

# The second coming of Christ

**Deltacourse**

*A discipleship training to equip Christians for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-16)*

# 30

## QUIET TIME

**Theme: The second coming of Christ**

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understood.

Day 1<sup>BS</sup> Matthew 24:1-14  
The first sign before the second coming (the long period of proclamation).

Day 2<sup>BS</sup> Matthew 24:15-28  
The second sign before the second coming (the short period of tribulation).

Day 3<sup>BS</sup> Matthew 24:29-41  
The third sign is the second coming of Jesus Christ himself

Day 4 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12  
The apostasy of unbelievers and the last antichrist before the second coming

Day 5 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:4  
The day of the second coming

Day 6 2 Peter 3:1-14  
The second coming, the last judgment and the renewal of all things

Day 7 Matthew 25:31-46  
The last judgment

Day 8 Revelation 14:6-13  
Announcement of the last judgment

Day 9 Revelation 20:1-15  
The thousand year period, the final battle and the last judgment

Day 10 Revelation 21:1 – 22:5  
The new heaven and the new earth

- Think about Philippians 4:6-7.  
Always make your wishes known to God.
- Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

## STUDY

**Theme: The second coming of Jesus Christ**

Read study 30 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

## BIBLE STUDY

**Theme: The second coming of Jesus Christ**

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **Matthew 24:1-44**

## MEMORISATION

### 1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

### 2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

### THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

**Matthew 24:14**

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

**Matthew 24:14** (NIV)

### 3. Review and back-review

*Review* the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

## 30. The second coming of Jesus Christ

In his teachings and in his parables Jesus Christ makes clear that the kingdom of God has come with his first coming (Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 12:28-29). The kingdom is a spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36). The kingdom grows continually (Mark 4:26-32) and receives its final perfect phase at his second coming (Matthew 13:36-43). But when and how does Jesus Christ return?

### A. The signs of Christ's return

#### 1. Jesus speaks about 'the last things' (Matthew 24:1-3)

The disciples put two questions to Jesus about the last things that will happen in human history: "When will the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem take place?" (Matthew 24:1-3a) and "From which sign will we recognise your return *and* the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3b). The disciples thought that Jerusalem would be destroyed at the end of the age (i.e. the end of human history in this present world). However Jesus' prophetic answers on the one hand point to events that will happen in the near future (the tribulation of Jerusalem) and on the other hand to events that will happen in the end time (the great tribulation before the second coming).

Jesus' answer to the disciples' first question is stated in Matthew 24:15-20 (*Read* it) (cf. Luke 21:7,20-24a). He speaks of the great tribulation of Jerusalem, which took place in 70 A.D. This tribulation of Judea foreshadows other great tribulations that would come during the future history of the world (*Read* Matthew 24:4-14). It serves as an illustration of the ultimate catastrophe that will come over the world in the end time! Compare the many 'shadows' in the Old Testament that pointed to the 'realities' in the New Testament (Colossians 2:17).

The word 'and' in the disciples' second question means 'namely' (or 'that is'). Thus, 'the end of this age' will take place at 'the second coming of Jesus Christ'! There will not be another period of 1000 years between these two events!

Jesus' answer to the disciples' second question is stated in Matthew 24:21-31 (*Read* it). He speaks of 'the final great tribulation' shortly before his second coming (Matthew 24:21-29a). It will be the worse tribulation of all times as well as the close of all previous periods of tribulation (Matthew 24:4-14). In his teaching Jesus weaves these two tribulations together.

#### 2. There will be many signs (Matthew 24:4-14)

Before the second coming of Jesus Christ there will be many signs that point to the fact that this present world is coming to an end: false Christians, false prophets from

other religions, wars, hunger, earthquakes, oppression of genuine Christians, apostasy of nominal Christians (the emptying of churches), the contempt for God's commandments and the growing cold of love. All these signs accompany the proclamation of the gospel to all the nations in the world (vs. 14; cf. Matthew 4:23; Acts 20:24-25). These events must happen, but they do not signify *the end* (vs. 6). They are merely "*the beginning of birth pains*" (vs. 8). These events will happen from "the destruction of Jerusalem" in 70 A.D. "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:20,24b), that is, from the first coming of Jesus Christ to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

#### 3. There will be three very clear signs (Matthew 24:14,21-31)

There will first be *a very long period of proclaiming the gospel* of the kingdom as a testimony to all the nations (Matthew 24:14).

This will be followed by *a very short period of great tribulation*. This will be the final tribulation under the final antichrist (Matthew 24:21-29a).

Finally there will be *the sudden, unexpected and awe-inspiring return of Jesus Christ* on the clouds (Matthew 24:29b-31). This is 'the sign' of the end of the world and its history (Matthew 24:3). The first two signs cannot be used to calculate the time of the second coming (verse 36,42). The third sign will be sudden and unexpected for everyone!

### B. The very long period

#### 1. At the beginning of the very long period Satan is bound for a symbolic 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-6)

At his first coming Jesus Christ came with the purpose 'to destroy' the devil's works (1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14). Through his completed work of salvation by his death and resurrection Jesus Christ 'bound' the strong man. He curtailed, curbed and severely limited Satan's powers to do evil (Matthew 12:29). Through his death he 'disarmed and triumphed over' the demonic powers and worldly authorities (Colossians 2:15). Jesus Christ proves that he has 'driven Satan out' of his control and power over the world by subsequently drawing people from all over the world to himself (John 12:31-32).

Satan still has lots of power to do evil. He is still the murderer and father of all lies (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4), but "he has been bound in order to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the (symbolic) thousand years were ended" (Revelation 20:2-3).

## 2. During the very long period the gospel is proclaimed as a testimony to all the nations (Matthew 24:14)

Satan will remain bound for a symbolic period of 1000 years (Read Revelation 20:1-7).

Some Christians believe that the 1000 years refers to 'a literal millennial kingdom' after the so-called second phase of the second coming of Christ. They believe that Christ or his representative would rule from Jerusalem over a kingdom of peace in the whole world. Some believe that Jewish missionaries would bring an uncountable number of Gentiles to faith in Christ. Some even believe that the Jewish temple would again be erected and animal sacrifices would again be offered (thus, a return to the Old Testament Law). Others believe that the resurrected Christians would live between not yet resurrected people in the millennial kingdom. All these Christians believe that even this 1000 years reign of Christ on earth would end in a failure!

The belief in a literal millennial kingdom on earth cannot be proved from the Bible!

The number '1000' is here not a literal number, but a symbolic number. The number '3' represents the Triune God (cf. Matthew 28:19). The number '10' represents completeness with respect to people on earth (cf. lesson 19) and the number 10x10x10 (three times ten) represents the absolute completeness determined by the Triune God. Thus, the number '1000' represents the divinely determined period of time that stretches across all generations (cf. Psalm 90:1-4; 105:8) for the completion of God's plan on earth (cf. Isaiah 14:24,26,27).

The number '1000' is symbolic for the period of time from the first coming of Jesus Christ to the second coming of Jesus Christ, because the period *begins* with the binding of Satan (cf. Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:17-20; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:7-12; 20:1-3), which happened at Christ's first coming, and *ends* with the final battle, the resurrection from the dead and the final judgment (Revelation 20:7-15), which will happen at Christ's second coming.

During this symbolic period of time Satan "can no longer deceive the nations", that is, he can no longer keep Jesus Christ (and Christians) from proclaiming the gospel in all the nations in the world. "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then (only) the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). Jesus Christ goes out as Conqueror bent on conquering (Revelation 6:1-2; cf. Matthew 28:18). He 'sows the sons of the kingdom' in the whole world (Matthew 13:37-38). He 'draws all people to himself' (John 12:32; cf. Philippians 2:9-11). He gathers his

wheat into the barn (Matthew 3:12a). In summary, the God of the Bible brings an uncountable number of people from all the nations in the world out of the dominion of Satan into Christ's kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Disciples of Jesus Christ are made in all the nations in the world (Matthew 29:19-20). Thus, Jesus Christ builds his Church and the gates of hell will not be able to overcome it (Matthew 16:18)!

## 3. At the end of the very long period Satan is released (Revelation 20:3b,7)

Shortly before the second coming of Jesus Christ Satan will be released from his position of being 'bound' (curtailed, curbed, limited).

### C. The very short period

Satan's release from being 'bound' is *the beginning* of the very short period at the end of history of this world. Satan will deceive 'the nations' and gather them for the final battle in human history (Revelation 20:7-8). 'The nations' is a symbol for the non-Christians and unbelievers within all the nations (Matthew 24:29). The second coming of Jesus Christ will be *the end* of the very short period.

During this very short period of time, the following events will take place: the reign of the final antichrist, the final great tribulation and the final battle.

#### 1. The reign of the final antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

Satan (the dragon) will stand on the shore of the sea of nations (Revelation 13:1; cf. Daniel 7:2-3). 'The beast' (the final antichrist) will come up from the nations and Satan will give him his power and throne and great authority (Revelation 13:2).

Although many antichrists arise throughout world history (1 John 2:18; 4:3), there will be one final antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3b). During the long period the coming of the antichrist (the man of lawlessness) is being held back by 'something' or 'someone' (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7). Most probably this is a reference to 'the laws' and 'the law enforcers' in the world. When laws are no longer enforced in the world, the final antichrist will be revealed.

The final antichrist will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God and claiming worship for himself (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:3-6). This means that he will invade the organised Christian Church ('God's temple', cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16) and spread his lies there (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). True Christians will continue to oppose him (James 4:7) and will refuse to worship and serve him. But this will lead to the final great tribulation against Christians (Read Revelation 13:11-17).

The antichrist will exercise his evil authority for a symbolic period of 3½ years ('a time, times and half a time', '42 months' or '1260 days'). The number '3½' is not literal, but in the Bible represents 'a period of tribulation' (1 Kings 17:1; Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7; Luke 4:25; James 5:17; Revelation 11:2-3,9,11; 12:6,14; 13:5).

## 2. The final great tribulation of Christians (Matthew 24:21-26)

Although Christians throughout history will experience troubles and tribulations (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 7:14), there will be a final great tribulation (Matthew 24:21-26) at the end of the history of the world.

Some characteristics of 'the last days' are: hypocrisy, carelessness and materialism (Matthew 24:37-39). People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, lovers of evil and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Nominal Christians will abandon the Christian Faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons through hypocritical liars (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Many nominal Christians will turn away from their traditional faith (2 Thessalonians 2:3a).

God will permit the final antichrist to receive power over all countries and all peoples. God will also allow him to make war against Christians and in some sense 'conquer' them (Revelation 13:7-8; cf. Job chapter 1-2). "There will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equalled again" (Matthew 24:22). False Christs and false prophets will appear, perform great signs and miracles in order to try and deceive Christians (Matthew 24:24a).

But genuine Christians need not fear! It is impossible to deceive genuine Christians (Matthew 24:24b)! Christians will overcome this evil world because they have been born-again and believe (1 John 5:4). They will stand firm to the end (Matthew 24:13)! God, who *began* a good work in them, will carry it on and perfectly *complete* it at Christ's second coming (Philippians 1:6)! No one and nothing can snatch genuine Christians out of the hand of Jesus Christ (John 10:28-30)! No one and nothing can separate them from God's love for them (Romans 8:37-39)!

The length of the period of the great tribulation is not literally 3½ years, because the number '3½' represents 'a period of tribulation', without specifying its length. Nevertheless, Jesus teaches that the period of tribulation "will be cut short for the sake of the elect" (the Christians) (Matthew 24:22).

## 3. The final battle

At the end of this short period (the great tribulation), Satan will go out to 'the four corners of the earth' (a symbol of the whole earth) to deceive the nations and to gather them for battle against Christians (the saints) (Revelation 20:7-9a). The final battle is also depicted in other Bible passages (Revelation 16:12-16; 17:14; 19:17-19). The Bible does not refer to specific nations, because 'the nations' is a symbol for non-Christians out of all people groups who have become enemies of Christ and Christians (Matthew 24:9).

The second coming of Jesus brings this final battle to an end (Revelation 19:11-16,20-21; 20:9b-10).

## D. The sudden appearance of Jesus Christ

### 1. There will be only one second coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:27-31)

Some Christians believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ would take place *in two phases*: The first phase of Christ's second coming would be the so-called 'coming' (Greek: *parousia*) of Christ *for* the Christians' before or in the middle of the final great tribulation. They believe that this so-called 'rapture' of believers or of the Church would be imminent and secret (invisible, inaudible). They say that suddenly all Christians would disappear from the earth! They base their theory on a wrong understanding of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Matthew 24:40-41. They say that Christians would be saved from the great tribulation, while non-Christians would have to go through the great tribulation. The second phase of Christ's second coming would be the so-called 'appearance' (Greek: *apokalupsis*) of Christ *with* the saints' at the end of the final great tribulation, just before the establishment of the so-called millennial kingdom on earth.

The belief in two second comings of Christ cannot be proved from the Bible!

However, with both Jesus and Paul the words 'coming' (Greek: *parousia*) (Matthew 24:39; 2 Thessalonians 2:1) and 'appearance' (Greek: *apokalupsis*) (Luke 17:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:7) are interchangeable!

Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:3-31), Paul (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2:1-8), Peter (2 Peter 3:3-13; cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7) and John (Revelation 13:5-10,15-18; 14:14-19) unanimously teach that all Christians living at that time must pass through the final great tribulation before the one and only second coming of Jesus Christ!

In the parables (Matthew 13:36-43; 25:10-13; 25:19) and in all the teaching passages of the Bible (Matthew 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31-32) the second coming of Jesus Christ is a single and all-encompassing (all-enfolding) event!

## 2. Christ's second coming will be sudden, unexpected, visible and audible to all people

The second coming will be sudden and unexpected "as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2; Acts 1:7). No one knows or can predict the day or hour (Matthew 24:36,42). The unbelievers will not be ready when Christ returns (Matthew 24:37-41). The Christians ought to be ready. Nevertheless, Christ will return when also they do not expect it (Matthew 24:43-44)!

The second coming of Jesus Christ will be visible as the lightning and audible as a loud trumpet call (Matthew 24:27-28,31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). All people on earth will *see* Jesus Christ coming on the clouds of the sky (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7) and *hear* the loud command and trumpet call.

Christ's second coming will be accompanied by great signs: there will be a great earthquake that removes mountains and islands and the sky and bodies in the universe will recede (Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12-17). With fire coming down from heaven Christ will end the final battle of Satan and his allies against Christians and throw them all into hell (Revelation 19:20-21; 20:9b-10).

## 3. Five events will happen on the day of Christ's one and only second coming:

(1) the resurrection from all the dead, (2) the transformation of the living, (3) the welcoming of Jesus Christ (4) the final judgment (5) and the renewal of all things.

### E. The resurrection from all the dead

#### 1. Christians who have already died will be resurrected

Some Christians believe that there will be at least *two physical resurrections from the dead*, separated by at least 1000 years. They base their theory on a wrong understanding of Revelation 20:4-6, which speaks of 'the first resurrection' and 'the second death'.

The belief in two (or even more) physical resurrections from the dead cannot be proved from the Bible!

The Bible teaches only one physical resurrection of *all the dead* (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:12-13). The resurrection of the bodies of Christians will take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52).

1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians only speak about the resurrection of Christians, not about non-Christians. But this does not mean that non-Christians are not resurrected together with the Christians.

Revelation 20:5 speaks about 'the first resurrection' and 'the second death'. This does not refer to a physical

resurrection or a physical death. They are *symbols of literal realities* that surpass the mere literal meaning of the terms.

The implied 'first death' is the death of *the bodies* of both Christians and non-Christians, whereby their spirits are separated from their bodies (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The 'first resurrection' is the resurrection or translation into heaven of *the spirits (souls)*, Revelation 20:4) of only Christians after the death of their bodies (Luke 16:22; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 1:23).

The implied 'second resurrection' is the resurrection of *the bodies* of both Christians and non-Christians at the second coming of Jesus Christ (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

And the 'second death' (Revelation 20:6,14; 21:8) is the casting of *the spirits* (Luke 16:23) *and the bodies* (Matthew 10:28) of only non-Christians into hell after the final judgment.

Before the second coming of Christ all people will die physically, but Christians will be translated and received into heaven (Matthew 25:34). At the second coming of Christ all people will be resurrected physically, but only non-Christians will be cast into hell (Matthew 25:41).

### F. The transformation of the living

At the second coming, when Jesus Christ returns accompanied by the spirits of Christians who had died before his second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:14; cf. Hebrews 12:23), he will command the bodies of all Christians and non-Christians to rise from the dead. All the dead will hear his voice and will come out of their graves together (Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:13). "The perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:53a). Their resurrected bodies will be re-united to their spirits. Those who have done good (the Christians) (cf. John 6:29) will rise to live forever and those who have done evil (the non-Christians) (cf. John 3:18,36) will rise to be condemned forever (John 5:28-29; cf. Matthew 25:46).

The mortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) and imperfect spirits (cf. Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4) of Christians who are still alive when Jesus Christ returns will be changed in a flash. "The mortal must clothe itself with immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53b).

The resurrected bodies of former dead Christians and the transformed bodies of still living Christians will be like the glorious resurrected body of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20-21)! The resurrected body will be imperishable (cf. Revelation 21:4), glorious, powerful and spiritual, that is, a life-giving spirit bearing the perfect likeness of Jesus Christ (i.e. completely possessed and controlled by the Holy Spirit) (1 Corinthians 15:42-50). The resurrected body is called 'a building from God', 'an eternal house in

heaven not built by human hands' (thus: the resurrected body is not built by way of human parents), 'a heavenly dwelling that is inhabited' (2 Corinthians 5:1-4)! Also their transformed spirits will be like the human spirit of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:1-3). God has prepared (equipped) Christians for this glorious future and has given them his Holy Spirit as a deposit that guarantees that this will certainly happen (2 Corinthians 5:5)!

## G. The welcoming of Jesus Christ

Some Christians believe in '*the rapture of the Church*' 7 or 3½ years before the second phase of the second coming of Christ. They believe that at the so-called first phase of the second coming of Christ, all Christians (the Church) would be caught up into the clouds and return with Christ to heaven. All Christians would then celebrate the wedding of the Lamb in heaven, while the rest of the world would have to pass through the great tribulation on earth! They base this theory on a wrong understanding of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. They believe that the so-called second phase of the second coming of Christ would take place 7 or 3½ years later. They base this theory on a wrong understanding of the number 3½ in the Bible.

The belief in the rapture of the Church before or in the middle of the great tribulation cannot be proved from the Bible.

At the one and only second coming of Jesus Christ, only Christians will welcome him! The resurrected and transformed Christians will be caught up together in the clouds to meet Jesus Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The word 'caught up' means 'to snatch up' or 'to take by force' (John 6:15; 10:28; Jude 1:23; Revelation 12:5). They will be caught up by angels (Matthew 24:31,40a,41a; cf. Luke 16:22). The phrase 'to meet' refers to the custom of people to go out from where they live to welcome an important person and then to return together with him (cf. Acts 28:15; Matthew 25:10). Thus, only the resurrected and transformed Christians will be snatched up by angels into the clouds to meet and welcome Jesus Christ in the air at his second coming! They will welcome him, glorify him and marvel at him (2 Thessalonians 1:10)!

*Later on that same last day* the angels will also gather the non-Christians before Christ's throne of glory in the air (Matthew 24:40b,41b). Thus the angels will gather all the nations before Christ's throne of glory for the one and only final judgment (Matthew 25:32).

Thus, although Christians and non-Christians will be resurrected from the dead simultaneously, Christians will be snatched up into the clouds first in order to welcome and meet Jesus Christ!

## H. The final judgement

### 1. There will be only one final judgement

Some Christians believe that there will be at least *three final judgments* for different groups of people. They base this theory on their other theory of the second coming in two phases and on the different names given to the one final judgment: the final judgment of Christians after they have been caught up (the rapture) to meet Christ and to be judged before Christ's 'judgment seat' (2 Corinthians 5:10), the judgment of all the nations except Israel at the end of the so-called great tribulation period before Christ's 'throne of glory' (Matthew 25:31-32) and the judgment of all unbelievers at the end of the millennial kingdom before 'the great white throne' (Revelation 20:11-12). Thus these three final judgments are separated by 7 and even 1000 years!

The belief in several final judgments cannot be proved from the Bible!

At the one and only second coming of Jesus Christ the one and only last judgement of all people that ever lived in history will take place (Matthew 3:12; 13:30,40-43; 24:39-42; 25:31-32; Luke 17:30,34-35). The one and only resurrection from the dead will be immediately followed by the one and only final judgment (John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:46). The judgment of believers before 'the judgment seat of Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:10), the judgment of all the nations before 'the glorious throne of Christ' (Matthew 25:31-32) and the judgment of all the resurrected dead before 'the great white throne' (Revelation 20:11-12) refers to one and the same final judgment day! Just like the various different names for Jesus Christ do not refer to different persons, likewise the various different names for the final judgment do not refer to several different judgments. In the Bible 'the throne' is depicted in the upper regions (1 Kings 22:19; Daniel 7:9-10; Revelation 4:2; 20:4).

The final judgment of people in the air (in the upper regions) will take place simultaneously with the final judgment and renewal of the universe and the old earth by fire (Matthew 19:28; *Read 2 Peter 3:7-13*).

Whoever has done good will rise to live and whoever has done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:28-29; cf. Matthew 25:46).

### 2. The Christians will be separated from the non-Christians (Matthew 25:32)

After the angels have gathered all the people before the judgment throne of Jesus Christ he will speak the final word. He will publicly reveal everything which Christians and non-Christians have done (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 2:5-8). Everyone will have to give an account of their lives (Hebrews 4:13; cf. Matthew 10:26) and of

their works and whether they belong to Jesus Christ and whether they have lived according to his Word. He will separate the Christians from the non-Christians (Matthew 25:32) and only those whose names have been recorded in the Book of Life, will inherit the kingdom of God in its ultimate phase (the new earth) (Matthew 25:34; Revelation 20:12,15).

### 3. The non-Christians will be publicly sentenced

The people who do not believe in Jesus Christ (the non-Christians and unbelievers) are already condemned on earth before they die! They are condemned for their unbelief (John 3:18,36; cf. Romans 8:1), their neglect to live righteously (Matthew 25:41-46) and their unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 1:6,8; Revelation 21:8).

At their physical death their spirit (soul) is separated from their body and cast into hell (cf. Luke 16:23-26). At the resurrection, their bodies will be resurrected together with the bodies of Christians (John 5:28-29). They will be driven before Christ's judgement throne in the upper regions and publicly sentenced. Their eternal punishment will be publicly announced (Matthew 3:12b). Especially their neglect of doing what is right in God's eyes will be remembered (*Read* Matthew 25:41-46), so that everyone will know that God's judgment has been completely righteous (Luke 12:47-48; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; cf. Revelation 15:3-4). Then they with spirit (soul) and body will be cast into hell (Matthew 10:28; 13:42; Mark 9:47-48; Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:8).

Hell is the place which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). It consists of a separation from God's presence, love and glory (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is an everlasting punishment and torment in the unquenchable fire (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:47-48; Revelation 21:8).

### 4. The Christians will be publicly rewarded

The people who believe in Jesus Christ are already acquitted on earth before they die. They are acquitted because of their faith (Ephesians 1:7-8; Hebrews 10:17-18). By their faith in Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation they have already been completely justified (forgiven) (John 3:18a; Romans 3:22,24; 8:1). They already possess eternal life (John 5:24-25; 10:28; 1 John 5:11-13).

At their physical death their spirit (soul) is separated from their body and translated into heaven (i.e. 'the first resurrection'). At the resurrection, their bodies will be resurrected together with the bodies of non-Christians (John 5:28-29). Then they with their spirit (soul) and their body will be caught up into the clouds to welcome Jesus Christ and to be judged. All their deeds will be made manifest (2 Corinthians 5:10). They will be publicly declared to be perfectly righteous (*Read* Matthew 25:34-40). Especially their good deeds will be

remembered (Matthew 25:35-36), so that everyone will know that God's judgment has been completely righteous. Every Christian will be rewarded according to his deeds (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Genuine Christians will never be condemned (John 5:24; Romans 8:1; Hebrews 10:17-18) and they will never perish (John 10:28). They will receive the kingdom of God in its final phase (Matthew 25:34).

The kingdom of God in its final phase is the heavenly Jerusalem that after the final judgment will descend onto the new earth as the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-2,9-10).

### 5. There will be no more opportunity to repent and be saved

After the second coming of Jesus Christ there will be no more opportunity to repent and to be saved (Matthew 25:10-13; cf. Proverbs 27:1; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2)!

## I. The renewal of all things

### 1. The renewal of all things will take place at the second coming

Some Christians believe that after the second phase of the second coming of Christ there will still follow a long period of literally 1000 years kingdom of peace on the old earth before the renewal of all things. They base this theory on the wrong understanding of Revelation 19:1 to 20:7. They fail to see that Revelation 19:11-21 and Revelation 20:7-15 are parallel accounts of the second coming, the final battle and the final judgement.

The belief in a future literal and earthly 1000 year kingdom of peace cannot be proved from the Bible.

The apostle Peter teaches that the one and only second coming of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:4) will be the day of the final judgment (2 Peter 3:7) and the day of the Lord on which the present creation is destroyed and the new creation is established (2 Peter 3:10-13). Jesus and John teach that the second coming will be accompanied by the shaking of the heavenly bodies and the termination of the functions of the sun, moon and stars (Matthew 24:27-31; Hebrews 12:26) (*Read* Revelation 20:7 – 21:5)! The day of the second coming is the very last day in the history of this world. Jesus teaches that at his second coming the kingdom of God will reach its final and perfect phase (Matthew 25:34).

### 2. The present state of the universe will be terminated

The present creation will be liberated from its frustration and bondage to decay (Romans 8:19-22). Everything above the earth, as the sun, moon and stars, and everything on the earth will be changed (Revelation 6:12-14; 16:17-21; 20:11; 21:1). The elements will be disintegrated by fire and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (i.e. will be found out, exposed by the light) (2 Peter 3:10).

### 3. The creation will be renewed and perfected

The renewal of all things will take place at the second coming of Christ (Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21; cf. Revelation 21:5). Jesus Christ will establish the new heaven (universe with all its stars) and the new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:5; cf. Isaiah 65:17). He will make everything new (Revelation 21:5)!

### 4. The wedding of the Lamb

Throughout the whole New Testament period the Church prepared herself for the wedding with the Lamb (Ephesians 5:25-27). Before the second coming the Church is called 'the heavenly Jerusalem' (Galatians 4:24-27; Hebrews 11:10,13-16; 39-40; 12:22-24; 13:14) (*Read* Isaiah 54:1-5,11-12). It is the people of God whose lives are hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-4). It is the community of people whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). It is the community of Christians that function as prophets, priests and kings on earth (1 Peter 2:9-10).

After the second coming and final judgment of all people, the Church is called 'the New Jerusalem' or 'the Bride of the Lamb'. She descends from the upper regions together with Christ onto the new earth (Revelation 21:1-2,9-10).

Thus the second coming of Christ is completed with 'the wedding of the Lamb' (Revelation 19:7-8). The wedding of the Lamb shows that Revelation 19:7-8 is a parallel account of Revelation 21:1-2,9-10.

The New Jerusalem is a symbol of the complete community of believers from the Old Testament period (Hebrews 11:10,16) and the New Testament period (Hebrews 13:14). It is a symbol of the Church throughout all ages, that is, the Church in the Old Testament (Psalm 107:32) and the New Testament (Matthew 16:18). It is a symbol for the absolute 'full number' of the elect who cannot be deceived (Matthew 24:22,24,31; Romans 8:28-30,33; Romans 11:4-6,25-26).

### 5. Eternity

On the new earth God's covenant (cf. study 6) reaches its perfection! In the Old Testament the covenant is: "I (God) will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people" (Genesis 17:7; Exodus 6:2-7; Leviticus 26:12). This covenant is continued and expanded (enlarged) in the New Testament to include the believers in Jesus Christ coming from all the nations on earth (2 Corinthians 6:16). And this covenant comes to complete fulfilment at the second coming, because the Christians from all the nations in the world will be 'his peoples' (plural) and dwell in his presence (Revelation 21:3).

On the new earth all people will be completely perfect! There will be no more tears, death, mourning, crying or pain. Everything will be made new (Revelation 21:4-5). The new earth will blossom and bear abundant fruit (Revelation 22:1-2). The wild animals will be tame and live in peace with the domestic animals. No one will harm another (Isaiah 11:6-9). The new earth will be a place where only righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13)!

On the new earth the kingdom of God will reach completion and perfection (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Revelation 11:15-18)! Jesus Christ will be made subject to God the Father who put everything under him so that God may be all in all, that is, so that God may rule directly over all and everything (1 Corinthians 15:28). This means that the work of Jesus Christ as Mediator between man and God will then be completed. The different tasks of God the Father and God the Son will then come to an end (Revelation 11:15; 21:22; 21:23; 22:1,3). But the kingship of Jesus Christ will continue forever (1 Chronicles 17:12b,14; Isaiah 9:6; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15). 'The throne of God and the Lamb' will remain forever (Revelation 22:1,3).



## J. How should Christians live before the second coming?

**Be patient and persevere.** Be patient with imperfect people and persevere in suffering, because the Judge is standing at the door (James 5:8)

**Be watchful in your trials.** Do not eat and drink too much and do not worry about your livelihood. Be watchful and pray that you may escape the trials that are about to happen (in the period of tribulation) and that you may be able to stand before the throne of judgment (Luke 21:34-36).

**Be holy and godly in your life.** Let the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and let him strengthen your heart (your resolve and dedication) so that you may be blameless and holy in the presence of God at the second coming (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13; 2 Peter 3:11-12).

**Be faithful in your task.** God has entrusted this task to you. He will reward

