

About Christ's Return

Do you need more clarity about Christ's return? You're not alone, so did the early Christians in Thessalonica. It seems they were hearing contradicting teachings and wondered "Has Christ already come and we missed it?" As the Apostle Paul writes to them in this second letter, he affirms what he's already taught them: the End is coming but it hasn't happened yet. By studying his second letter to the Thessalonians, we too gain a better understanding of what to expect in the End Times. Paul teaches us about the signs of Christ's return, about the Antichrist or "man of lawlessness," and he reminds us what must happen before Jesus Christ returns. Ultimately, Paul does not want us to be afraid of Christ's return, instead he desires to teach us about it so that we are encouraged to continue on in our faith.

AWARENESS Before listening reflect on what you already know or understand about topics we'll cover in the episode.

- When you think about the End Times and Christ's return, do you feel more fearful or hopeful? Why?
- If you knew exactly when Christ would return, what would you do today?



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE: [About Christ's Return](#)

READ [2 Thessalonians 2](#)

REFLECTION After listening, consider the following questions:

- Does obsession about the details or fear about Christ's return detract from or undercut your understanding of God's grace in your life? Why or why not?
- Read [2 John 1:7-9](#). Like Paul, John also places great emphasis on trusting what you've been taught so you are not deceived. Why do you think Paul and John shared this concern?
- Consider the evils and injustices present in our world and society today. Then reflect on host Dave Bast's observation based on [2 Thessalonians 2:7](#), "Things are not as bad as they could be in the world. God is still here. God restrains the worst excesses of evil." When you think about this, what prayer requests or praises come to mind?? Write them out. Have a conversation with God about the thoughts, questions, and feelings this verse and quote stir in you.
- Consider N.T. Wright's reflection on [2 Thessalonians 2:13-14*](#): "Everything a Christian does, from belief to baptism to holiness to hope, is held within this framework of God's powerful love and grace. That is why Paul can thank God for them. All that has been accomplished in their lives is his gift and all that will be accomplished will be to his glory" (p 151). How does this truth ease worry and fear, and help you live with the mysteries surrounding Christ's return?

*N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians. Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

RELATED PASSAGES for further study

[Luke 21:5-36](#), [2 John 1:5-11](#), [1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11](#), [Titus 2:11-14](#), [Matthew 25:31-46](#)

CONCLUSION

One of the ways we stand firm in our faith is by professing what we believe together in worship. Often we do this in the form of creeds, like the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed. Groups of Christians also write catechisms to clearly articulate what they believe based on scripture. Catechisms and creeds never take the place of scripture, but they can aid in our understanding of its larger themes. Read the below Question & Answer 52 from the Heidelberg Catechism, which articulates a Reformed understanding of Christ's return (read the scripture passages listed in the footnotes).

[Q & A 52](#)

Q. How does Christ's return
"to judge the living and the dead"
comfort you?

A. In all distress and persecution,
with uplifted head,
I confidently await the very judge
who has already offered himself to the judgment of God
in my place and removed the whole curse from me.¹
Christ will cast all his enemies and mine
into everlasting condemnation,
but will take me and all his chosen ones
to himself
into the joy and glory of heaven.²

¹ [Luke 21:28](#); [Rom. 8:22-25](#); [Phil. 3:20-21](#); [Tit. 2:13-14](#)

² [Matt. 25:31-46](#); [2 Thess. 1:6-10](#)

How does Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 52 help root you firmly in what you've been taught about Christ's return, yet live with the mystery surrounding the specifics? Are there other specific creeds, confessions, catechisms, or songs that function similarly and give you the confidence to remain steadfast in your faith?

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/about-christs-return>

Printed on December 4, 2024