

Midweek Advent III

Jesus Will Come”

It is impossible for us to predict the future. But every year at this time, ending one year and entering another, so-called “experts” fill up supermarket tabloids and television talk shows with their predications for the new year and beyond. They are either so vague and general that they may be close to correct on something. Or their predications will be so far out that they could never happen. But at this time again next year those same self-anointed “experts” once more will make their predications for 2022.

There are similar attempts to predict the future by those who hold a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other trying to match up current events with Bible passages, especially making a guess when Jesus will return to bring this world to its end. Such guessing is interesting and intriguing, but it also is very misleading for our Christian faith. Jesus is coming again, but not based on our timetable telling Him when to return. Jesus will come when that time is right in God’s plan for our salvation. Jesus will bring the world to its end and gather all of His faithful people around His heavenly throne.

The Bible is not a guidebook telling us about the future events of this world. But through the Bible the Holy Spirit does tell us what we need to know about our future as Christians, especially what life will be like right before Jesus returns. Wars, earthquakes and famines are part of human history. They remind us not to trust in the temporary things of this world that will be destroyed. Such things will increase before Jesus’ return. Also, many people will teach falsely about Jesus and will lead astray those who do not know Him as their Savior. There will be many false prophecies of Christ’s coming, some even claiming to be Christ Himself already returned.

Those will be difficult days for believers in Jesus. Opposition and hatred will be directed against all who believe in and proclaim the truth of God’s Word. Yet we know that our God will remain faithful to us. His Word still will have power. It will go out into all the world, giving people everywhere the chance to hear of our salvation in Jesus Christ. For our good, God will cut short this time of persecution and trouble by sending His Son Jesus for us. God’s Old Testament people long ago waited for God to fulfill His ancient promise of a Savior. During this Advent season we also wait in hope for God to make good on His promise of our Savior who is coming back for us.

The Bible does tell us much of what Christ's return will be like. It will be sudden, like a thief coming during the night. It will not be like counting down the days to Christmas or the minutes to midnight on New Year's Eve. It will be in great glory, unlike the humbleness of a baby in a manger. It will be for all the world to see, not just revealed to shepherds in a field. Like the lightning which flashes in the sky there will be no doubt about it when Jesus returns.

But no one knows when this will happen. Even Jesus Himself in the humiliation of His earthly life said that He did not know the day or hour of His return. Thus it is useless for any of us to predict when this great event will happen. But we will not miss it. Jesus will come with a loud shout and the trumpet call of His angels accompanying Him. He will gather all people before Him, resurrecting bodies and reuniting spirits of those who already have died. Those who received God's blessings while on earth will be divided into two groups. All who rejected Jesus in their lives and refused the salvation He freely offered them will be confirmed by Him in that judgment and allowed to live eternally apart from His goodness. On the other hand, we who have welcomed and rejoiced in Christ's presence in our lives by that faith the Holy Spirit has worked in us through God's Word and Sacraments will be blessed by living in our Triune God's visible presence forever. As a heavenly choir of saints and angels we will stand around our Savior's throne singing the song of the saved: "worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and praise."

Knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again means hope for us. It is our final victory over sin, death and the power of the devil, a championship that Jesus Himself won for us by His own sinless life, death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Instead of guessing and wondering when the return of Christ will be, God calls on us to live our lives expecting Him to arrive any day. We are to be prepared in faith to receive Jesus by sight. We are to live in such a God-pleasing way that we also help prepare others to receive Jesus in faith also. We do so by our love of and participation in Christian worship. We do so by our reading of and witness to God's Word, the Holy Bible. We do so by words of our joy and our works of kindness to those around us.

In the very last verses of God's written word we hear our Lord Jesus promise us, "Yes, I am coming soon." To this promise we, as God's baptized people, respond in faith, "Maranatha, amen, come Lord Jesus." In His name. Amen.