

The Return of Jesus

Introduction

One of the most important subjects described in Scripture is: *the return of Jesus to the Earth*. Unfortunately, that is a rather “hazy” topic to many Christians. Basically, many Christians have heard **something** to the effect that Jesus will one day return; but they do not have many “details” about that event.

This is not very surprising; because most mainstream Christian denominations put all of their *emphasis* on “going to heaven when you die”. In other words, most Christian churches assert that when a Christian’s body dies, his “immortal soul” leaves his body, and goes to heaven – and his soul then lives in heaven, with God and Jesus – forever.

As a result, it is expected that most Christians will not be very “interested” about Jesus’ return to the earth – because after all, they believe that they will be living in heaven – **forever** - after their bodies die!

Nevertheless, in my experience most Christians appear to have at least a *general* understanding that Jesus will return to the earth, at some point in the future.

An Alternate View

As it turns out, there are a few Christian denominations which explicitly assert that Jesus will never return to the Earth. One of the “key” passages that those groups use, to support their view that Jesus will never return to the world, is the following:

John 14:18-20 (ESV):

¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

In particular, those groups focus on the phrase “the world will see me no more”. From that, they conclude that no one who is in “the world” – i.e., no *unbeliever* – will ever see Jesus again – neither in this age, nor in the next age.

Of course, Jesus did subsequently appear to his *followers* after that passage – including his famous “doubting Thomas” appearance – but he did not appear to anyone else. In other words, he did not appear to “the world” (unbelievers), *after* his resurrection.

So, the above passage certainly indicates that Jesus will *not* appear to “the world” any more, during this **current** age. However, does that mean that he will not appear to the world in the age to come? In other words, is it true that no one in the world will **ever** see Jesus again – not even in the **next** age?

As it turns out, there are quite a few passages in Scripture that address that very question. Here is a small subset of those passages:

Luke 21:25-28 (ESV):

²⁵ “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Matthew 24:30 (ESV):

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Revelation 1:7 (ESV):

⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Matthew 26:63-64 (ESV):

⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

All of the above passages explicitly state that Jesus will return to the earth; and that everyone on earth – even Jesus’ **enemies** – will see him.

In addition, there are many, *many* prophecies about the Messiah (Christ) in the Old Testament. The prophecy below is particularly “interesting” – because it explicitly speaks about the **return** of Jesus – i.e., about him coming back to the earth, *after* he was crucified:

Zechariah 12:10-11 (ESV):

¹⁰ “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. ¹¹ On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

The above passage tells us that when Jesus returns, the Jews will see him – and then finally realize that he is actually the promised Messiah!

From all of the above passages (and many similar ones), it appears clear to me that John 14:19 is only speaking about this **current** age. In other words, the world will not see Jesus again during **this** age – but the world will see Jesus in the **next** age.

Return to the Earth, or to the Atmosphere?

There is a *third* belief about the return of Jesus as well. Basically, some Christian groups believe that Jesus will return in the next age – and the world will see him – but he will **not** actually “stand” upon the earth. In other words, this belief asserts that Jesus will appear in the *atmosphere* around the earth, so that people can see him – but then he will go back to **heaven**, without ever “setting his feet” on the earth.

Interestingly, there are a number of passages in Scripture which address the above belief as well. Here are a few of them:

Acts 1:9-11 (ESV):

⁹ And when he [Jesus] had said these things, as they [the apostles] were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

The above passage describes the ascension of Jesus to heaven. After the ascension, angels tell the apostles that Jesus will return in the same way that he left. When the ascension occurred, Jesus was directly **standing** on the Earth, and was then taken up to heaven. So, since he will return in the *same way*, that implies that Jesus will come back from heaven, to **stand** on the Earth again!

Isaiah 63:1-6 (ESV):

¹ Who is this who comes from Edom,
in crimsoned garments from Bozrah,
he who is splendid in his apparel,
marching in the greatness of his strength?
“It is I, speaking in righteousness,
mighty to save.”

² Why is your apparel red,
and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?

³ “I have trodden the winepress alone,
and from the peoples no one was with me;
I trod them in my anger
and trampled them in my wrath;
their lifeblood spattered on my garments,
and stained all my apparel.

⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart,
and my year of redemption had come.

⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help;
I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold;

so my own arm brought me salvation,
and my wrath upheld me.
⁶ I trampled down the peoples in my anger;
I made them drunk in my wrath,
and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

The above passage describes Jesus’ rescue of Jerusalem (and Israel) from an attack by the surrounding nations, at the end of the age. (Chapters 62 and 64 explicitly mention that Jerusalem will be rescued from foreign nations.) In particular, the region of Edom is located in the southern part of the modern country of Jordan. So, since Jesus will defend Israel against other *nations*, that is a definite indication that he will actually be on the Earth.

Zechariah 14:1-5 (ESV):

¹ Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³ Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. ⁴ On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. ⁵ And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

The above passage is another prophecy about the return of Jesus. This prophecy occurs slightly *earlier* in time than the previous passage – it describes the initial attack of foreign nations against Jerusalem; and then about how Jesus will go out and fight against those nations.

One item that is extremely important in that passage is that it states the following about Jesus: “On that day **his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives** that lies before Jerusalem on the east”. That explicitly tells us that Jesus will “set his feet” on the Earth!

Conclusion

Again and again in Scripture, the apostles *encourage* Christians to look forward to **the return of Jesus**. In other words, we are exhorted to anticipate his return, in order to help us through the trials that we encounter during this age. So, the belief that Jesus will never return to the Earth completely *contradicts* that clear message from the apostles.

Here are just a *few* of the examples, of the apostles instructing Christians to await the return of Jesus:

1 Peter 1:13-16 (ESV):

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV):

¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Titus 2:11-14 (ESV):

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Revelation 22:16-17,20-21 (ESV):

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Indeed, we should all look forward to the return of Jesus to the Earth – when righteousness will dwell throughout the world!