

## **Belgic Confession 37 –The End of the World – Final Events**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: “Eschatology” means “the study of last things.” This is the subject of this last article of the Belgic Confession of Faith. Now the Bible does not give too many details about the end times, and there is a good reason it doesn’t! God **does not want man to become preoccupied** with eschatological events. **He knew doing that would affect how man would work**.

Instead, our Lord said that you must “occupy” – be busy – until he comes.

But God does say **some things** about “end times” matters. We will look at those things over 3 Sundays. In this 1<sup>st</sup> sermon you will hear the **order of the events at the end of times**.

Our headings are:

**When will Christ come**

**What will happen on earth when Christ Comes?**

**What will happen in heaven when Christ Comes?**

Our goals are: **That you will properly understand what the Bible teaches about the last times** so you and your family can **find comfort in persecution and be encouraged to faithfully serve the Lord**.

Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, when **the time appointed by the Lord** (which is unknown to all creatures) is come and the number of the **elect complete**, that our Lord **Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly**, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare Himself **Judge of the living and the dead**, burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it.

Then all **men will personally appear** before this great Judge, both men and women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, being summoned by the voice of the archangel, and by the sound of the trump of God. **For all the dead shall be raised** out of the earth, and their **souls joined and united with their proper bodies** in which they formerly lived. As for those who shall then be living, they shall not die as the others, **but be changed in the twinkling of an eye**, and from **corruptible become incorruptible**.

### **When Will Jesus Christ Come**

**1. Christ will return in the air at a time “appointed” by his Father – not one day sooner or later.**

**And know for certain that he will come back. You can count on it. He said so.**

**John 14:2** "In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself**; that

where I am, there you may be also.

**2. This means no one knows – not a single man or woman knows - when Christ will return – and it is contemptible to say so.**

Those who pretend to know are either deceivers or have been deceived. The Scriptures are clear.

Matthew 24: 42-44 "Watch therefore, for **you do not know** what hour your Lord is coming. 43 "But know this, that **if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched** and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the **Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**

Matthew 25:13 - "Watch therefore, **for you know neither the day nor the hour** in which the Son of Man is coming.

**3. Some people have some false signs of Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming because they misunderstand Matthew 24.**

The signs of the first part of Matthew 24 actually refer to the Christ's "coming in destruction of Jerusalem," not of his second coming at the end of the world, which you see in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Matthew 24 and 25. The disciples asked two questions and Jesus answered 2 questions. Further,

**a. It is impossible for the events of V 1-35, which refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, to refer to the same things in V36-51 and in Chapter 25, which refer to the end of the world.** See some examples:

V18. A sign for the destruction of Jerusalem: **If you are in the field and see the Romans coming, run!** V40. **Two will be in a field, one will be taken and the other left.** The first requires action, but the second requires passivity. There is no need to run.

V19-20. A sign for the destruction of Jerusalem: You will have troubles if you are **pregnant, nursing a baby, traveling on the Sabbath, or moving in winter.** This would only make sense if they were referring to the destruction of Jerusalem. When Jesus comes the 2<sup>nd</sup> time **there will be no troubles for anyone when Jesus returns! No one will travel by walking...or worry about pregnancy, or care if it were the Sabbath, or if it were winter.**

**b. This cataclysmic language in V29, is very similar to the language used in the destruction of smaller or less important cities like Tyre and Babylon and so it does not have to** apply to the whole world. Look at one example.

Isaiah 13:10 For the **stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened** in its going forth, And the **moon will not cause its light to shine.** 11 "I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low

the haughtiness of the terrible. <sup>13</sup> Therefore **I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place,** In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.

No star will fall! What would happen if a star were to fall on the earth? (Stars refer to leaders of the nation!) We use similar language: "I'll crush you." But that is not literal. That is just beating someone in Risk!

**c. Furthermore, things would be normal (eating, drinking, marrying) when Christ returns. Cataclysmic signs do not mark the coming of Christ. Instead, Jesus said that he would come suddenly...like a thief in the night...**like the suddenness of when the rain started to fall in Noah's day. No one expected rain...as it never happened before.

Matthew 24: 36 "But of that day and hour **no one knows, not even the angels of heaven,** but My Father only. 37 "But **as the days of Noah were,** so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 "For as in the days before the flood, **they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,** until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 "**and did not know until the flood came and took them all away,** so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

The Apostle Paul confirmed this.

1Thessalonians 5:2 - ... the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

**Christ will unexpectedly come because God wants to stop idleness** (for if you know when the master would come, you would only be busy just before he comes). Edgar Whisenant, a retired NASA engineer, wrongly predicted the date of the rapture twice: September 1, 1988 and September 1, 1989. Harold Camping, who was the operator of one of the largest Christian radio networks, predicted that the world would end in September of 1994. He also was wrong too.

#### **4. Christ will come when all of his children his Father has given to him believe.**

Revelation 6:11 - Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

#### **5. Christ will come with glory, majesty, and power, proving he is Judge and King of the whole world.**

Even the wickedest will accept that Christ is Judge and King of the world and bow to him. **He will not come as a king pleading for followers...**but as a conquering king. All eyes will see him.

#### **6. Lessons:**

**a. Christ will not leave his people in this sin-cursed world forever. He will take you away! That is evidence of love.**

**b. Distrust anyone who pretends to know the time of the Lord's return. They are deceivers.**

**c. Preach the Gospel** (and support the preaching of the Gospel) so men can be saved from the coming judgment. Be motivated, knowing that preaching is the only way men can be saved.

### **What will happen on earth when Christ comes?**

**1. When Christ returns the angel of God will sound a trumpet for all on the earth to hear.**

No one will miss this great blowing of the trumpet. There has never been one like it, and there would not be another like it.

1Thessalonians 4:15-16 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

There will be no secret rapture. There will not be a "cosmic dog whistle" (Riddlebarger) for Christians only.

**2. When Christ returns, he will come in bodily form and all the earth will see him.**

Acts 1:11 - ... "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

**3. When Christ returns, Christians who are dead will be raised up and be reunited with a changed, but real body-like Christ's body when he was resurrected.**

1Corinthians 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Christians who are alive will also be changed. Christians will get glorious bodies in a blink of an eye. These bodies will not be limited by time or space, just as Christ could walk through closed doors after his resurrection!

**4. When Christ returns, Christians (alive and formerly dead) will be taken up from the earth to be with Christ forever.**

1Thessalonians 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the **clouds to meet the Lord in the air**. And **thus we shall always be with the Lord**.

I have a sense of wonder that people read this verse (which is tied to Christ's promise in John 14) and that some take it to mean that we will then come back to this earth after it has been burned and purified. They teach that our bodies which will no longer be limited to time and space would then come back to live on an earth controlled by time and space! **You will experience Christ!**

### **5. Lessons:**

**a. Isn't it great to know all the pains and suffering of this life will be gone?** Name your ailment...it will be gone...there will be no more strokes, in-grown toe nail, exhaustion, allergies, or Covid-19.

**b. Be patient through trials of this life.** You will be in the presence of the Lord soon enough. Comfort each other with this.

### **What will happen in heaven when Christ comes**

#### **1. Every single man, woman, boy, and girl – from eternity - will appear in judgment before Christ.**

Daniel 12:2 - And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

John 5:28-29 - ... for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 "and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

There are no second chances to be saved after Jesus returns. There is no purgatory. After death comes the judgment. There is no tribulation period for second chances. That's make-believe silliness.

#### **2. All men will have a summons- to appear in judgment that you cannot ignore or resist.**

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

### **3. Lessons:**

**a. While the world has to appear before God's throne of judgment, you have the Advocate who has a sure defense.** He will say he lived for your righteousness, and died for holiness. Look forward to Judgment Day.

**b. The wicked will be condemned.**

**c. The condemnation of the wicked will confirm God's righteousness.**

**Conclusion:**

Christ will return suddenly at an unknown but appointed time, with power, glory, and majesty, when all his elect believe in him. He will cause the dead who believe in him to be raised up, and the dead and living believers will be given glorious bodies, taken up into heaven, and spend eternity with him. The wicked who have died will also be raised along with the wicked who are living and be condemned by God.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Knowing this, **be motivated to comfort one another.** 1 Thessalonians 4:18. The trial of this life will not go on forever. Name your pain. It will be gone. Name your need. It will be met. Covid-19 doesn't seem to big now!

**2. Work hard.** 1 Thessalonians 5: 6...let us watch and be sober. Stay busy. Luke 19:13... Occupy till I come. When someone asked Martin Luther what he would do **if he knew that the Lord was returning tomorrow.** Luther reportedly said, "I'd **plant an apple tree today.**"

Finally: If you are not a Christian you can find no comfort in this. Instead, hear the screams of those who are in hell, crying out for rescue but getting none. Hear these things in order that you will be afraid and when you are afraid that you will repent of your sins and embrace Christ. You may not get another opportunity.