

“Jesus Is Coming Back”

By: Doug Warren

How can you believe in the return of Jesus to earth?

On your way to work you see him. Some pass by him, oblivious. Others laugh and make jokes at his expense. Others slink by embarrassed. He is standing in Monument Square or at Morrill’s Corner sandwiched by placards that read, “The End is Near!” We don’t know what to do with him, but we are certain that he is mad and so we ignore him, or laugh at him, or pray for him. There are many who would discount all of Christianity as equally irrelevant.

Why should I even need to consider such a question? It gets at the very heart of whether Christianity is a nostalgic social construct, factory of dangerous zealots, or the ultimate truth of reality. If we are to understand Christianity, much less embrace it, we must confront this essential question, “Will Jesus return to earth as He promised to do?”

There are actually several questions that go into this that I would like to consider in turn. First of all, how can reasonable people even talk about someone who lived two millennia ago “coming back”? How could anyone possibly be able to return to a world that He supposedly left so long ago?

This brings us to the essential supernatural nature of Christianity. It is not after all just a set of beliefs, values, or rules. Christianity is a faith in a person, Jesus of Nazareth, who was called the Christ or Messiah. Foundational to that faith is the understanding that Jesus, while a real human person was not only a person, but also God Himself. As if this isn’t enough of a mind-blower, Jesus claimed to be God on a mission to save us.

Now for most of us this is a problem. We don’t want to admit that we need to be saved. As most know the truism from AA, the first step is admitting you have a problem. Well, that’s well and good for alcoholics, you might think, but I don’t have a problem from which I need to be saved. If that is where you are as you read this, not much of this is going to help. But if you are willing to recognize the need all of us have to be saved, then it makes sense to at least consider the One who says He can save you.

If we are willing to admit that we need help, the next question might be, “How did what Jesus did in His first coming or what He is going to do in His second coming do anything for me?” Jesus gives us a helpful picture. He said that our problem was that we could not be with Him and His Father because of our sin [I know “sin” is not a popular word, but stay with me for a moment]. He had created us to be with Him in perfect community, but we [humanity] messed it up by our rebellion against Him. So He came the first time to purchase us back with His own life and death. Then He rose from the dead, and instructed His disciples on the next part of His plan. He was going to go back to His Father and prepare a place for His people [New Heavens and New Earth] and then come back in glory to gather them to Himself and enjoy forever.

This puts our question into context. It explains why He came in the first place and shows *why* He needs to come again. If I can understand what He is supposed to be doing when He comes back, it makes the discussion of whether or not it is possible a whole lot more profitable. He is not simply coming back on a road trip; He is coming back to fulfill His ultimate purposes in saving a people unto Himself. Is that something that He is able to do? Unlike our investment portfolios that are quick to warn us, “past performance is not an indicator of future returns”, Jesus’ first coming is able to show us that is faithful. We can trust Him when we read His promises to return and complete His mission.

How can we trust Jesus? He has already done the unbelievable: God became man. He did the unthinkable: He took on our failure and punishment, dying in our place. He did the impossible: He rose from the dead just as He promised on the third day. So as incredible as it seems to believe that He is coming again, He will do it just as He promised.

So if Jesus really is returning to planet earth that brings us back to our proverbial caricature (sp?) with the sandwich boards. What happens when He comes? Is that our hope or our deep buried fear? While we may reassure ourselves that such a far-fetched myth will never come to pass, is that simply whistling in the dark because we don’t have an answer?

The wondrous good news of the gospel is that all those who recognize and cling to Jesus as our only rescuer will greet that day with joy unimaginable. The sobering and terrifying reality is that all those who ignore or reject Jesus will find that He is indeed real and faithful, but that His perfect character is also their undoing. So what about you?