Facing An Uncertain, Yet Certain Future – Part Two

Luke 17:20-37
October 19, 2008

There are two common reasons given by atheists as to why they don’t believe in God:

1. "How could there be a God, with all the evil and ________ in the world; certainly, if there was a God, He would do something about this."
2. "I could never believe in a God who could bring __________ upon those who are disobedient to Him, and send them to _________."

Actually, the answer to both of these arguments is the same – it is the ________ ________ of Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of II Peter 3:3-4,8-9: “Know this first of all, that in the last days, mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation’…But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Most people, even most Christians are extremely confused about Christ’s Second Coming. A primary reason people have such a hard time understanding the doctrine of the Second Coming is because they fail to make the necessary __________ between three important events:

First, the distinction must be made between Christ’s ______ coming and His ________ Coming. In the passage before us, Jesus speaks of His first coming in verses 20,21, and of His Second Coming in verses 22-37.

Second, we must make a distinction between the __________ of the Church and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. These are two separate events: the Rapture is the occasion when Jesus Christ comes in the clouds, but does not come all the way to the earth. His purpose is to _________ the New Testament Church, all those who know Him by faith (See John 14:1-3; I Cor. 15:51-58; I Thess. 4:13-18). The Second Coming of Christ is the event at which He _________ to earth, _______ His Church, to establish His Millennial Kingdom. Which of these two events is Jesus describing in verses 22-37 – the Rapture of the Church or the Second Coming of Christ? Let us consider four reasons that suggest that this entire passage (vs. 22-37) is talking about the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the age:

1. This entire ________ is speaking of the Second Coming, not the Rapture.
2. In verses 34-36, where it says three times that two people will be together – one will be taken and the other will be left – that the one who is taken is not the ____________ snatched away at the Rapture, but is the ____________ who is taken away to be judged by Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. This is supported by the two __________ illustrations that Jesus gives (vs. 26-30). This view is supported by the text in verses 34-36. The verb ‘taken’ in each of these three verses does not mean ‘taken to _________’ but ‘taken away in __________.’
3. Third, verse 31 makes no sense if it refers to the Rapture of the Church, for I Cor. 15:52 tells us that the Rapture takes place in a ______-_________, “in the twinkling of an eye”. There will be no ____________.
4. Jesus’ answer in verse 37 suggests a fateful and ________ end for those taken away.

We began last week to note the specific details of Christ’s Second Coming:

I. It Will Be Delayed – vs. 22,25
   A. It will not come during Jesus’ earthly life – vs. 25
   B. It will not come in response to the longing of His disciples – vs. 22

II. It Will Be Preceded by Many False Claims – vs. 23
A. Claims regarding the timing of the Second Coming
B. Claims regarding the person of the Messiah
C. Claims regarding the advent of the Messiah

III. It Will Be a Public Event, for All the World to See – vs. 24

IV. It Will Be _______________ – vs. 26-33
Especially for those who are unbelievers, living here on earth at the time of Christ's return, it will take them completely by ___________. See verses 26-30.

What is the point that Jesus is making in these verses?

When Jesus uses the phrase 'eating and drinking', He was referring to people going on with their normal, everyday __________, as they always had. When He talks about people 'marrying and being given in marriage, buying, selling, planting and building', He indicates that they were ___________ their lives just as though the future was a sure thing.

How could the Second Coming take them by surprise?

V. It Will Be a ________ and _________ Event – vs. 34-36
It is important to note that, just as today, at the time of Christ’s Second Coming, there will be both ________ and _________ living on the earth, those who believe the Gospel and those who reject it. And when Christ returns to establish His kingdom, there will be an immediate and ___________ separation of the believers from the unbelievers.

Do you notice a similarity here between the Second Coming of Christ and the events surrounding the flood and the destruction of Sodom?

A suggested chronology for the events at the end of the age and the Second Coming of Christ:

This chronology seems to be supported by Jesus in two parables from Matthew 13 – The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) and The Parable of the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50).