

April 24, 2005 by Steve Brandon



The Coming of the Son of Man

Matthew 24:23-31

The Coming of the Son of Man ...

1. Will be Public (verses 23-28)
2. Will be Powerful (verse 29)
3. Will be Purposeful (verses 30-31)

In this last century, C. S. Lewis wrote a series of books called "The Chronicles of Narnia." In them, he describes various aspects of this world and of the Christian life. The last book in this series is entitled, "The Last Battle." Appropriately, this book describes what things will be like toward the end of the world. The opening scene of this book has a talking Ape, named Shift, talking to his donkey friend, named Puzzle. As these two are talking with one another, you quickly discern that Shift is a wicked ape, and that Puzzle is a gullible donkey. With his clever words and crafty speech, Shift manipulates Puzzle to the point that the donkey actually functions as his slave.

One day, Shift and Puzzle were beside a river and noticed a yellow object floating down the river. After they fished it out of the river, they discerned that it was a lion's skin. Shift coerced Puzzle to wear it as a sort of coat. Once this donkey had put on the lion's skin, Shift said to Puzzle, "You look wonderful, wonderful. ... If anyone saw you now, they'd think you were Aslan, the Great Lion, himself." At such a thought, Puzzle said, "That would be dreadful." "No it wouldn't," said Shift. "Everyone would do whatever you told them." (p. 9).

As the story goes on, Shift, the ape, tells everyone around that Aslan has returned to Narnia, and that Aslan has appointed Shift to be his spokesman. In order to convince the other animals in Narnia that Aslan had indeed returned, on occasion, Shift would let Puzzle out late at night from a distance of all the other animals, so that they might get just a small glimpse of the donkey dressed in a lion's skin. It was enough to fool many in Narnia that Aslan had indeed returned. But as the story goes on, the orders that were coming from Shift, the ape, which were supposedly the instructions of Aslan, Himself, were unlike anything that Aslan would ever have done.

For instance, Shift was demanding from the squirrels that they bring some nuts to Aslan. Here is what he said, "I want -- I mean, Aslan wants -- some more nuts. These you've brought aren't anything near enough. You must bring some more, do you hear? Twice as many. And they got to be here by sunset tomorrow, and there mustn't be any bad ones or any small ones among them" (p. 27). When the squirrels thought this a bit improper as it was depleting their storehouse that they had worked so long to accumulate, they requested to speak with Aslan, Himself, Shift refused. Shift said, "He may be very kind ... and come out for a few minutes to-night. Then you can all have a look at him. But he will not have you all crowding round him and pestering him with questions. Anything you want to say to him will be passed on through me: if I think it's worth bothering him about. In the meantime all you squirrels had better go and see about the nuts. And make sure they are here by tomorrow evening, or my word! you'll catch it." (pp. 27-28).

Such behavior was causing distress among the animals of Narnia. Though it didn't quite seem right that Aslan would insist upon such things, as gathering nuts, they had convinced themselves that they had indeed seen Aslan, late at night from a distance. And so, they blindly followed this talking ape, supposing that he was indeed speaking on behalf of Aslan.

This story illustrates our text this morning. Jesus warned His disciples of the false Christs that would arise and deceive many.

Matthew 24:23-28

Then if anyone says to you, "Behold, here is the Christ," or "There He is," do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. If therefore they say to you, "Behold, He is in the wilderness," do not go forth, or, "Behold, He is in the inner rooms," do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The title of my message this morning is, "The Coming of the Son of Man." My first point is that it ...

1. Will be Public (verses 23-28)

When Christ comes back, He isn't going to make his appearance off in the distance someplace in some shadowy form, as Puzzle did. No. When Christ comes back, there will be no doubt of His return.

When you hold a party, you need to send out invitations to let others know that they are invited. They need to know when the party will be and where the party will be located. But Christ doesn't need to send out any invitations to His ultimate party. Nobody will need to tell you "Behold, here is the Christ" (verse 23). Nobody will need to tell you "There is [the Christ]!" (verse 23). If somebody tells you these things, don't believe him. When Jesus returns, he won't be hiding out in some back room someplace (verse 26). When Jesus comes again, He won't be making only faint appearances. When Jesus returns, it will be clear to all. There will be no mistaking it. As Revelation 1:7 says, "every eye will see Him" (Rev. 1:7).

This is the thrust of verses 27-28, "For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

You know what a thunderstorm is like. The sun has gone down and it is late at night. It has been raining hard for a few hours. The storm has knocked the power out. It's so dark outside and you can barely see a thing. And then, all of a sudden, the lightening flashes and gives a flickering light outside for a few seconds. During those moments, you are able to see again, almost as if it is the day time. And a few seconds later comes the loud crash of thunder! Ccchhhrrrrrr--brrrrrrrrhhhhrrrrrr.

When you think of the return of Christ, you ought to think about lightening, which illumines all around! This is the sense of verse 28, "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather." Somehow, someway, the birds of prey find the carcass. In today's language, we might say it this way, "Wherever the road kill is, there the crows are sure to gather!" "Wherever the living are, the Lord will make Himself known."

I have seen pictures attempting to represent this phenomenon. In them, lightening comes from outer space and comes upon the earth. All around its surface is this bright glare of the lightening bolt. It's a good picture for you to keep in your mind. For, such will be the "Coming of the Son of Man." When Jesus returns, it won't be a secret. When Jesus returns, all the world will know!

However, until He comes again, others will come, claiming to be the Christ. And as verse 24 says, these "false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders." I believe that the signs that these false prophets and false Christs will do will be quite convincing. Many will be misled by their deception, as verse 4 said. But, when you compare the signs and wonders that some of the false Christs will perform with the miraculous appearance of Jesus, Himself, all around the globe as a flash of lightening, there is no comparison.

It's a bit like the magicians in the days of Moses. Through their cunning deception, they could turn a staff into a serpent (Ex. 7:9). They could turn water into blood (Ex. 7:22). They were able to pull frogs from their hats like magicians do today with rabbits (Ex. 8:7). But none of the other miracles could they duplicate. They couldn't produce gnats (Ex. 8:18) or swarming insects (Ex. 8:21). They couldn't produce pestilence on livestock, boils, or hail (Ex. 9), or any of the other miraculous things that the LORD had done through Moses and Aaron (Ex. 10). The power of the LORD compared with the power of these magicians was no comparison. So will be the return of Jesus to earth.

Sadly, many will be deceived (verse 5) in that day. People will follow after the magician who works his wonders using slight of hand. But, the assurance that we have in verse 24 is that the elect won't be deceived. Jesus said that they will "mislead, if possible, even the elect" (verse 24). The implication of this verse is that it's not possible to deceive the elect in these things. It is the elect who have seen and have known Christ and know what His return will be like. They won't accept any imitations.

I was recently in a meeting with a friend. We were enjoying our sack lunches together. As I pulled out a bottle of water to drink, he offered me a little pouch of flavoring that contained about a teaspoon of powder. (I believe that it was the new Splenda sweetener that has recently come on the market.) He told me to pour into my bottle of water and shake it up. Without adding any calories, it would add some sweetness to the drink. I poured it into my water, shook my bottle, and tasted it. I wasn't impressed. I've tasted sugar. And I found that this imitation sweetener was a poor substitute. Such is the case with the elect, who have known and tasted of the genuine character of Christ. They know of His incredible power and have willingly submitted themselves to Him. They have experienced of His incredible kindness. When one comes along with a few small miracles claiming to be the Christ, they know it's fake. When they meet one claiming to be a great prophet, without the kindness of Christ, they know it's not right.

"The Coming of the Son of Man ..."
2. Will be Powerful (verse 29)

In verse 29, we see of the incredible power that Jesus will display when He returns. Jesus says, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." In this verse there are four phrases worthy of our meditation.

(1) Jesus said that "the sun will be darkened" (verse 29). I don't believe that this will be an eclipse. I don't believe that this will take place when the sun burns up all of its energy, which would take place some billion years from now, should we last that long. I believe that Jesus will quench the light of the sun, much like we blow out a flickering candle.

(2) Jesus said that "the moon will not give its light" (verse 29). We know that the moon is a reflector. When the source of a reflector is gone, the reflector is dark. So will the moon be dark.

(3) Jesus said that "the stars will fall from the sky" (verse 29). I don't know how they will fall. Perhaps they will shoot across the sky and appear to fall upon the horizon. But in their falling, it also means that they will fail in giving forth their light as well. I believe that Jesus will quench all of them, like He will the sun. Pictures someone's birthday when they get to be middle aged. Upon the birthday cake are 30, 40, perhaps 50 candles that can be blown out with a single breath. Jesus can blow out trillions and trillions of stars, spanning the entire solar system, each of which is putting forth a massive amount of energy, in one breath.

The magnitude of this short phrase, "the stars will fall from the sky" is unbelievable. And yet, it's like the creation account, when we read, "God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also" (Gen. 1:16), almost as if the stars were an after thought! It's similar here: "He will quench the light of the sun. He will quench the light of the moon. And the stars also" (paraphrase of verse 29). Do you see the power of Christ's return?

(4) Jesus also said that "the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (verse 29). You can only imagine what will take place on earth in those days. But the turmoil will be far more than simply on the earth. It will spread to the entire universe, reaching even to the heavenly host. If you talk about the sun and all of the stars growing dark, you know that something big is happening. It is understandable that the universe is

shaken to its core!

Now, many commentators will take these events as figurative, rather than literal. They will often point back to the many places in the Old Testament where similar language is given Isaiah 13:10, "For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light." Joel 2:29, "The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes."

As I went back to read these passages again this week, I was open to understanding them figuratively, as if they described merely the destruction of kings and rulers and authorities. I found that some may have this in mind, such as Ezek. 32:7, which talks about Pharaoh being extinguished, or Haggai 2:21, which talks about "shaking the heavens and the earth" and bringing down thrones and powers" to place Zerubbabel in power. But when I read others in their context, I came away with an understanding of the Lord destroying this whole world in His wrath and in His vengeance. For instance, Isaiah 34 speaks of God coming to pour out His wrath upon the entire world, as it says in verse 2, "The LORD's indignation is against all the nations." In verse 4, we read, "all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll."

The day that Jesus is talking about here is a climactic day. It is a day of demonstrating His "power and great glory" as He rescues His godly ones from all over the earth. It's not localized to any one power. Jesus is talking about returning as the sovereign King over the entire earth, which is demonstrated in verse 30, "all the tribes of the earth" seeing these things..

I simply don't believe that these things are describing the falling of leaders from power. I believe that Jesus is describing the cosmic disturbance that comes alongside His return to earth. When He comes there will be the darkening of the sun and the disappearance of the stars! It's not too unreasonable to conclude this. Peter told us that a day is coming when the present heavens and present earth will be destroyed by fire in the "day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:7). In Revelation 21, we are told of "a new heaven and a new earth" because "the first heaven and the first earth passed away" (Rev. 21:1). The "first heaven" is the sky that you see! The "first earth" is the terra firma upon which we stand! John said that they will pass away someday. I believe that verse 29 is talking about that day!

Now, this brings up another question. What about the word, "immediately" (in verse 29)? Jesus said that these things would take place "immediately after the tribulation of those days." For the past several weeks, I have been giving you a history lesson of how I believe that all of these verses have been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. But, I don't believe that verse 29 has yet to be fulfilled. I didn't find anything in Josephus this week that would lead me to believe that these things took place.

This word, "immediately" ought to cause you to realize that prophecy is difficult. Kent Hughes, pastor of College Church in Wheaton once said, "We have yet to find a scholar to unravel the knotty problems in the Olivet Discourse. It is difficult." [1](#)

A few weeks ago, I told you that prophesy is a bit like a tangled piece of yarn with several colors. Some speak about the near future. Some speak about the far future. Some speak about both. At this point in Jesus' teaching, we see the yarn changing from one color to another. He was talking about 70 A. D., but now He's talking about His final coming in the distant future. But as He does, it causes us to reflect back upon the tribulation He talked about in verses 21-22. And so, we have a sense where these things took place, ... but will also take place in the future.

This is how I understand the word, "immediately." These things that were fulfilled in the past will be experienced again in the future. Tribulation is coming. And just after that tribulation, cosmic disturbances will take place in the heavens. The sun, moon, and stars will all become dark. And then, ... verse 30.

"The Coming of the Son of Man ..."
3. Will be Purposeful (verses 30-31)

Matthew 24:30-31

and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

These are two of the most glorious verses in all of the Bible! They are filled with purpose. When Jesus comes again, it will be to rule and to reign. It won't be some hidden reign. It will be out in the open for all to see. When Jesus comes again, He will destroy those who have rebelled against His reign, and He will gather those who have submitted to His reign.

In the last half of verse 30, Jesus was referring to Daniel 7:13, in which Daniel refers to the day in which Jesus is given a kingdom forever. Here is what Daniel wrote,

Daniel 7:13-14

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

When Jesus says that He will appear again on the clouds, coming "with power and great glory," He is saying that He is the sovereign one to whom the world will give an account! There are many today who simply don't believe the words of Jesus. "Sure," they say, "He existed." "Sure," they say, "He was a fine teacher." "Sure," they say, "He did many good things." "But He is like anybody else! He certainly wasn't God.

I'm not accountable to Him. He certainly won't return." There will be a day in which Jesus will prove these people wrong! When Jesus comes, all will know that it is Him! The "sign of the Son of Man will appear[ing] in the sky" will convince them.

We don't know what exactly this "sign" is. Some have said that a giant cross will be formed in the sky for all to see. I don't believe that's quite what Jesus was talking about. Others say that this is the "supreme sign." Throughout the ministry of Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees were constantly asking Him "to show them a sign" (Matt. 12:38; 16:1). But, Jesus constantly refused, saying that "an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign" Matt. 16:4). But, here, they claim is the "supreme sign." I'm not sure that this is quite right either.

I believe that these words are simply referring to the visible and clear presence of Jesus in the whole world. Wherever anybody is, they will look to the heavens and will know that it is Jesus who has returned. He said in verse 27 that His coming would be "from the east to the west" just light lightening. Nobody is going to be in the dark. All will understand that something incredible is happening. All will understand that it is Jesus who is coming back.

The sense of things in verse 30 is that the return of Jesus isn't a blessed reality for many. Jesus said that "all the tribes of the earth will mourn" (verse 30). It's probably not mourning in repentance. It is probably mourning in despair. ²For some, life will be terrible in the day that Jesus returns. Listen to Revelation 6:12-17,

Revelation 6:12-17

And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

Things are so bad that people want to die by being crushed to death. Because, they realized that nobody can stand before the wrath of God. That's what's taking place in verse 30.

But, there are some that will escape the wrath of God. They are called "His elect." They are mentioned several times in this context (verses 22, 24, 31). These are the ones upon whom God has chosen to bestow the blessings of eternal salvation by the sheer pleasure of His grace. The Lord will protect those who are His. In verse 31 we read, "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

I believe that Jesus is speaking here about the rapture of the church. It's the time when the church is "caught up together ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). Christ is coming down for judgment, but "His elect" are being taken out of the world before the world is destroyed. The good news is that "God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:8). The language here in verse 31 is consistent with much New Testament language concerning the coming of Christ. The angels are the reapers, just as Jesus said in Matthew 13:41. A trumpet will be blown, just as Paul said in several places (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52).

Verse 31 is a rescuing verse. The angels don't gather the elect to see them destroyed. The angels gather the elect to preserve them alive. Verse 30 is a condemning verse. "All the tribes of the earth will mourn." On that day, when Jesus returns, everyone on the planet will be forced to deal with Jesus, Himself. Some will have to deal with Jesus as He is in His glory and power in condemnation (verse 30). The others will be rescued alive as they are gathered to Him by the angels (verse 31). These will know of His love and grace and kindness.

This is the great reality of all life. You have a meeting scheduled. You don't know when it will be. You don't know where it will be. But you have a scheduled meeting with Jesus Christ to account for your life. Those who are gathered by the angels to be with Jesus "shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). Those who are left on the earth will be destroyed by His wrath, physically by death and spiritually in hell forever.

Where do you want to be on that day? I want to meet Jesus in the clouds. I don't want to be left on the earth. It is how you respond today that determines where you will be on that day. If Christ has become your refuge and you are trusting in the cross alone for your salvation, then you will be forgiven and will live with Jesus forever. But, if you have rejected Christ and your life obviously demonstrates that fact, then you will be left on the earth to suffer for a season, and then be sent to hell forever.

These are glorious words. And yet, these are sobering words. As a believer in Christ, there is no need to fear the second coming of the Son of Man. When He comes, He has a purpose: to rescue and to destroy. If the military is on your side, it is a joy to see men wearing fatigues and carrying machine guns. It is a joy to see the tanks roll into town. But, if you are fighting against the military, it is a day of dread when you see these very same things.

The believer loves His appearing, because He loves the king! "In the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). Do you long for (and love) His appearing? When Christ comes back, He will gather those who "have loved His appearing!" This is what the rest of Matthew 24-25 is all about. For the next five or six weeks, we will be thinking about the return of Christ to this earth. My desire for these times is that such thinking would transform our thoughts and our lives!

Are there days in your life that you have looked forward to with eager anticipation? Perhaps your birthday or anniversary, when you are planning on taking a day off of work to spend it with your family. Perhaps a musical performance or sporting event. Perhaps you are awaiting the day you will receive a special package in the mail (as was the case for our children this week). Perhaps a vacation this summer is

something for which you are counting down the days.

As a family, we will be spending a week up in Michigan at Gitche Gumee Bible Camp, as we did last year. I remember coming home one year from the camp, and our daughter was so excited about going again next year that she packed her suitcase for next year, shortly after arriving at home. That's what it means to "eagerly long" for something.

I remember in college eagerly longing for a day to come. For my undergraduate work, I attended Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. One of the long-standing traditions at Knox is the celebration of "Flunk Day," which takes place one day each spring. My guess is that this has been taking place for some 50 years. The idea is that you should take a day in the semester when you simply decide that you will "flunk." People will often call this "senior skip day." However, it's more than you alone. It's more than the seniors alone. It's the entire college, faculty and all!

On that day, all classes are cancelled. All scheduled activities are cancelled. And it's a party! It goes all day long! Those who plan the party will often bring in various things for entertainment. There are often movies that play throughout the day. Lunch and dinner are special outdoor bar-b-cues. There are often carnival activities. I remember one year, a Ferris wheel being brought to campus. They organized big tug of war matches across mud-pits. They organized giant water fights. They have had inflatable swimming pools brought in that are filled with soapy suds. I remember loud music. All day long, you greet your fellow students by saying "Happy Flunk Day!" to them.

But the catch is this. You don't know when it will be Flunk Day. It's planned by only a handful of students. They set the agenda. They plan the party. Nobody else knows when it will be, not even the president of the college. What's more is that you don't even know who the students planning Flunk Day are. It's all very secretive.

Now, Flunk Day would always start at 4 o'clock in the morning. People, who we called "friars" would begin running around campus outside at 4am, blowing whistles and yelling at the top of their lungs, "Flunk Day." The bell in the tower of Old Main would begin to ring. Schedules are handed out for the day, listing all of the activities of the day. Big banners are put up. It was this massive party that went from 4am until late at night.

Now I want for you to think about what this did to us students. During the entire Spring semester, a legitimate conversation starter was "So, when do you think that Flunk Day will be?" I remember at times, people studying the school calendars that were put out. They looked at the athletic calendars. They looked at the theatre schedules. They looked at the schedules of other special events, all trying to figure out which days the "friars" had selected as target days for Flunk Day. This was a bit tricky, because special events were easily cancelled. I remember one time a political science professor was flown across the country to lecture on a certain topic one certain. But low and behold, it was Flunk Day. Needless to say, this professor didn't deliver his lecture, because everything is cancelled on Flunk Day.

On several occasions, I remember some students, who thought that they figured out when Flunk Day was. The night before, they started to party. They didn't do their homework. They sat around, listened to music, played cards, and enjoyed their alcoholic beverages. Only to find out that it wasn't Flunk Day. Boy were they disappointed when they found out that they actually had class on that day (though, as I remember, they didn't attend class the next day as they were in no condition to pay attention).

I remember doing some studying and thinking about the possibilities of having Flunk Day the next day. I remember waking up around 4am, thinking that I would hear those magic whistles and the bell tower ringing. But they never came and I was a bit disappointed to attend class the next day.

I remember on several occasions having a Flunk Day scare. Some students ran around campus at 4am, blowing whistles and yelling "Flunk Day! Flunk Day!" Quite a few people got up, thinking that it was Flunk Day, but it soon became obvious that it wasn't Flunk Day. Nobody knew what was going on. There weren't any schedules or big signs someplace saying "Happy Flunk Day." The bell on Old Main wasn't ringing. And so, everybody went back to bed when they figured out that it was a hoax.

I remember one year, the "friars" decided to begin Flunk Day at 5am, rather than the customary 4am. It was late in the semester and there weren't any other days that could possibly be Flunk Day. And so, many people had anticipated it and were up at 4am. But, when there were no whistles and no activities, things died down, ... until 5am, when the festivities began in earnest.

I tell you that story for several reasons. First, I received an email on Monday this past week from Knox College Alumni Relations. It said, "Happy Flunk Day! Yes, it's Flunk Day 2005 ... music is streaming from windows and balconies across campus, and students are outside enjoying this beautiful April morning. We hope you can get away from the daily grind, go outside, celebrate Spring and enjoy your own special Flunk Day. If not, take a mental break for a few minutes and reminisce about Flunk Days of the past." It was a perfect day for Flunk Day, with the temperature breaking 80 degrees.

But secondly, it's a good illustration of what it is like to "eagerly long" for a coming day. Our longing for the return of Christ ought to far exceed the longing of a few college students for Flunk Day.

When you think about the return of Christ, which will be public (verses 23-28), powerful (verse 29), and purposeful (verses 30-31), Does it stir your soul? Do you look forward to this day? Do you long for this day?

The return of Christ upon earth is called "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). The Bible tells us that the true citizenship of any believer is not here upon the earth, but in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Those who trust Christ have "a better and an abiding" possession awaiting them in heaven (Heb. 10:34). Paul said that there is a "glory" to be revealed that far exceeds any difficulties of suffering that we might experience here upon the earth (Rom. 8:18). When Christ comes back, He will take us home to a better place!

Have you ever reached the point where you wanted Jesus to return today? In recent days, I have longed to see Him return and to enjoy the rest that He has prepared for me. One of the characteristics of believers in Christ is that they "eagerly await" for His return (Phil. 3:20).

Hebrews 9:28 says that Christ "shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." If you aren't eagerly awaiting His return, you need to examine your life. The angels will gather those who are eagerly awaiting Him.

If you aren't "eagerly awaiting His return" perhaps you love this present world too much. The Bible tells us that "if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:16). But when you don't love the world, your heart will be set upon the things above and you will "eagerly await" His return. Please evaluate your heart this morning.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 24, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Kent Hughes said this while preaching on Mark 13 at College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, on May 28, 1988.

[2] D. A. Carson, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Matthew, p. 505.