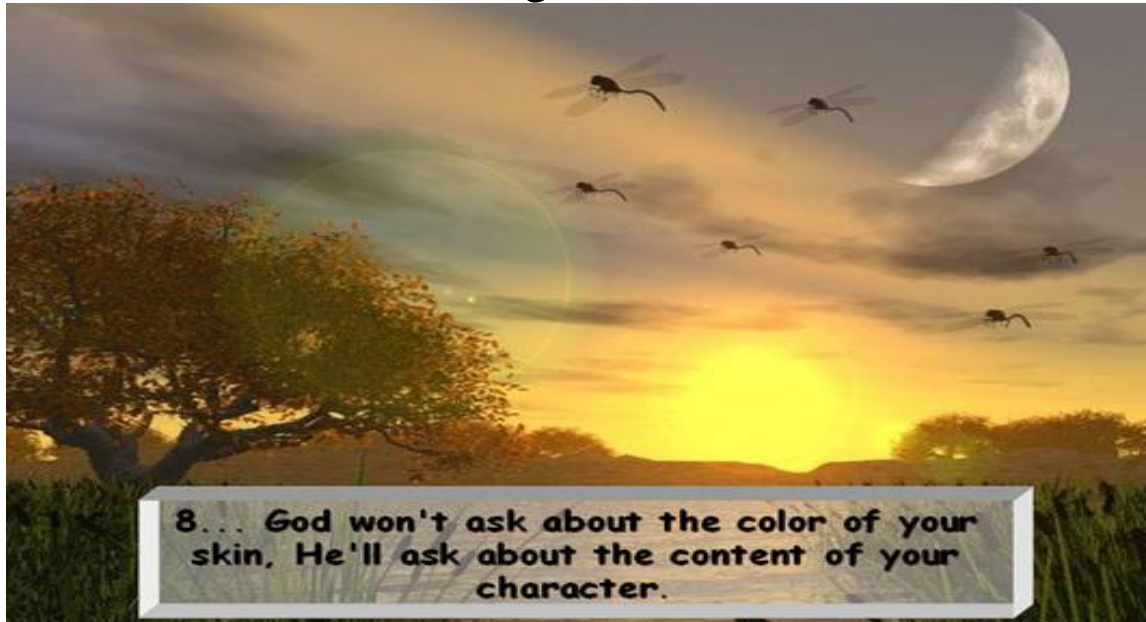


1

Personalizing Christ's Return



2

3

4 **Graham F. Watts, Sr.**

5

6 **VISION:** To hear the midnight cry, "The bridegroom comes, go out to meet
7 Him" (Matthew 25:6) and become like Him when I see Him as He is (1 John
8 3:2).

9

10 **MISSION:** Purify myself even as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3), to be glad,
11 to rejoice, give honor to Christ and be ready for the marriage of the
12 Lamb (Revelation 19:7).

13

14 **VALUES:** Follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4), be without
15 fault before God (Revelation 14:5), be perfect even as my Father in
16 heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48), wear the Lamb's fine, clean and white
17 linen (Revelation 19:8) do righteously (1 John 3:10) and walk humbly
18 with God (Micah 6:8).

19

20 **OVERALL AIM:** Studies presented here unveil Bible knowledge to inquiring
21 minds to prompt the following inquiries: "Are our feet on the rock of
22 ages? Are we one with Christ as He is one with the Father" (John 10:30
23 in Evangelism, {Ev} 199.1)? Am I crucified with Christ (Galatians
24 2:20)?

25

PURPOSE/REASON FOR/WHY

27
28 The focus here is on the return of Jesus Christ for me!

OBJECTIVES/WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH

31
32 At the end of this study, the reader is equipped to evaluate his/her
33 personal readiness for the day of the Lord!

SIGNIFICANCE: SO WHAT

36
37 The day of the Lord draws near (read Ezekiel 30:3; Joel 3:14, Obadiah
38 1:15 & Zephaniah 1:14). Signs of His coming are fast fulfilling.
39 Politically, "You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, see that your
40 heart be not troubled; the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7).
41 "...With regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering
42 together to Him" (2 Thessalonians 2:1, New American Standard Bible,
43 NASB); "...It will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man
44 of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and
45 exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that
46 he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being
47 God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, NASB). "...[But] the Lord will slay [that
48 lawless one] with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end, by the
49 appearance of His coming..., the one whose coming is in accord with the
50 activity of Satan with all power, signs, false wonders and the
51 deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not
52 receive the love of the truth so as to be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-
53 10, NASB). And in contemporary society, people will be unloving,
54 without self-control, brutal and reckless among other things (2 Timothy
55 3:1-5). But we have this promise: "...I have loved [you] with an
56 everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee"
57 (Jeremiah 31:3). God invites all to inherit eternal life (John 3:16).

58 BACKGROUND CONTEXT

59
60 Ever since the fall in Eden, God has longed for restored face-to-face
61 fellowship with His children (Genesis 3:8). When Jesus became flesh
62 (read John 1:1-2; 1 John 1:1-3; Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:23) and took
63 the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7), His short lived, face-to-face,
64 earthly experience was punctuated by emotional pain captured in the
65 following cry: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones
66 those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children
67 together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were
68 unwilling" (Matthew 23:37, NASB). Jesus died on the cross (Matthew
69 27:32-42), was resurrected (Acts 10:39-41; Mark 16:1-4) and returned to
70 His Father's side (Acts 2:33; Hebrews 1:3 & 8:1) to help prepare
71 mansions for the soon to be redeemed (John 14:1-3 & Revelation 22:12).
72 For many who wait for Christ's return, there is great expectation and
73 anticipation. The Psalmist inquired: "Lord, how long shall the wicked...
74 triumph" (Psalms 94:3)? "[Under] the fifth seal, [John] saw under the
75 altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the
76 testimony which they held and they cried with a loud voice, saying,
77 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our
78 blood on them that dwell on the earth'" (Revelation 6:9-10)? For
79 others, the coming of Jesus brings no delight. For example, "...In the
80 last days, scoffer will come ...following their own evil desires,
81 [saying]: 'Where is this coming He promised? Ever since our fathers
82 died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation'" (2
83 Peter 3:3-4, New International Version, NIV). This background prepared
84 the way for the study question that follows.

85

86 STUDY QUESTION

87

88 Is Jesus Christ coming for me?

89

90 **ANSWER SOURCE: HOLY BIBLE**

91

92 1. **Jesus Christ returns for a covenant people.** The Psalmist described
 93 that group this way: “Gather my saints together unto me; those that
 94 have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalms 50:5). The
 95 commitment to Jesus Christ that describes a covenant by sacrifice is
 96 this: “...Just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to
 97 live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as
 98 you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness” (Colossians 2:6-7,
 99 NIV). “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and
 100 deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic
 101 principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Colossians 2:8,
 102 NIV). Are you in a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ?

103

104 2. **Jesus Christ returns for people separated from sin (Revelation 1:5).**
 105 “In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives... and [God gave] you...
 106 fullness in Christ... **In Him you were also circumcised in putting off of the sinful**
 107 **nature...** by... [burial] with [Christ] in baptism and [resurrection] with
 108 Him through your faith in the power of God” (Romans 2:29; Colossians
 109 2:9-12, NIV). Therefore, “Put to death... whatever belongs to your
 110 earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and
 111 greed..., [for] because of these [things] the wrath of God is coming
 112 [on the children of disobedience]. You used to walk in these ways...,
 113 but now you must rid yourselves of all such things, [including]...
 114 anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language... Do not lie to
 115 each other since you have taken off your old self... and have put on
 116 the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of
 117 [the] Creator” (Colossians 3:5-10, NIV). “Since you died with Christ
 118 to the basic principles of this world, why as though you still
 119 belonged to it do you submit to its rules? Do not handle! Do not
 120 taste! Do not touch (Colossians 2:20-21, NIV)!

- 121 3. **Jesus Christ returns for people focused on heaven.** “[Those who]
 122 have been raised with Christ [have] set [their] hearts on things
 123 above, where Christ... [sits] at the right hand of God [and] ...not on
 124 earthly things. ...[Their] life is now hidden with Christ in God, [so]
 125 when Christ who... [is their] life appears, [they will] also appear
 126 with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4, NIV). Therefore, as God's chosen
 127 people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and
 128 patience” (Colossians 3:12, NIV). A description of the incremental
 129 nature of this lifelong work follows: “...Add to your faith virtue; and to
 130 virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience;
 131 and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness and to
 132 brotherly kindness charity” (2 Peter 1:5-7). If these attributes
 133 abound in us we shall **NOT** be unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus
 134 Christ, but if we lack them, then we are blind and have forgotten
 135 that we were purged from old sins (2 Peter 1:8-9 & Revelation 1:5).
 136 “[Am I giving due] diligence to making my calling and election sure...
 137 so [that] an entrance shall be ministered unto [me] into the
 138 everlasting kingdom of our Lord... Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11)?
 139
- 140 4. **Jesus Christ returns for people in a healing community.** “Bear with
 141 each other; forgive whatever grievances you may have against one
 142 another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. [...Remain in my love and
 143 love one another as the Lord loves you (John 15:9 & 12)]. ...Put on
 144 love; this binds... all [divine attributes] together in perfect unity
 145 [and] let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of
 146 one body you were called to peace. ...Let the word of Christ dwell in
 147 you richly; teach and admonish one another with all wisdom... as you
 148 sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts
 149 to God. Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the
 150 name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him”
 151 (read Colossians 3:13-17, NIV & 1 Corinthians 10:31).

152 5. **Jesus Christ returns for an obedient people.** “The secret [things
 153 belong] unto the Lord our God: but those [things which are] revealed
 154 [belong] unto us and to our children... that [we] may do all the words
 155 of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29). Jesus Christ embodied the fullness
 156 of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9). “...To the faithful in Christ Jesus...
 157 (Ephesians 1:1), God... [has] blessed [them] with all spiritual
 158 blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) according as
 159 He [has] chosen [them] in [Christ] before the foundation of the world
 160 that [they] should be holy and without blame before Him in love”
 161 (Ephesians 1:4). [God not only chose but also] predestinated [them]
 162 unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ... (Ephesians 1:5) in
 163 whom [there is] redemption... [and] forgiveness of sins, according to
 164 the riches of [God’s] grace” (Ephesians 1:7). “[And] having made
 165 known to [humanity] the mystery of His will... (Ephesians 1:9), [which
 166 is, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not
 167 imputing their trespasses unto them... {2 Corinthians 5:19}] that in
 168 the dispensation of the fullness of time [God would] gather together...
 169 all things in Christ [that] are in heaven and... [are] on earth...”
 170 (Ephesians 1:10). “[Then] let the [revealed] word of Christ dwell in
 171 you richly...” (Colossians 3:16) that His word might be a lamp to your
 172 feet and a light to your path (Psalms 119:105), that you might order
 173 your steps in His word and **NOT** let iniquity have dominion over you
 174 (Psalms 119:133). Thus, when “...Christ, who... abolished death and...
 175 brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy
 176 1:10) appears, then “...It shall be said in that day, ‘Lo, this is our
 177 God; we have waited for Him and He will save us; ...we will be glad and
 178 rejoice in His salvation” (Isaiah 25:9). “...The ransomed [or
 179 redeemed] of the Lord shall return and come to Zion; songs and
 180 everlasting joy [shall be] upon their heads, they shall obtain joy
 181 and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10 &
 182 51:11). Let us then “...Obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

183 6. **Jesus Christ returns for a converted people.** "...[You are] a royal
 184 priesthood, an holy nation... that [you] should show... the praises of
 185 Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter
 186 2:9). "...[As] priests of God and of Christ, [who expect to] reign
 187 with Him..." (Revelation 20:6), "The priest's lips should keep
 188 knowledge and [people] should seek the law at his mouth; for he is
 189 the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. But [you] are departed out of
 190 the way; [you] have caused many to stumble at the law; [you] have
 191 corrupted the covenant of Levi...; ...[You] have not kept my ways, but
 192 have been partial in the law" (Malachi 2:7-9). "...Judah [has] dealt
 193 treacherously and an abomination is committed in Israel and in
 194 Jerusalem; for Judah [has] profaned the holiness of the Lord which He
 195 loved and [has] married the daughter of a strange god" (Malachi
 196 2:11). And these have [you] done again, covering the altar of the
 197 Lord with tears, weeping and crying out insomuch that He [regards]
 198 **NOT** the offering any more, or [receives] it with good-will at your
 199 hand" (Malachi 2:13). [You] have wearied the Lord with your words.
 200 Yet [you] say: 'Wherein have we wearied him'? [You did] when [you]
 201 say: 'Every one that [does] evil is good in the sight of the Lord and
 202 He delights in them...'" (Malachi 2:17). We may appear righteous unto
 203 men outwardly, while we are full of hypocrisy and iniquity inwardly
 204 (Matthew 23:28). "...No one [will] see the kingdom of God unless s/he
 205 is born again: ...born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:3 & 5, NIV).

206
 207 7. **Jesus Christ returns for a pure, blameless people.** Thus, if Christ
 208 is coming for me, then I must listen to His appeals. "Behold, I will
 209 send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me. And the
 210 Lord whom [you] seek..., [whom you delight in] shall suddenly come to
 211 His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, behold, He shall
 212 come..." (Malachi 3:1). "But who may abide the day of His coming? Who
 213 shall stand when he appears? [Who shall ascend into the hill of the
 214 Lord or who shall stand in His holy place (Psalms 24:3)]? He is like

215 a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap [to them who look for His
216 appearing]" (Malachi 3:2). Thus, we can have "...Clean hands, pure
217 hearts, [souls not lifted up unto vanity] nor sworn deceitfully;
218 [and] shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from
219 the God of [our] salvation" (Psalms 24:4-5) when "He... sits as a
220 refiner and purifier of silver and... [purifies] the sons of Levi and
221 purges them as gold and silver that they may offer unto the Lord an
222 offering in righteousness" (Malachi 3:3). Hence, God "...Will come
223 near to you to judgment and [He] will be a swift witness against the
224 sorcerers, the adulterers, false swearers, those that oppress the
225 hireling in ...wages, the widow and the fatherless; that turn aside the
226 stranger from ...right and fear not me, [says] the Lord of hosts"
227 (Malachi 3:5; read also James 5:4). "All the sins here specified
228 have been coming in among the people who claim to be the people of
229 God. It is time for personal reform among the people of God so we
230 cease to take His name in vain. Each one, rebuke your neighbor and
231 not suffer sin upon him/her (Leviticus 19:17) for "Open rebuke is
232 better than secret love" (Proverbs 27:5).

233
234 SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS: This study examined the second return of Christ
235 by making a personal application of it. The question that focused the
236 study asked: Is Jesus Christ coming for me? In our study, we uncovered
237 seven benchmarks to help us assess our fitness for the day of the Lord.
238 The people whom Christ will gather at His return are 1) A covenant
239 people; 2) A people separated from sin; 3) A people focused on heaven,
240 4) A people who comprise a healing community; 5) An obedient people, 6)
241 A converted people and 7) A pure, blameless people. Are you; Am I that
242 people? Because it is of little redeeming value to engage in Bible
243 study merely for information, subsequent paragraphs follow that make a
244 practical application of the truths set forth here.

245

246 **DISCUSSION: WHAT DO THESE THINGS MEAN?**

247

248 This study presented the return of Christ from an individual
249 perspective. While Jesus Christ gathers a group (read 1 Thessalonians
250 4:13-17), mere organizational membership does not grant automatic
251 access to the kingdom of God. Jesus makes it very clear that we
252 demonstrate discipleship not by religious affiliation, but by bearing
253 much fruit (John 15:8), which Scripture defines as "...Love, joy, peace,
254 patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-
255 control" (Galatians 5:22, NIV), which, "...If we possess... in increasing
256 measure, will keep [us] from being ineffective... [Christians]" (2 Peter
257 1:8, NIV). Christ has ransomed God's heritage by His death and
258 resurrection (Isaiah 53:3-6, 8, 10-12), but whether we are included
259 among the redeemed is a personal decision. We will either walk
260 according to the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) or
261 according to the Spirit, which is the only way to NOT gratify the
262 desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16). When we personalize the
263 return of Christ, then hypocrisy and discord between our beliefs and
264 actions give way to purposeful revival and reformation, to make us
265 ready for the coming of Christ. Anything short of this personal
266 transformation is a sham! Like ancient Israel, we don't want to pursue
267 and NOT obtain God's righteousness because we seek it NOT by faith
268 (Romans 3:21-22 & 9:30-32). "The Jews claimed to obey the law of God.
269 They appeared to be very strict in observing some portions of the law;
270 but ***the precepts that interfered with their personal interests were unheeded.*** The
271 people offended God by lightly esteeming the requirements that touched
272 their earthly treasures. Beware, brethren, lest while professing to
273 honor the law of God, you fall into the same error as did the Jews..."
274 (Review and Herald, {RH}, December 1, 1896 par. 11) while you appear
275 outwardly pious to men and women. A form of godliness without the
276 accompanying offers no merits (2 Timothy 3:5).

277 **CONCLUSIONS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

278

279 "A message which is as a two-edged sword must be given to the people,
 280 to clear away the evils that are seen among them. A living testimony
 281 that will awaken paralyzed conscience... [must] be borne" (RH, December
 282 1, 1896 par. 8). "God has revealed His interest in fallen men by
 283 giving them a Savior. He covenanted not to stir up His wrath against
 284 the perversity of His children, **NOT** to censure them in His hot
 285 displeasure **UNTIL** every advantage had been given them through all their
 286 period of probation" (RH, December 1, 1896 par. 16).

287

288 "God has a yearning desire to save the purchase of the blood of Christ
 289 from the sure result of... [transgression]. Sin, if persisted in, will
 290 bring... the wrath of the rejected Lamb. Mercy, rich and free, is
 291 presented in the gift of Christ's righteousness. Those who scorn this
 292 precious gift, who despise and reject the Savior, who refuses the
 293 invitation--"Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace
 294 with me..." (Isaiah 27:5)--reject the offer of the attributes of
 295 character [that] will constitute them sons and daughters of God. We do
 296 well to remember that "As many as receive Him to them [He gives] power
 297 to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John
 298 1:12); "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor
 299 of the will of man but of God" (John 1:13 in RH, December 1, 1896 par.
 300 17).

301

302 The Word of God is our instructor. "Be not carried about with... strange
 303 doctrines" (Hebrews 13:9). "All Scripture is given by inspiration of
 304 God and is profitable for reproof, doctrine, correction and
 305 instructions in righteousness that the person of God may be thoroughly
 306 furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16). "...The anointing [that

307 you] have received of [Christ] abides in you and you need NOT that
 308 [any] teach you..." (1 John 2:27). Thus, "...Whoever will be doers of the
 309 word, in sincerity and truth, will behold His glory; the glory as of
 310 the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14);
 311 then there is indeed a new birth, a transformation of character" (RH,
 312 December 1, 1896 par. 18). Therefore, as the "Elect... of God the Father
 313 through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of
 314 the blood of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 1:2), "...Being justified by His
 315 grace, we... [are] heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus
 316 3:7) if we abide in Christ (John 15:3-4).

317

318 **CALL TO ACTION: WHAT SHALL WE DO?**

319 "Venture not one step further in... impenitence" (RH, December 1, 1896
 320 par. 31). "...Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your
 321 hearts..." (Hebrews 3:15). "...Turn... from [your] evil ways..." (Jeremiah
 322 26:3 & 2 Chronicles 7:14). If you have not yet repented, "Repent and
 323 be baptized... and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38, NIV).
 324 If you have already repented, "...Live in the Spirit [and] walk in the
 325 Spirit" (Galatians 5:16 & 25). [By doing so, we can] ...serve the Lord
 326 with fidelity... while mercy's sweet voice is still heard, while it is
 327 not yet too late for wrongs to be righted..." (RH, December 1, 1896 par.
 328 29), "...That... times of refreshing, [that is, the latter rain], shall
 329 come [to us] from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19; Hosea 6:3; Joel
 330 2:23 & James 5:7). "[And] when through the grace of Christ we have
 331 been converted, God calls upon us to wear His yoke (read Matthew 11:29
 332 & 16:24) and labor in His lines (read Isaiah 58:6, John 21:15, Luke
 333 4:18 & John 14:12) to save other souls who are bound up with Satan, who
 334 do not realize their peril" (read Ephesians 2:1 & Colossians 2:13 in
 335 RH, December 1, 1896 par. 30). Our calling exceeds church attendance!