

Christ's Return Is Even Now

I wish to start by reminding you of events that happened during World War II that in many ways parallel worldwide future events.

The time was December 1941. These were among the darkest days of World War II. Shortly after attacking Pearl Harbour, the Japanese invaded the Philippine islands.

To ward off the Japanese attack, the American general in the Philippines, Douglas MacArthur, chose Bataan and Corregidor island as his defensive strongholds.

But it was to no avail. Though the combined Filipino-American defenders held on for some time, they were eventually defeated. Bataan fell on April 9, 1942. Corregidor would be captured about a month later.

During the invading army's relentless advance, General MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines. He barely escaped the Japanese attempt to capture or kill him, and made his way to Australia.

Upon arriving at Batchelor Field, 40 miles south of Darwin, Australia, MacArthur told reporters: *"The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese lines for the purpose of organising the American offensive against Japan."*

A primary goal was to liberate the Philippine islands. MacArthur vowed to personally come back to do the job. He promised his listeners, *"I came through and I shall return."*

General MacArthur was surprised that his casual statement, *"I shall return,"* energised the Filipino resistance so dramatically. He wrote in his *Reminiscences*: *"The phrase 'I shall return' seemed a promise of magic to the Filipinos. It lit a flame that became a symbol which focused the nation's indomitable will It was scraped in the sands of the beaches, it was daubed on the walls of the barrios, it was stamped on the mail, it was whispered in the cloisters of the church."*

A simple phrase became a rallying cry of hope for millions. General MacArthur was true to his word. He promised to return and liberate the Filipinos from their captors. And come back he did, landing on the beach at Leyte Island in the Philippines during October 1944.

Less than a year later, the war was over. On September 2, 1945, on board the U.S.S. Missouri, the formal surrender documents were signed, with General MacArthur presiding. The man who had promised *"I shall return"* then broadcast a message of hope to the people of the United States.

It began with these words: *"Today the guns are silent. A great tragedy has ended. A great victory has been won. The skies no longer rain death - the seas bear only commerce - men everywhere walk upright in the sunlight. The entire world lies quietly at peace. The holy mission has been completed."*

Jesus Christ told His disciples often about His departure and then His later return.

John 14:1-3 ***"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."***

This was the time of Jesus' last supper with His disciples.

Within hours, He would be betrayed, arrested, condemned, beaten, crucified and murdered.

We can say with confidence that these were the most important hours in the history of God's Plan for our salvation.

During these momentous moments of time, Jesus was talking about the future and how He would continue to work with them.

Go away?

Come back to them?

The disciples' reaction showed that they had no idea what Christ was talking about.

Thomas flatly admitted he was confused, and I feel he spoke for the whole group.

Philip mumbled something about Jesus showing him the Father.

He also was spokesman for them all.

Peter thought he understood how he could continue to be with Jesus, he would simply follow Him wherever He went.

But that was not what Jesus was talking about, they found it all so confusing.

Jesus was in a world that didn't recognise Him.

His mother had no idea what He was talking about at the wedding of Cana when He said His time hadn't come [**John 2:4**].

Nicodemus was puzzled about eternal life and being born again [**John 3:1-9**].

The Samaritan woman had no idea what the true spiritual water would do for her [**John 4:4-15**].

The Jewish leaders were so confused they didn't even know they were confused about where Jesus had come from, what He was doing and where He was going [**John 6:42**].

Jesus' brothers thought He was beside Himself [**Mark 3:21**] and did not believe Him [**John 7:5**].

It is not surprising that the disciples did not know as to what Jesus meant about "returning".

How would the disciples see Him again?

Yes, Jesus would appear to the disciples after the resurrection a number of times over a period of about six weeks.

But that really was **not** the "return" Jesus was primarily talking about.

Acts 1:9-11 *"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? 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."*

This is the promised return that Jesus had been talking about being verified here by God's Angelic Messengers.

Revelation 11:15 *"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.'"*

This scripture refers to this important event of salvation history.

Christ's return this time with all power and authority to rule this world from that day onward into eternity.

We can all look forward in great anticipation to that day, for we know it will be the time of the resurrection and our ultimate salvation.

Paul described this wonderful time yet future in a scripture we know so well.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."*

Not all Christians will be in the "sleep" of death when this day comes, and those who have died Christians will then be resurrected from their graves.

Note that here the sound of a trumpet is mentioned as was mentioned in Revelation.

There was under the Old Covenant a special holy day that could well foreshadow this great event, a day on which a trumpet was also blown.

Leviticus 23:23-24 *"The LORD said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts.'"*

According to Jewish tradition the trumpet used on this occasion was not the silver trumpet as referred to in **Numbers 10:2-10** but the "sopar" the rams horn.

"Yobel" which was used on special solemn occasions, notably to proclaim the year of jubilee.

In the Talmud we read that Rabbi Saadiah declared that God commanded us [Jewish nation] to sound the trumpet on the New Year's Day [Feast of Trumpets] for ten reasons, among them were the following:

1 **To remind us of the prophets**, who were compared to watchmen blowing the trumpet of alarm, as we find in –

Ezekiel 33:4 *"then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and takes his life, his blood will be on his own head."*

A time of war which will also surround the return of Jesus Christ.

2 **To remind us of the great and terrible Day of Judgement**, on which the trumpet is to be sounded as we find in –

Zephaniah 1:14-16 *"The great day of the LORD is near – near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers."*

Again this is referring to the prophesied return of Jesus Christ to reign.

3 **To remind us of the resurrection of the dead** and our firm belief therein.

Isaiah 18:3 *"All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it."*

The two Hebrew words used to describe people are “*shakan*” and “*yashab*”, whose combined use cover all who live and have lived on the earth from creation.

So a resurrection is implied.

The raising of a banner and the trumpet sounding are both symbols of the return of Jesus Christ.

To paraphrase MacArthur’s words and apply it to God’s Plan of salvation when Jesus Christ returns, the great tragedy of humanity’s experience without God will end.

Human civilisation will no longer rain death on itself.

The entire world will truly lie at peace.

The greatest victory of all, the victory over sin and death, will have been won.

We, Christians, will be raised imperishable and immortal.

When we understand the profound love that God has for all the world, as well as for Christians, this day of Christ’s Return means more than ever to us.

We yearn for the consummation of God’s Purpose, when God will send Jesus Christ to become King of kings and Lord of lords and at the same time give immortality to all Christians.

But what about in the meantime?

Are we alone in this world as we wrestle with our sins?

With our daily problems?

With our doubts?

And some with persecution because we are Christians?

In a real sense Jesus Christ has already returned by dwelling in each of us right now.

John 14:15-18 *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – **the Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. **But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**”*

Here we see Christ’s Promise “*I will come to you*”.

The means by which He will fulfil this promise is also mentioned in this passage of scripture.

Christ who had lived with these disciples for three and a half years as their teacher and counsellor, was now going to leave them.

To replace Him, the Father was going to send “*the Spirit of Truth*”.

John 14:26 [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

The Counsellor whom the Father will send is the Holy Spirit.

Note it was only coming to His disciples [Christians] for the world in general could not accept or know the Holy Spirit.

How true this is today.

The vast majority of people living do not accept or know God [the Holy Spirit].

Note also that the Holy Spirit had already been working with them.

John 6:44 *“No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.”*

God uses the Holy Spirit to bring people to Jesus Christ.

Romans 2:4 *“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that **God’s kindness leads you towards repentance?**”*

God’s “Kindness” [NIV] or “Goodness” [King James] leads us to repentance.

Galatians 5:22 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,”*

Kindness is one of the worked out fruits of Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:37-38 [NIV] *“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

A very dramatic example of this.

John 14:17 [NIV] *“the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

We also see that the Holy Spirit would “be in you”.

When we put all that is stated on this matter in this 14th chapter of John we have to conclude that Christ will once again live on earth in us.

Scripture shows in this chapter the common factor of the Father, Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit, each dwelling as one, within one another as one, within us.

This unity was once described to me in this way: *‘God was likened to three beings holding hands in a circle eternally. But at one moment in time, at the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ the Son of God, the circle was broken. Christ and the Father each took hold of a hand of man, one his right hand and the other his left hand. Once again the circle was complete, never again to be broken.’*

A beautiful symbolic picture which shows man being brought into the great unchanging circle of love that is God.

John 17:14-15 *“I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”*

Part of Christ’s Prayer for those He was about to leave behind, as He returned to the Father.

Christ did **not** pray for us to be taken out of the world. Christ does not want us to go on some retreat or into some monastery, cutting ourselves off from the rest of mankind.

Why?

He could not then, dwelling in us, use us as a vehicle of His Love to the rest of mankind.

Romans 5:5 *“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into [through] our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

The Greek preposition “en” translated “into” [NIV] or “in” [King James] is also used to denote something that is emanating from within and passing on outwards in union with what it had entered.

This is exactly as Christ stated the Holy Spirit, the source of God’s Love in us, would do.

John 7:37-39 [NIV] *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

It would be like a river of life giving water flowing through us.

Here we see that God is limiting Himself at this time by only loving this world through us who profess to be Christians.

What a great privilege but also a tremendous responsibility.

John 17:15-17 *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.**”*

Christ did pray that we would be protected from the evil one.

Christ also prayed that we would be “sanctified”, Greek word “hagiazō” to make holy, to be separated for God’s use, to be made saints [“hagios”].

Every true Christian is a saint; for a saint is someone that God makes, **not** what men decree.

The one thing that sets us apart from the rest of the world is God’s Word, The Christian Bible, and our accepting it as the truth.

Our part in the sanctification, that is being made a saint by God, is believing what God says and promises in His Word and the living on a day-to-day basis as if we do believe it.

God’s Word should be the “yard stick” by which we make every decision in life, both big and small decisions.

To enable us to do this we first have to know what God’s Word says on any subject or event we have to face in our lives.

This will be done by our diligent study of God’s Word and our allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us.

The Holy Spirit will then remind us of those scriptures and our understanding of them when we need them to make right decisions in our lives.

John 14:26 *“But the Counsellor, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**”*

When we fully understand what John’s statement about Jesus says at the beginning of his gospel, it will clarify what we are to become to fulfil God’s Purpose for calling us.

John 1:14 “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*”

“*Made his dwelling among us*”.

The Greek word translated “*dwelling*” is “*skenoo*” meaning to reside or occupy.

This word is peculiar to John’s writing, and he uses it on four other occasions [**Revelation 7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3**].

All of these are in the sense of a permanent stay.

God is now permanently joined to human flesh.

There is even now a human being on the Throne of God as our high priest!

1 Timothy 2:5 “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”

Note it says “*the man Jesus Christ*”.

Jesus Christ although God, without a beginning or an end [**Revelation 1:8, 11**]; from the time of His physical birth through Mary, became man and still retains that manhood to become the perfect high priest.

Hebrews 5:14-16 [NIV] “*No such scripture!!!!*”

Meditate on this fact: God really does feel for us as human being.

When Jesus the Christ became a man, it was not for just 33 years, it was for ever.

Jesus the Christ, being man as well as God, ensures that God fully understands everything that will ever happen to us in life.

He will always be able to say, “*I have been there*”.

Jesus went through every experience that man can go through - in fact more than any man could go through.

Jesus is like us in all things except that He emerged from every experience completely sinless.

a) **Temptations**

The fact that Jesus was without sin means that He faced the full power of Satan’s temptations.

Jesus knew depths, tensions and assaults of temptation which we will never know.

So far as His Battle being easier, it was immeasurably harder; why?

We are easily vanquished long before Satan’s full power is turned on us.

We never know temptation at its fiercest and its most terrible, because we fall long before that stage is reached.

b) **In terms of pain**

The normal human frame endures a certain level of pain before we faint and lose consciousness of pain.

There are agonies of pain we do not know that Jesus endured without collapsing.

This experience of Jesus had three effects

1) **It gave Jesus the gift of sympathy.** The Christian idea of God as a loving father is something we accept, but in Jesus' day this was a very new idea.

To Jews God was Holy, which meant different in the sense of being a completely different sphere of life, in no sense did He share human life.

To Stoics the highest Greek thinkers, God was apatheia, unable to feel anything. Their argument was that if a person was able to feel joy or sorrow it meant that he could be influenced by another person. For that moment of influence that person was greater than the person he made feel joy or sorrow. So for God to be God, He must not at any time be influenced by anyone else.

To Epicureans Gods lived in perfect happiness and blessedness in a space completely detached from this world to the extent of not being aware of this world.

Christianity came with what was a staggering and blasphemous concept. That God was more than just involved with this world but could actually identify with its suffering.

The result of this new concept was:

2) **It gave God the quality of mercy,** for God understands

Some people have lived a very sheltered life of ease.

They have been protected from the temptations that come to those whose life has not been an easy one.

Some people have a temperament and a nature which is easy to control; others have hot passions that make life a perilous thing.

The person who has lived a sheltered life or has a non-inflammable nature finds it very hard to understand why the other person fails and falls into sin.

They are faintly disgusted and repelled by such a person's actions; they condemn and fail to understand.

But through Jesus, God knows, as there is no part of human experience of which God cannot say "*I have been there*".

3) **It makes God able to help for He knows the problems we face**

The best person to help on a journey is someone who has travelled the road before.

The best person to help you through pain is one who has endured pain to the full.

When we have a sad and sorry tale to tell, when the pain of living has drenched us with tears, we have a God we can go to for help, who understands what is happening to us.

We have a God who has been there.

That is why God finds it easy to forgive weak and stumbling humans, pick them up, encourage them and help them on their way.

Here then is the tremendous truth.

Jesus is the perfect high priest because He is perfectly God, and because He is perfectly man, Jesus brought God to men, and He can bring men to God.

Christ with all this experience and now with all authority, desires to fulfil His Work through us by living once again on earth in us.

When this happens we have access to all that love, compassion, patience and faithfulness we see in Christ's Life as recorded in first four books of New Testament.

Matthew 28:18-20 *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"*

This is not a commission we can take lightly, it must be an all consuming passion in our lives.

Every thought and action must be one of submission to Christ, so He may use us to fulfil this commission we have working in harmony with Him.

It is Christ in us that is going to do the work but we as physical instruments in His Hands can help or hinder the progress the work makes.

The Holy Spirit is the vehicle through which the Father calls and guides the people we are to reach in this world.

But we are the ones who "go".

We are the ones who physically "baptise" people.

We are also the vehicles through which the Holy Spirit will teach these people all the Words of Christ.

When we harmonise our lives with this great commission, then we have the promise that Christ will always be with us.

Matthew 5:13-16 *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

Christ in us is the salt that will savour this Godless society, Christ in us is the light that will shine in the darkness of ignorance that envelops the whole world.

But again we are to be totally involved in this.

We spread the saltiness wherever we go, for it to add to the "taste" of life of all who come in contact with us on a day-to-day basis.

We are the light stand that holds the light that will dispel the darkness of ignorance, through spreading the words of the one who is the 'Light of the World'.

John 8:12 *"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"*

"Follows", to walk the same path as Christ which was at times a painful way to travel.

Suffering is one way in which we can be a light to others.

When even in the face of great pain and trials we do not lose faith in God, nor stop thanking Him for the many blessings He has showered on us.

If we learn and show contentment with what physical blessings we do have, putting a far greater value on our relationship with God through Jesus the Christ, we are a light.

Physical pain and trials come and go, but spiritual gifts and fruits are eternal.

When we understand this then we can shine as a bright light to others through any trial.

John 12:46 *“I have come into the world as a light, so that no-one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”*

When we believe in and trust Jesus Christ, we will not be ignorant of what God is doing and planning for humanity. All this information of God’s working with mankind is locked up in His Word, The Christian Bible, and this will be unlocked by the Holy Spirit, if we have faith in what God has done for us through Jesus the Christ.

John 15:1-5 *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. **If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**”*

In this simple but vivid analogy we are likened to branches on a vine where fruit is expected to be produced.

Note:- unless we and Christ are joined as one, no fruit will be produced.

At times the Father may have to prune us, take away from us those things which inhibit us from producing fruit.

This could be wealth or even health.

Such pruning would be a humbling experience which could drive us to our knees asking for God’s intervention in our life to save us.

A tree is pruned to allow light and air to have access to every part of it, improving the health and growth of the tree.

There may be parts of our life that need to be illuminated and others that need life giving air!

When a plant produces fruit the fruit is used in two ways:

- a) It is something that can give nourishment to others. The fruit is of limited value to the plant itself;
- b) The fruit carries seeds which are the means by which the plant is multiplied.

Lift this analogy to a spiritual level and we can see that the fruit that is produced by Jesus Christ in our lives will nourish others.

Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Love, joy, peace of mind, kindness, etc.

All of these are fruits that when they are digested by others who are influenced by contact with us will nourish them spiritually.

Others will also carry away with them a “seed” of the mind of Christ after contact with us **if** we allow the Holy Spirit to produce these fruits in us.

If Jesus Christ is to be visible to the world today, then it is **we** who must make His presence obvious to all who come in contact with us.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-8 *“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.”*

We have here a historical record of a group of people who allowed Christ to live again in their lives.

Is the gospel message that we have heard simply been words that fell on our ears?

Or has it come to us with Power, with the Holy Spirit and His ability to produce fruits in our lives?

Such fruits that all who know us will see the dramatic changes that have taken place in our lives.

They in turn will tell others so that what Jesus Christ has done by dwelling in us will ring out throughout the Godless land as it did in Macedonia and Achaia.

This same Power is available to us now.

The same results of Christ's return now in us can happen today.

We are the ones who can make this to happen **if** we allow Christ into our lives to direct every part of our lives.

Philippians 2:5 *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:”*

The King James translation says, *“Let this mind be in you which was [and is] also in Christ Jesus.”*

God will **not** force us to accept the mind of Christ in our lives but that is exactly what He desires.

The choice is ours.

I firmly believe that Jesus Christ will one day once again stand on the Mount of Olives, but I also firmly believe that He has already returned in spirit by dwelling in our hearts and minds.

Just as the promise *“I shall return”* given by General MacArthur to the Filipinos lit a flame in their lives, may the far more important Promise of Christ *“I shall return”* light a flame in our lives that will transform them.

Christ's Return now in us and in person in the future is the hope of this world that is now without hope.