

James T. Jeremiah  
The Second Coming  
May 12, 1978

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Amen. How do you like that? Great. They sounded like the Blackwood Quartet before something happened to them.

James T. Jeremiah:

Would you open your Bibles this morning to the book of Titus? Let me read for you beginning with verse 11 of chapter two. And keep your Bibles open because we're going to study that this morning. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God or the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm sure every preacher has wondered what he would preach if he were preaching his last sermon. There are so many themes, so many things to think about. Hopefully this is not my last sermon. It may be my last sermon as president of Cedarville College in the chapel, but I have news for you. We've already made arrangements to come back. And we'll have other things perhaps to say. But I want to think with you this morning about a theme that I trust will always be a part of this institution. I have no reason to believe it will not. I'm convinced that if it is, that the college will maintain its doctrinal stand. Because the thing I want to mention today is always the first thing, outside of flipping from the doctrine of inspiration, the first thing that becomes a minimal emphasis or no emphasis at all or is entirely forgotten. I refer to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

The Apostle Paul said, "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." As you read this passage that I've just read for you or with you, you will see that the grace of God is mentioned here as the great theme relating to many other truths of the Bible. I like to think of it in this passage of scripture in considering what God's grace has brought. Verse 11. Salvation hath appeared. What God's grace has taught. Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. What God's grace has brought, in verse 12, that he might redeem us. And what grace God's grace has sought, verse 14, purify a peculiar people. God is looking and seeking and purifying a special people for his name.

James T. Jeremiah:

As you read the word of God, you will discover that there are many great cardinal doctrines related to this truth. In this passage alone, you will find major doctrines related to this phrase, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior. You'll find it in relation to the grace of God, in relation to salvation, the incarnation. For, in verse 11, the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared. It appeared in the coming of Christ in the incarnation. The second coming of

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Christ is related to the doctrine of godliness, as you'll find emphasized in verse 12. The person of Christ is here related to this great truth. The atonement, redemption, depravity, all of the great doctrines.

James T. Jeremiah:

It is reasonable to say that if we are sound in our concept of the coming of Christ, the possibility is that we are going to be sound in relation to the other miracles of the Bible. If we believe in creation, if we believe in incarnation, in bodily resurrection, the Ascension of Christ, then we are likely to come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is coming back again. I believe if we are sound in our concept and our convictions on the coming of the Lord Jesus, we will not be afraid to believe the rest of the miracles. The prophetic miracle of his coming will not be a difficult thing when we accept the historical miracles of the scriptures all through the pages of this great book.

James T. Jeremiah:

If I understand the teaching of the Bible correctly, there are two aspects of the second coming of Christ, both of them referred to in this text. Looking for that blessed hope. That's the next thing on the schedule. The blessed hope when the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall be raised. And those of us who are alive will be caught up to meet him in the air. The rapture of the saints. But it also refers to the revelation, when he shall come in power and glory, for the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, someone says it's very difficult for me to understand how the second coming of Christ could be related in two different aspects. That is, the rapture and the revelation. It ought not to be difficult when you remember that the first coming was like that too. The first coming of Jesus Christ is related to the incarnation, when he came as a babe in Bethlehem. And the ascension, when he bodily ascended to the throne of God and is seated there, indicating that the work of redemption has been completed. And so as you think of these two aspects of the coming of Christ, be reminded that the first thing on God's prophetic calendar is not even the return of the Jews to Israel, though they're there. It is not the arising of the apostate church, though this is in existence. It is not the unusual rise of the occult, though this is present. But that which is next in God's schedule is his return in the air for his people.

James T. Jeremiah:

As you think about this matter, let me say to you, young people, it seems to me that it's later than we think. There is a tradition that in an enchanted forest, there was a sundial. And on the sundial, there was this phrase: it is later than you think. And travelers through the forest would come to the sundial and read this statement. And as they did so, they stopped to meditate. Young people, the meditating time ought to put some real feet in our service for God, for it is later, much later, than we think.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now let's think about the practical aspect of this today, as we find it in this passage of scripture. The blessed hope of the Lord Jesus Christ is related to purity of life. Look at it. Looking unto Jesus, who is to cleanse us to be his own people. Beloved, now are you the sons of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. This

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hope in him purifieth the one who has it, even as he is pure. That means when we look for his coming, we will be involved in saying and going and doing right.

James T. Jeremiah:

When I was a young Christian, I remember getting saved. And then I discovered that not everything in my life was eliminated that ought to have been eliminated all at once. And I shall never forget, I remember it to this day, when as a young Christian, I went to a place where I ought not to be. While I was there, the Spirit of God impressed upon me a truth that I'd heard in prayer meeting. I hadn't heard much about it, but I'd heard that Christ was coming, and I could hardly wait to find my way out of the place. I had a feeling that Jesus would come before I could leave. He hasn't come yet. But his coming is nearer now than it was then.

James T. Jeremiah:

You see, when you look for the blessed hope, you're going to have a righteous walk. It is an impossibility to really believe that Jesus is coming again and for a Christian to walk in deliberate known sin while he really believes that. It has to do also with peace of heart. Looking for that blessed hope. That word blessed means happy. John 14:1-3 has something to say about that. When Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Don't have to be in trouble to have peace. "Let not your heart be troubled. I will come again and receive you unto myself." And when Paul concluded his message to the Thessalonians on the rapture of the saints, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, he said, "Comfort one another with these words." We may rest assured, friend, that the victory is ahead and the victory can be shared even now. But we are not headed for doomsday. We are not headed for defeat. We are not headed for blackness or darkness forever. We are waiting his coming from the glory, and that ought to give peace of heart when we anticipate that wonderful day.

James T. Jeremiah:

It should also involve patience in living, looking for that blessed hope. And that idea is well expressed by Williams in his translation of the passage when he said, "While we are waiting for the realization of our blessed hope." You see, the farmer in the Bible is pictured as one who plants his grain and waits for the harvest. James makes the application of this in James 5:7-8. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waiteth." And because we don't always get things done on our time clock and in our calendar and by our watch, we sometimes think it will not come. But let me tell you, God's never ceased to work on time. And when you think about that event yet ahead, it is as certain as his first coming was back in Bethlehem. We can patiently wait for it. This will help us to face the unusual trials, the unexplained changes, the unexpected disappointments, the unrewarded service, the unwanted reverses. It all takes patience. We can face all of this when we know he is coming again.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, I suspect about this time of year, some of you students will be glad for the rapture. You'd be happy if the Lord would come before those final examinations. Well, that's a poor reason to want the Lord come, very frankly. You may be tested on the other side of the rapture. Then what would you do?

James T. Jeremiah:

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Several years ago, I recall on this campus a man. I probably won't tell you who he is. His name is Charlie, but that's enough. He had charge of the maintenance. We had a little something that needed to be done and didn't get done. And so I saw him one day. I said, "I wish we could get this finished." And his reply was, "Oh, that the Lord would come back again." I said, "Do you mean to tell me you want the Lord to come back again so you could get out of doing that?" "Well," he said, "it would solve a problem." I said, "Now, remember something. The Bible says in my father's house are many mansions. And maybe there will be the need of maintenance." And he replied by saying, "Do you think I'm going to get stuck with that job in heaven, too?"

James T. Jeremiah:

Well, we smile at this. But I have met a good many people, and I must confess, there have been times in my life when the appearing of the Lord Jesus from the glory would have been extremely wonderful. But the patience that that event, future as it is, gives to us, ought to give us strength to press on to serve God in the midst of every problem and every difficulty.

James T. Jeremiah:

If we're looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, it will also give us purpose in witnessing. Looking for that blessed hope, for that one who gave himself for us, looking for him will be done with meaning when we are telling others about him. You mark it down. The people who today are vitally concerned about winning lost people, being involved in seeing the lost come to Christ, are almost always those who believe that Jesus Christ is coming back again. If you believe in the doctrine of Christ's return and it has put you in some kind of a spiritual rocking chair, and you're not motivated to reach the people who are out there without the Savior, then you better read that doctrine again in the scriptures, because it is related to witnessing, evangelism, mission. We need to reach them while it is today, for the night comes and no man can work.

James T. Jeremiah:

1 Thessalonians 2:19, Paul writes about these Thessalonian Christians. Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ that is coming? What a wonderful day it'll be when he comes and we're united with him.

James T. Jeremiah:

George Whitefield was asked one day, "What would you be doing if Jesus would come today?" He opened his little book to see where his schedule would take him. And he replied to these people who asked the question, "My friend, I would be doing precisely what I planned to be doing anyway." No wonder he had a burden for souls.

James T. Jeremiah:

Looking for that blessed hope will put purpose in your witnessing. It'll put persistence in your service. Looking, connect that word with the text down a ways, and it says zealous of good works. And writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised, we shall be changed. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For your know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." What a day it will be. But let's be at the business that the Lord would have us to carry on.

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James T. Jeremiah:

R.A. Torrey made the statement on one occasion that we ought to live today as though the Lord Jesus Christ would return today, but we ought to serve today as though he would not return in our lifetime. And if you take that attitude, you'll not be setting any dates. You'll not be trying to figure out from scripture or from science or from the pyramids or from something when Jesus is coming back. No one knows. It may be today. It'll be soon, it'll be sudden, it'll be startling, it'll be selective. He's coming back again.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm sure that the history majors have read about the dark day of May, May 19, 1780, when, at least in the eastern part of this country, everything went black. Whittier writes about this in a story called Abraham Davenport. The story goes like this. When the dark day came, the Connecticut Statehouse was in session, and everything went dark and the people were frightened. They thought the day of judgment was coming. And then all the eyes in the place turned to Abraham Davenport. He was known for his wisdom and his spirituality, apparently. And then he deliberately rose to his feet and said this. "This well may be the day of judgment. But be it so or not, I only know my present duty, and that is to occupy until he comes. And so I choose to meet him faithful in my task, ready when he calls. So reverently I say, let God do his work. We will see to ours. Bring in the candles." And the Connecticut statehouse legislature finished their day's work.

James T. Jeremiah:

Many trends, many signs, many indications the Lord's return is not far away. Let's remember, we need to bring in the candles, maybe. And not be so content, but wait patiently without being persistent. For patience in the right sense produces persistence to press on to serve him, to honor him. Looking unto the Lord Jesus, that blessed hope produces power in speaking. If you want to be a witness, you want to carry out the message of Christ then get your eyes upon him and his second coming. Look at this again. Looking for that blessed hope, these things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Power in speaking.

James T. Jeremiah:

You know why a person who believes in the second coming can be dogmatic? One of my friends calls it bulldogmatic. You know why? Because they are convinced on the authority of this book that it's going to happen. And if our trust in the authority of this book pertaining to the second coming is a vital part of us, it'll be true of the other parts of the scripture we preach, too. It's a strange thing how true those who believe the old book can be, and how wonderful it can become in speaking forth the message of Christ, and know that one day he'll appear.

James T. Jeremiah:

You've read in the Old Testament, I'm sure, that text of scripture that says, in Daniel 12:4, that in the latter days, many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased. You've also read about a man who lived several years ago by the name of Isaac Newton, who was a believer. Isaac Newton lived in 1642 to 1727. That's a little before our time. And he made this statement about this passage of scripture, this prophetic message back in Daniel. Isaac Newton wrote this. "Personally, I cannot but believe these words concerning the end of the end times. One sign of the end will be a remarkable

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increase in means of getting about. Men will travel from country to country in an unprecedented manner. Through the discoveries of science, men will probably be able to invent some means of locomotion, enabling people to travel at the astonishing rate at 40 miles an hour."

James T. Jeremiah:

Now, remember, nobody traveled 40 miles an hour unless they were shot out of a cannon back in 1727. Nobody had done that. And he took the scriptures to be literal. And he had a message to give. We may laugh at this, and I can understand that. 40 miles an hour, we're hardly in gear before we're going faster than that. But he didn't see that. He put his faith in what God said, that many would go to and fro, knowledge would be increased.

James T. Jeremiah:

But there was a man in that day who was an unbeliever. His name was Voltaire. Voltaire, the infidel, and a contemporary of Isaac Newton, hearing what he had said, made this comment. "See want a fool Christianity makes of an otherwise brilliant man. Here, a scientist like Newton actually writes that men may travel at the rate of 40 miles an hour. Doesn't he know that if a man would travel at 40 miles an hour, he would be suffocated? The heart would stand still." Well, I'm going to Jamaica another week, and I'll guarantee in one of those jetliners, I'll travel at least 40 miles an hour. And I don't expect to be suffocated, unless the thing sinks in the Atlantic and I go down with it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Isn't it wonderful to know that when God says something, you can believe it? And when you put your faith in what he says, you can speak with authority. Back in those days, Isaac Newton, who believed in Christ's coming again and the prophetic scriptures, had more sense by far than the so-called brilliant Voltaire.

James T. Jeremiah:

Last of all, this blessed hope involves a great deal with payment for faithfulness. That blessed hope. Friend, I don't think it would be happy or blessed if Jesus were coming and there were no rewards, no equalization of service. The last part of the revelation, John records, "Behold, Jesus comes quickly, and his reward is with him." Paul, as he faced the executioner, recorded to Timothy, "Crown of righteousness will be given unto all them that love his appearing."

James T. Jeremiah:

Let me say to you that it's one thing to believe it and have an academic knowledge that he's coming. It's another thing to love it. Do you really want to see him? Are you looking for that blessed hope? I trust that Cedarville College, from every day of its life, from its beginning to its end, until the Lord Jesus comes and there will be no need for a Cedarville College as it is today. Until that day, we never forget to look for that blessed hope.

James T. Jeremiah:

Someone wrote these lines, with which I want to close. It is not for a sign we were watching. For wonders above and below, the pouring of vials of judgment, the sounding of trumpets of woe. It is not

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for a day we are looking, or even a time yet to be, when the earth shall be filled with God's glory as the waters cover the sea. It is not for a king we are longing, to make the world kingdoms his own. It is not for a judge who shall summon the nations of earth to his throne. Not for these, though we know they are coming, for they are but adjuncts of him before whom all glory is clouded, beside whom all splendor grows dim. We wait for the Lord, our beloved, our comforter, master, and friend. The substance of all that we hope for, beginning of faith and it's end. We watch for our savior and bridegroom, who loved us and made us his own. For him, for him, for him. We are looking and longing for Jesus. And Jesus [inaudible]. He may come today.

James T. Jeremiah:

Young people, he may come today. Are you ready? Do you want him to come? You anxious for him to come? Not to get us out of troubles, testings, difficulties. Just to see him. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep serving, keep watching, keep working, keep believing, but keep on looking. He's coming again.

James T. Jeremiah:

Lord Jesus, speak to our hearts this morning about this great theme, and help us to see how practical it is in relation to our lives. Keep us from having a doctrine, straight and true as it ought to be, without having it find a place in our living, so that it manifests itself in flesh and bones and blood out in a world that needs the Christ we profess to know. In Jesus' name. Amen.