

God Promises That He Will Return

Opener: What's a big promise someone has made to you? Did they keep it? What happened?

Scripture: The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.²³ It was necessary, then, for copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.²⁶ Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the world was created. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:22-28

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Matthew 24:42

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.²⁶ People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:25-28

The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

Discussion Questions

1. God's promise to return concludes our 13 week series on God's promises.¹ Do you tend to trust promises or react with skepticism? What about the promises God has made? Examples?
2. Hebrews thoroughly explains the juxtaposition of what God provided under the law and what He provides in Christ. How would you describe what God set up through the law to prepare us for what Jesus did for us on the cross that continues to play out in heaven itself? Hebrews 9:22-28
3. Hebrews 9:28 crescendos to the ultimate truth: Jesus “was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and He will appear a second time . . . to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.” That's the promise—He's coming back! Why would Jesus return? What will He accomplish when He returns that He hasn't already accomplished? Matthew 24:42; Luke 21:25-28; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17
4. What have Christians argued about throughout the centuries regarding what will happen when Jesus returns? Will our beliefs, however strongly held, make a difference to what actually happens?
5. How does knowing that Jesus will return someday impact our relationship with Him now?
6. Why do you think the Father has kept the time when Jesus will return secret? How do you think the disciples would have responded if Jesus had told them He wouldn't return for at least another 2,000 years? What difference would it make if we knew the exact day Jesus will return?

Wrap Up: As a professor explained, “Class, I'm going to tell you what I'm going to tell you. Then I'll tell you what I told you. Then I'll review.” That's what the Bible does when it comes to Jesus' return. We're told over and over again that Jesus is coming back. He said it Himself. Paul, James, and John reinforced it. Then Hebrews hammers home this vital truth—Jesus and His sacrifice are supreme and all-sufficient—and He's coming back to establish His kingdom on earth! Now that's a promise.

¹ We've discussed God's promises to give us strength, wisdom, love, protection for our hearts and minds, leadership, a place in His Kingdom, access to Him, eternal life, a firm foundation, and completion—and He will fight for us and work out everything for our good!