

Is Jesus Coming Again?

or

Going Home With Your Friend!

Though I was only five years old, I can still remember the long trip from Oregon to Grandpa Venden's house in California—so we could be “Home for the Holidays.” As we traveled, the day came and went. Night settled down and I remember being struck with the thought that the moon was following us. The moon faded into dreams and the next thing I knew, Dad was carrying me beneath the Ponderosa pines that grew in Grandpa's yard.

The next morning was Christmas day. I helped Grandpa get a fire going with a bellows he had brought from Norway. Breakfast preceded present opening and took several years to finish. We finally opened our presents and my favorite was a blue blankie made by Grandma that had horses running across it. I still have it.

We had Christmas a second time that year. Home for the holidays had to include both sets of Grandparents. Grandpa Moore had an enormous tree ornamented with lighted glass tubes that bubbled with colored water. Yellow angels flew about the tree and hovered over the presents. Grandpa Moore always gave each grandchild a silver dollar for Christmas so we could be rich.

Aunt Barbara came over with *Idiot's Delight*, her fabulous whipped cream and strawberry jello. After eating, the adults played table games, while we cousins all enjoyed having the run of the house. There was homemade fudge and taffy and other goodies scattered around, where nobody was watching. It snowed that night, adding a final touch of enchantment.

Christmas after Christmas passed and I went away to college where I met a girl who was later to become my wife. I remember going home with her for Christmas. Her family had a rock fireplace strung with lights which were left up year round. Nostalgia at the flick of a switch.

Our first year of marriage, we lived in a one room apartment furnished with orange crates and foam pads. That wasn't the home we wanted to be in for Christmas, so we fueled our Datsun and headed for Northern California. Ten hours later we approached a door by moonlight and discovered a note tacked to it. Somebody had written with a felt tip marker “There is room in our inn and the door is unlocked.” Once more, we were Home for the Holidays.

The next year, I got my first job teaching school. My folks moved to Nebraska, where they were spending their first year in a 100 year old farmhouse. They were confident that having the whole family together would make the farmhouse home, so they sent airline tickets and we had a white Christmas on the hill.

There's something special about getting together with loved ones and friends for Christmas. Over the years we've driven thousands of miles to be Home for the Holidays. Some of the journeys have been difficult as we crawled along on icy roads with vehicles that had long ago seen their best years of service. Why do we do it? Perhaps it is because within us all, there is a desire to go Home.

Do not let your hearts be troubled (distressed, agitated). You believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely on God; believe in and adhere to and trust in and rely also on Me. In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going away to prepare a place for you. And when I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. John 14:1-3 (The Amplified Bible)

Don't They Want to Come Home?

Each year at Christmas, we celebrate the first Advent of Jesus. As that time approaches, the weather cools, trees change color and then lose their leaves, the days grow shorter and the nights longer, window panes wear morning frost, and in many places, snow blankets the land. The second Advent of Jesus will be Christmas on the grandest scale. As you look at conditions in the world around us, perhaps you've noticed that "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas."

1. What do each of the following texts say about conditions in our world just prior to the 2nd Advent of Jesus?

Daniel 12:4

Isaiah 51:6

Matthew 24:6,7

Matthew 24:12

Thessalonians 5:3

2. Jesus recognized that the world, as we know it, is not the sort of home He intends for His children. According to John 14:1-3, what is He doing about that?

3. What will it be like to live in that home?

Isaiah 25:8

Isaiah 35:4-10

Matthew 6:20-21

Revelation 7:16-17

Revelation 21:3-4

4. What promise did Jesus make in Matthew 26:63-64 while testifying under oath?

In the Bible, the prophecies about Christ's coming are divided into two parts, Suffering Savior and Coming King. There are eight times as many texts predicting Jesus' 2nd coming as there are predicting His first coming. Every prophecy relating to the Suffering Savior has been fulfilled exactly. We can expect the Coming King ones to be fulfilled as well!

5. When our soldiers came home from Desert Storm, the homecoming celebration made headlines and TV. The following texts describe what it will be like when Jesus returns to take His friends home.

Matthew 24:27 & 30

Matthew 25:31-32

Luke 21:27

Acts 1:11

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

2 Peter 3:10-12

Jude 1:14

Revelation 1:7

Don't They Want to Come Home?

When Jesus returns to take His friends home it will be the most spectacular event in history. There will be nothing secretive about it. Nobody is going to miss it when it happens!. This is going to be BIG!!

6. Considering the following passages, who will be going home with Him when He comes? Why are some denied entrance into Heaven.

Matthew 7:21-23

Luke 13:24-30

Matthew 25:1-12

In Lesson 1, we noticed Christianity is really about getting to know Jesus as your friend. When Jesus comes the second time, He will be coming for His friends. It's wonderful that when He comes, pain, suffering and sickness will be gone! It's wonderful that we'll receive mansions and crowns and immortality! But the best thing about His return is that then, time will finally begin in person with the best Friend we have ever come to know! Some day a cloud in the east will begin to grow. It will capture the attention of every one on earth as Jesus rides forth, shining brighter than the sun. Suddenly, a cry will go up from His friends, "We know you!" He will look back into the eyes of each one and say, "I know you too! And I've come to take you home—home to a party."!

Often, when you are away, getting a letter from those you love is like receiving a little piece of home. This week as you study the passages from John, consider them a letter from "home"—from a Brother and a Father who love you and intend to come to take you home soon!

- *Begin each session with prayer* - maybe something like this: "Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together..."
- *Read the passage* - several times noticing as many details as you can.
- *Imagine the setting* - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.
- *Summarize the passage* - in your own words.
- *Apply the passage* - what message is God giving you?
- *Meditate and pray* - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

John 16:1-4

John 16:5-15

John 16:16-24

John 16:25-33

John 17:1-5

John 17:6-19

John 17:20-26

Don't They Want to Come Home?

It is evening—if heaven has an evening. Two figures walk silently together through the golden streets. The taller one is the Master. The other is the angel Gabriel. On they walk through beauty beyond description. But the beauty tonight seems marred by the strange silence of the two. They have come into that vast part of the city which is uninhabited. Just why it should remain so is hard to understand. For the homes that line its winding streets are lovely beyond words. The terraces, the lawns of living green, the rose gardens rich with bloom, would bring tears of joy to any child of God who could see it.

At last Gabriel breaks the silence.

“Master,” he says, “all that has come from your hand is good. And these homes are no exception. They are beautiful—as only you could make them.”

Again there is silence. And again Gabriel speaks.

“Master, when do you plan to bring them home?”

“Not yet,” He replies. And then softly, with a look of yearning sadness, “Not yet.”

“Didn’t you plan to go for them long before this?”

“Yes.” His sadness seems to deepen.

There is another silence, and then—

“Master, you know there is a housing shortage down there. Many have no homes. There is a continual clamor to find them. And those that do have them seem to be satisfied with earth. But, Master, the loveliest homes down there are only shacks compared to those that you have built.”

There is more silence, and this time it is the Master who breaks it.

“Gabriel, do you see those groups of people in all lands—the ones who are kneeling?”

“Yes, Master.”

“They are My people, Gabriel. They are faithful to Me. They keep my commandments. They love My words. They tell others I am coming back. And they pray, `Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’”

The Master hesitates. Then He continues, “But Gabriel, sometimes when My people feel that I am about to come for them, I detect a worried look on their faces, as if—”

The Master cannot say what is in His heart. But Gabriel knows, and turns his face. He has no answer for his Lord.

A few moments pass and the angel turns again, his face expressing the love and admiration that are in his heart.

“Jesus,” he says.

And the Savior’s face seems to light up as Gabriel addresses Him. He loves to be called by that name which in a special way expresses His mission to a fallen world. “And thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.”

Gabriel pauses an instant, as he looks at the nailprints in the Savior’s hands. Then, clasping both wounded hands in his own, he continues:

“Jesus, you gave so much for them.” He says no more, for even an angel cannot find words adequate to describe such infinite love.

The tears that a moment ago were stealing down the Master’s cheek, now flow unchecked. His disappointment is so great that its intensity cannot be described. At last, motioning toward the empty mansions about Him, He finds words:

“Gabriel, I’m so anxious for homecoming! I want them to be with Me, here, where I am. Just imagine the times we’re going to have!

Don't They Want to Come Home?

It's hard to wait, Gabriel. It's tough being so far away from My friends. I miss being able to go on walks with them. I miss being able to look into their eyes."

"Gabriel, don't they want to come home?"

Daniel 12:4 "...Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

Isaiah 51:6 "...The heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment..."

Matthew 24:6-7 "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars...These things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Nation will rise against nation, & kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, pestilences, & earthquakes."

Matthew 24:12* "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold"

1 Thessalonians 5:3 "When they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."

John 14:1-3 Please see beginning of lesson 8.

Isaiah 25:8 "He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken."

Isaiah 35:4-10 "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, & the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. The lame shall leap like a deer, the tongue of the dumb sing...They shall obtain joy & gladness, & sorrow & sighing shall flee away

Matthew 6:20-21 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Revelation 7:16-17 "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; the Lamb...will shepherd them & lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear."

Revelation 21:3-4 "God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Matthew 26:63-64* "But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'"

Matthew 24:27 & 30* "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (30) At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him."

Luke 21:27 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Acts 1:11* "...This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

2 Peter 3:10-12 "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, & the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

Jude 1:14 "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,

Revelation 1:7 "He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him."

Matthew 7:21-23 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Don't They Want to Come Home?

Luke 13:24-30* “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’

“But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

“Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

“But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

Matthew 25:1-12* - “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

** New International Version*