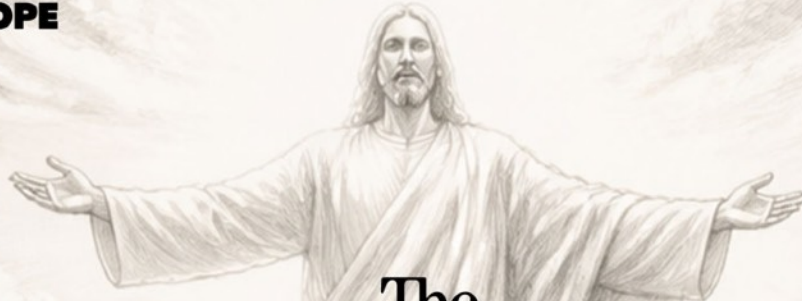




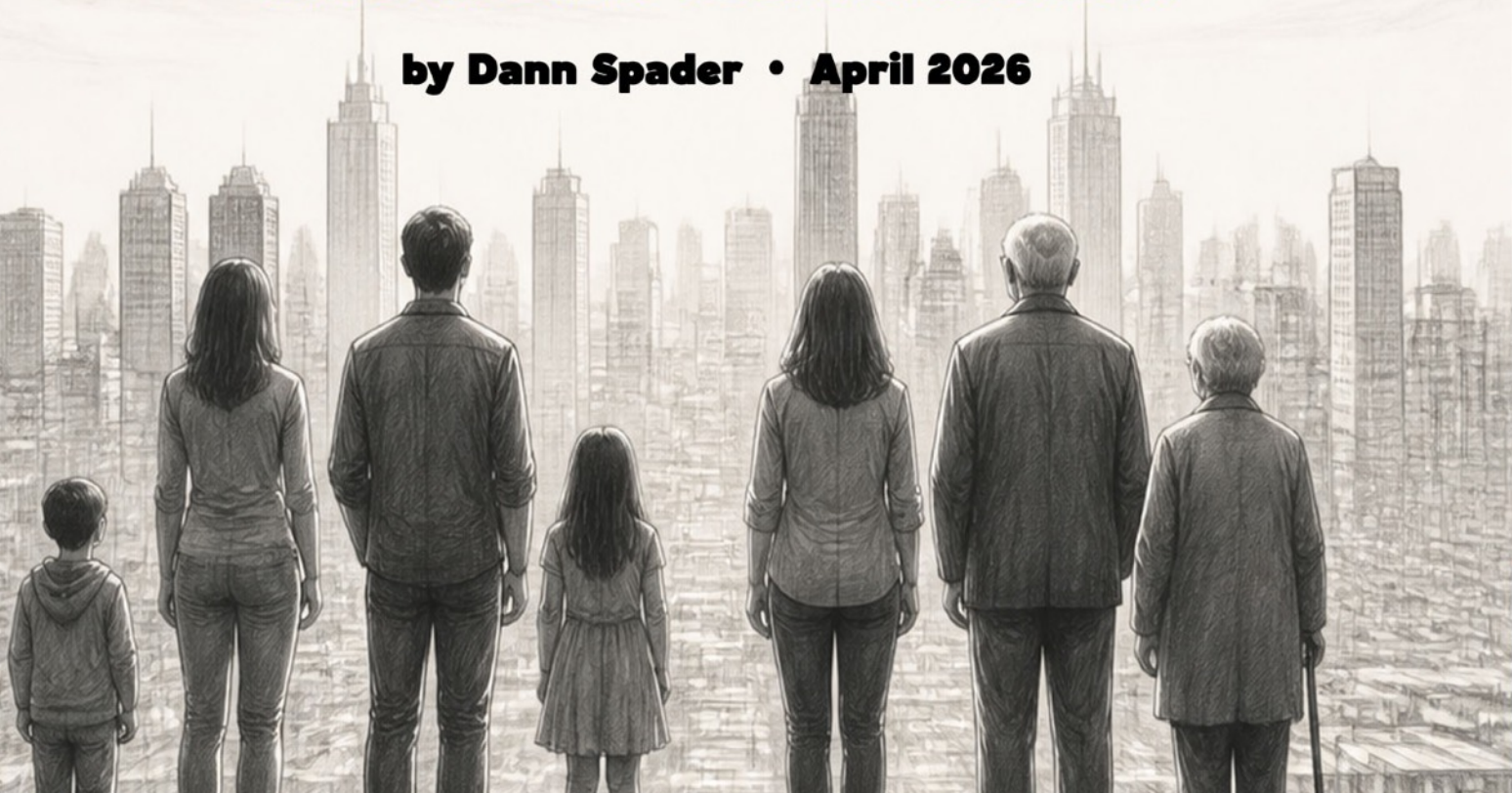
FUTURE HOPE



The Disciple-Making Value of Teaching Christ's Return

**Reclaiming Biblical Hope for
the Next Generation**

by Dann Spader • April 2026



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FutureHopeNow.com

A Question for Disciple-Makers

For more than fifty years my life has been shaped by a single question: How did Jesus make disciples who changed the world?

This question has guided my study of Scripture and my efforts at helping to start and grow discipling movements globally.

Through both Sonlife and Concentric Global, I've had the privilege of watching thousands of people mobilized for disciple-making.

These experiences have taught me the impact that younger leaders can have when they are discipled well and mobilized for the mission of Christ. Reaching the next generation is truly the most strategic way to change any nation.

But in recent years, a different question has increasingly captured my attention—one that goes beyond strategy. It is a question about the heart of any ministry long term. It is the “why” behind the “what”... the “passion” behind the “priority”... the “reason” behind the “reality”.

Why is Christ's own emphasis upon His return, so critical to a clear understanding of His life and the Great Commission? How does the success or failure of our teaching Christ's return, impact our ability in disciple-making?

Today's 'next-generation' are growing up in a world saturated with instability. Through smartphones and social-media, they are discipled daily by fear--wars, division, political tensions, and economic uncertainty capture their daily attention.

In this environment young leaders are asking profound questions:

- Where is the world headed?
- Does my life matter?
- Is there any reason to hope?

They've rightfully been called “the anxious generation”. And I'm increasingly convinced that this anxiety is directly connected to the absence of a clear, compelling biblical future. The Biblical Story: God's answer to the anxiety

I love a great movie. “Top Gun: Maverick” with Tom Cruise, is my all-time favorite. I have seen it five times and would love to see it again. It is the type of movie, no one would walk out of when it was only three-quarters done.

Why? Because the ending of the movie, gives meaning to everything that comes before it. It is the ending that makes the events of the story so meaningful.

Even when you know the ending of that movie, the significance of each detail and conversation, takes on new meaning as you watch it again. The ending makes the plotline so significant.

The same is true with God's grand story of Scripture. Yet today, many young believers have never been told how the story ends.

In a recent Christian school setting, 500 young people were asked if they've ever heard a series of messages about Christ's return. Not one hand went up. In a follow-up question, it was asked: "How many of you in the last month, with the chaos of life events, have thought about the end of the world?" Almost every hand went up.¹

Recently, in a training situation with 50 youth pastors... I asked: "How many of you have had a course on eschatology?" Only one person raised their hand.² In a similar discussion, a Christian publisher stated that in 25 years of publishing youth curriculum... they had never published a youth study on Christ's return.³

"We've stopped preaching the return of Christ" one pastor stated. "Study an older hymnbook and you will find that the majority of hymns, many in the last stanza, focus on the return of Christ."⁴ And yet, in a personal study of modern choruses... I could only find 1 chorus out of 50 that had anything about the return of Christ.⁵ And we wonder why our culture is drowning in anxiety.

We have reduced the Gospel message to simply this: Jesus died for our sins so that we can have a better life and someday go to heaven. The Gospel message is reduced to simply personal salvation.

While this contains essential truth, it does not capture the entire story of Scripture. The Bible presents a sweeping narrative that unfolds across four movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, *and Restoration*.

God created the world good. Humanity rebelled and introduced sin into creation. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God initiated redemption.

Yet personal redemption is not the final chapter. In God's story the final movement is complete restoration!

Scripture points to a future in which Christ returns and renews all of creation. (Acts 3:21, Matt 19:28)

As John Walvoord would state: "The second coming of Christ is not merely a doctrine... it is the culmination of all prophecy and the new beginning of God's full redemptive plan."⁶ Without restoration of all God's creation, the story is unfinished!

¹ As reported by Todd Hampson at "Littler Rock Christian Academy" in 2020

² ICOM Youth Pastor Appreciation training in March 2026

³ As stated by Doug Franklin of LeaderTrek Youth Ministry in March 2026

⁴ Message by Scott Boerckel of East White Oaks Bible Church in Spring 2026. In a personal study of 65 traditional hymns online, 77% had some focus on Christ's return in at least one stanza. Many were primarily about His Return.

⁵ Research of Top 50 choruses online in 2023... the one chorus was "The Lion and Lamb" by Bethel Music

⁶ John Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible*, (Victor Books, 1999)

Christ's Return is an essential part of the Gospel message

The gospel is not simply the story of forgiveness. It is the story of God's ultimate victory over sin, death, and evil. He will one day return and redeem fallen man, remove the curse, and restore all of His creation.

To ignore this is to only tell two-thirds of His story. When we leave out Christ's return, the gospel subtly becomes man-centered instead of God-centered. It fails to honor God for what He will yet accomplish.

As N.T. Wright states, "when we look at the contemporary world and church, we discover great confusion about future hope, but when we look at the early Christians... we find a very precise and specific faith." He continues, "the Gospel of Jesus Christ announces that what God did for Jesus at Easter he will do not only for all those who are 'in Christ' but also for entire cosmos. It will be an act of new creation..." "This is what the whole world is waiting for."⁷

Concerning the second coming of Christ, N.T. Wright continues, "We cannot relegate it to the margins of our thinking, our living, and our praying. If we do, we shall pull everything else out of shape".⁸

The gospel announces not only what Christ has done but also what He will do when He returns. The full Gospel is that Christ died, was buried, and rose again, and one day will return... to give us glorified resurrected bodies to rule and reign with Him (I Cor 15). Without this final dimension, the story of God's faithfulness remains unfinished.

Without the complete salvation story being told... our Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13) is not fully realized and the Gospel is diminished. The Gospel gets lowered to be just about us... not God's grand meta-narrative of full redemption and restoration.

We are told that even all of His creation "waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (Rom 8:19-21). Creation longs for, waits eagerly, and is anticipating that day of full restoration and the revealing of God's children to complete salvation.

There is a reason why God chose to make the very last book of the Bible to be about His return and restoration. There is a reason why He promised blessing to those who read it (Rev 1:3). To know God's full plan adds meaning and hope to all of life's actions. It gives greater meaning to all the details of our life-story.

⁷ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Joy*, (HarperOne, 2008) p. 79, 99, 107

⁸ Ibid., p. 142

Christ's Return Is a Jesus Issue

Recently a friend asked: "Dann, you've spent your life teaching Jesus and disciple-making, why are you changing your focus now?" I was surprised at that question... and initially couldn't understand it.

My immediate response: "I haven't shifted—I've only gone beyond the incarnate Jesus to focus more upon the resurrected and returning Christ".

As I later thought about the question from this friend, he seemed to see Christ's return as distraction to the issue of disciple-making Jesus' style.

To me the opposite was true. Biblical prophecy is completely about the person of Jesus Christ... "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10).

- 28-33% of the Bible was prophetic when it was written... with 50% of that yet to be fulfilled.⁹
- The 216 chapters of the NT contain 318 references to the Lord's second coming, which means that one verse out of every 30 verses state that fact.¹⁰ All 9 NT authors mention His second coming.
- To ignore prophecy would be to ignore a major portion of what Jesus taught--as His second longest sermon (Matt 24-25) was about His return... and His Coming is only second to salvation as the most mentioned doctrine.

I believe it is impossible to fully comprehend the complete meaning of Christ's first coming... if we fail to study the details of His second coming.

His mission of making disciples (John 17:4, Matt 28:16-20) is best understood in the context of His complete plan of "restoration" (Acts 3:21) and "renewal of all things" (Matt 19:28). As J. Dwight Pentecost often stated: "To understand Christ fully, one must understand not only His first coming but His second."

All in all, the return of Christ reveals the full character of Jesus. He is not only the suffering Savior but also the reigning King bringing full renewal to His creation (Matt 19:28). He will be faithful in all His irrevocable covenants... keeping the full promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. His faithfulness to us becomes the basis of our faithfulness to Him.

⁹ Todd Hampson, *Non-Prophets Guide to End Times*, (Harvest House Publishers 2018) p.7,

¹⁰ Thomas Ice and LaHaye, *Charting the End Times*, (Harvest House Publishers, 2001) p. 25

Questions to Discuss

1. How would an understanding of God's complete story impact our view of our present-day reality?
2. Do you agree/disagree with the premise that the Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus died, was buried, rose again and is coming back to give us glorified bodies to rule and reign with Him (see I Cor 15)? How would this understanding, shape our sharing of the Gospel?
3. In what way is prophecy all about Jesus?

Christ's Return Is an Apologetic Issue

Prophecy clearly teaches us that God stands above history and directs it toward His purposes. God is not reacting to history... He is directing it.

With hundreds of biblical prophecies fulfilled, the rock solidness of God's Word and the sure existence of our Creator can be documented historically and biblically.

As Isaiah records, God declares: "I will make known the end from the beginning" (Is 44:6-7). Prophecy is history written in advance... and only God can do that!

For example... 109 different prophecies were given to prepare us for Christ's first coming. Peter Stoner in his book *Science Speaks*, calculated the odds of one man just fulfilling 8 of these prophecies would be 10 to the 17th power (1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000). Stoner suggests that if we take that number of silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas, they will cover all of the state 2 feet deep. Mark one of those silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly. Blindfold a man and tell him he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up the one marked silver dollar.

What would the odds be of getting the right one?

Stoner concludes, "Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing those eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man!"¹¹

This says nothing about the other exact prophecies of Daniel 9--which documents the precise day of the Messiah's coming (173,880 days) after the signing of the decree by Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem. Or nothing about the precise nature of Daniel 2 and Daniel 7... predicting the history of the Gentile nations ruling in human history (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome). The Scriptures are filled with precise, exact biblical prophecies—building our confidence in God's authoritative Word and character.

¹¹ Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks: Scientific Proof of the Accuracy of Prophecy and the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), pp.107-109.

As Isaiah clearly states, ‘Who is like me?... I established a people and explained its future’ (Is 44:7 NLT). A few chapters later God declares through Isaiah: “only I can tell you the future before it even happens” (Is 46:10 NLT). And then God mocks the man-made idols who don’t know the future and says: “...from the beginning I have told you *plainly* what would happen.” (Is 48:16 NLT)

Jack Hibbs often likes to say, “Many say that you can’t prove the existence of God. I believe you can!”¹² Prophecy demonstrates clearly that God exists and He knows the future! (Is 41:26; Is 42:9; Is 43:9,12; Is 44:6-7; Is 45:21; Is 46:10; Is 48:3,5,15-16 NLT). Prophecy documents the reality of our God and His trustworthiness in the affairs of man.

Understanding prophecy about Christ’s return is called our “Blessed Hope” (Titus 2:13), and the “anchor for our soul... firm and secure” (Heb 6:19). Teaching prophecy creates a firm and secure foundation for any new or maturing believer. It confirms that God is Sovereign and rules over all. It assures each of us of our future hope.

Christ’s Return Fuels Disciple-Making long-term

Throughout Christian history, belief in the return of Christ has energized missionary movements.

As I was preparing to write this paper, I kept reading about the impact of the Niagara Bible Conference of the late 19th century. Begun in the late 1870’s, lay people... like today, were hungry to study about Christ’s return. Pastors were rarely speaking about the return of Christ and people were eager, in the chaos of their world, to know more. As James Brookes, the president of the Niagara Bible Conference, wrote later in a call to a deeper theological study in 1878, “The precious doctrine of Christ’s second appearance has, we are constrained to believe, long lain under neglect and misapprehension.”¹³

Beginning as a simple Bible conference in the 1870’s, focusing on the literal interpretation of Christ’s return, it continued on for over 30+ years. Out of this conference came the expansive Bible Conference movement that swept North America... along with the starting of multiple Bible colleges (such as Moody, Wheaton, Biola), all for the training of young disciples in God’s Word.

D.L. Moody was invited to this conference and he was amazed at the hunger of people to study the Bible literally... especially as it related to prophecy.

He decided that young people might also be interested in this... so in 1886 he invited students to come to Mt Hermon, Massachusetts for a month of Bible study. 251 students came, and without any leadership prompting, 99 of them signed a paper saying, “we are willing and desirous, God permitting,

¹² Lamplit Youth Prophecy Conference, Chino Calvary Church, Chino CA, Nov 2024 message.

¹³ Larry Pettegrew, *Forsaking Israel*, (Krell Press 2021), p. 310

to become foreign missionaries.” The morning after the closing of the conference the ninety-nine volunteers met for a farewell service, and while they prayed one more came in to join their ranks... making it 100.¹⁴

That became the beginning of the Student Volunteer Movement—the greatest sending movement in history. Over 20,500 young leaders went to the mission field by 1945, driven by one powerful vision: “The evangelization of the world in our generation.”¹⁵

And that movement helped spark organizations like Navigators, Cru, Young Life, InterVarsity—and even contributed to the Jesus Movement of the 1970s in which I personally came to Christ.

And interestingly, so many of us were greatly impacted by reading Hal Lindsey’s “Late Great Planet Earth” (38 million copies sold)... a revolutionary book speaking about Christ’s imminent return. Fueled by the conviction that “the-time-is-short” caused us to collectively see over 1000 college students, in South Dakota alone, come to Christ in just 2 years. God moved powerfully through a generation of young new believers as we studied the urgency of the return of Christ. And this reality, has happened multiple times in history.

And I believe God wants to do the same thing again!

Revival history demonstrates that to the degree in which believers understand that “time-is- short”, is the degree to which the urgency of evangelism is fueled. As I have read over 100 books on Christ’s return in the last 2 years... my heart is stirred afresh with a passion to share Christ and warn my lost friends of Christ’s imminent return. Christ’s return... does this!

As the famous gathering in 1878 of 112 “bishops, professors, ministers, and brethren”, designated as the First International Prophecy Conference, the conference unanimously passed a series of resolutions... including the following: “the doctrine of our Lord’s pre-millennial advent, instead of paralyzing evangelistic and missionary effort, is one of the mightiest incentives to earnestness in preaching the Gospel to every creature, until He comes.”¹⁶

Christ’s Return is a compelling evangelistic message

My wife’s parents, spent 35 years in Zimbabwe, the heart of Africa... being some of the first white people seen in the ‘bush’ of Zimbabwe. They were called to Africa as part of the Student Volunteer Movement of the early 20th century... sensing the great need for the “evangelization of our world in our generation”.

¹⁴ <https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/4/resources/250>

¹⁵ Student Volunteer Movement, Christianity.com article: <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/student-volunteer-mission-11630615.html>

¹⁶ Larry Pettegrew, *Forsaking Israel*, (Kress Biblical Resources, 2021) p. 311.

I came to Christ in the 70's... being the first of our family of 16 kids to trust Christ. The message of the forgiveness for my sins and the imminent return of Christ... changed my whole world view. We knew 'the-time-was-short' and we needed to reach our friends for Christ. The urgency of the message, coupled with the blessed hope of His return... fueled our Great Commission passion.

Recently in developing two different "youth-prophecy conferences" our leadership team at Future Hope¹⁷ were shocked at the hunger and deep interest of teen-agers in learning what God's Word said about the future. Expecting just a few hundred to attend, over 1000 participated in person with countless others online. And in each situation... almost 200 students made decisions for Christ. After several 45-minute biblical sessions...when the 'mic's' were opened for questions... students rushed in line 20-50 deep to ask some profound questions. The hunger for truth and hope about the future...caused all of us to marvel. ¹⁸

As one person said: "When young people grasp the urgency of Christ's return, they don't disengage—they mobilize!" I will never forget the junior high student at the 'mic' who asked the simple question... "If this is true, we must tell our friends. Can I bring my friend tomorrow?"

And I believe tens of thousands of young disciples are ready to be mobilized to tell their friends about this glorious future that God has prepared for us.

Evangelism is the natural response from disciples hearing the truth about God's deep love and great plan for humanity. Prophecy doesn't distract from mission... it ignites it!

Questions to Discuss:

1. How does understanding biblical prophecy, deepen our apologetic depth and confidence in God?
2. Historically, why is it true that prophecy is the fuel that drives a long-term passion for the Great Commission?
3. Why does prophecy have such an evangelistic appeal? How has this been abused and what should be avoided?

¹⁷ <https://futurehope.now>

¹⁸ Lamplit Youth Prophecy Conference 2024 (Prophecy Overview) and 2025 (The Daniel Project). Over 900 attended the first and over 1000 attended the second, with many others online. Conducted at Calvary Chapel in Chino CA. by their youth staff with Jack Hibbs their senior pastor, along with Future Hope trainers... Todd Hampson and Jeff Kinley. This event will also be conducted in Nov 6-7, 2026 and we are seeking to multiply it with online hosts.

Christ's Return is a core discipling issue

In the 50 plus years of studying the Life of Christ, I'm amazed that I missed this simple truth.

God's Word gives us twice as many verses about Christ's second coming as it does about His first coming. Jesus spoke over 19 times about His return... with His second largest message addressing the questions of His disciples about this topic (Matt 24-26).

Biblically, the second largest doctrine of the Scriptures, next only to salvation... is biblical prophecy. 28% of the Bible speaks to this topic. And yet sadly, my generation was encouraged not to teach prophecy... as it can be divisive or distracting. (Can you imagine a church saying we only want to teach 75% of the Bible?)

The apostle Paul clearly communicated this urgency of Christ's imminent return. In Thessalonica, Paul found a group of people eagerly responding to the Gospel. With these new believers, he spent at least 3 weeks discipling them in their new faith... and then three months later writes to the Thessalonians, addressing their concerns.

Every chapter of 1 and 2 Thessalonians speaks to some aspect of Christ's return. They were concerned that perhaps they had missed the Lord's return.

Paul reminds them what he taught them about the rapture, the Day of the Lord, the coming wrath, the Antichrist, and Christ's own teaching concerning the subject... saying to them, "don't you remember that when I was with you, I told you about these things?" (2 Thess 2:5). The imminent return of Christ, for Paul, wasn't advanced theology... it was foundational disciple-making!

We can see this clearly in Hebrews 6:1-2 (AMPC) where we are told: "Therefore let us go on and get past the *elementary stage* in the teachings and doctrine of Christ... not again... *laying the foundation of... the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgement* and punishment. The resurrection from the dead and eternal judgement are Second Coming of Christ issues. The author of Hebrews clearly understood these core discipling issues as foundational issues!

As C.S. Lewis writes: "There are many reasons why the modern Christian and the modern theologian may hesitate to give to the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming that emphasis that was laid upon it by our ancestors. Yet it seems to me impossible to retain in any recognizable form our belief in the Divinity of Christ and the truth of the Christian revelation while abandoning, or even *persistently neglecting* the promised, and threatening Return. "He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead." Says the Apostles' Creed. "This same Jesus," says the angel in Acts, "shall so come in the manner as you have seen him go into heaven."... If this is not an integral part of the faith once given to the saints, I do not know what is!" ¹⁹

Many reasons can be given for why this is critical. The very same reasons I'm arguing for in this paper. Christ's return provides hope and a full understanding of God's plan. It speaks truth about God's character, His goodness, His grace, and His justice. It produces endurance long-term during suffering and trials. Understanding Christ's imminent return helps keep our eyes focused on the "joy set before us" (Heb 12:2).

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*, (New York: Harcourt, 1952), p. 93

Christ's Return Produces Holy Living

When believers truly believe Christ could return at any moment, everything changes:

- Priorities shift
- Sin loses its grip
- Eternity becomes real

Scriptures call this a “purifying hope.” (1 John 3:3)

R.C. Sproul consistently taught in his Ligonier series that the second coming is the one redemptive historical event every believer across all generations will witness, and that the church's blessed hope is the visible, bodily return of Christ."²⁰

We live differently when we know:

- Justice is coming
- Rewards are real
- Our lives matter eternally

There will be justice in the world one day. God will judge and He will reward. This truth brings accountability and a sense of purpose.

In his recent book, “The King is Coming”, John Bevere tells about traveling to Brazil to speak in a stadium to 12,000 pastors and cell group leaders from a single church network. After the event, while meeting with the top pastors of this network... John asked these pastors, “If those in attendance were just the pastors and leaders, how many people are in your churches?”

One responded, “Well over 300,000 people!” Amazed, John responded. “When did this start and who was the founder?” Expecting a 100-year history, they responded, “It started 16 years ago with one man.”

John was stunned... “How did you do such a thing in a first-world nation? I thought I knew the answer to my question: It would be the effectiveness of their small discipleship groups.”

However, without hesitation, one of the pastors responded, “It’s because we teach our people the second coming of Christ. His assessment—judgment—of all we did with our lives, the ensuing eternal rewards, and how this will set our positions of leadership in the millennium and throughout eternity.” I was speechless, John continued.

The pastor then continued, “I’ve been asked to speak at numerous conferences in the USA. I’ve observed an interesting reality in most American believers. They see life through a seventy-eighty year perspective, whereas our people see life through an eternal perspective.”

²⁰ R.C. Sproul, *The Work of Christ* (Reformation Trust, 2012) and his “Renewing Your Mind” teaching series

John then wrote: “His comment profoundly impacted me... I contemplated and prayed about it for a long time!”²¹

But even more significant, I love what Jesus says multiple times, but very specifically in Rev 22:12... “Behold, I’m coming soon! My reward is with Me... “

What is that reward that Jesus promises at His return? It is an important question, and as I have thought about it... here are some of those promises that I believe are wrapped in our reward...

1. Satan will be bound (Rev 20:1-2,10)

Imagine a world in which Satan is bound, unable to spread lies, deception, hatred or evil. His ability to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10) will no longer exist. As Isaiah writes: “No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders.” (Is 60:18)

2. The Curse will be lifted (Rev 22:3; Rom 8:21-25)

Imagine all of God’s creation being “liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (8:21). God tells us that at His return He will make (not new things) but all things new... in other words, the curse will be lifted and creation will be what God originally intended it to be (Rev 22:3)! Beautiful, life giving, and reflecting His glory.

Animals will celebrate, creation will rejoice, and the trees of the field will clap with joy... the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard no more (Is 65:17,19)

3. We will be given glorified bodies (I Cor 15)

Imagine being “as youth” again (Is 40:10,30-31). No pain, no sorrows, no tears... with glorified bodies fully capable of being and doing all that God originally created us to do. We will be like Jesus (I John 3:2).

Zechariah 9:16-17 describes us this way: “The Lord their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will *sparkle in his land like jewels* in a crown. *How attractive and beautiful* they will be!”

Dan 12:3 says: “Those who are wise will *shine like the brightness* of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”

John Eldridge writes in his book, *All Things New*: “Your renewed bodies will be like the body of Jesus. We will burst forth into the new creation like children let out for summer break, running, somersaulting, cartwheeling into the meadows of the new earth. Running like the children, without getting tired... faster and faster till it was more like flying that running and even the Eagle overhead was no faster than they.”²²

²¹ John Bever, *The King is Coming*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2026), p. 36-37

²² John Eldridge, *All Things New*, (Thomas Nelson, 2017), p. 90

The doctrine of the resurrection is grounded in the reality of God's restoration of all creation. This causes N.T. Wright to claim that, "the resurrection was from the beginning a revolutionary doctrine."²³

C.S. Lewis said that this, "should be the subject of constant meditation"²⁴ to which Eldridge writes: "You have no idea what a great good this does the soul until you give it a thorough try yourself."²⁵

4. We will rule and reign with Him

We are told in Rev 5:10 that, "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and *they will reign* on the earth." Our future is like that of Adam and Eve... ruling and reigning on the earth.

Acts 3:21 states this about Jesus, "He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

God could instantaneously restore all things... but my understanding of God is that He delights in working in and through us to accomplish His will on earth. I tend to believe He will use us to restore this glorious earth to its original condition. Heaven and earth will be reunited.

Can you imagine going out to fix something... and it stays fixed? No rust, no decay, no aging nor breaking down. And I believe, that as we do this restoration, it will be alongside the saints of old. Telling stories to one another of His goodness... discovering how He miraculously worked in each of our lives.

Can you imagine the joy and privilege of working alongside Abraham, Joshua, Daniel, Sarah or Martha... telling stories of how God worked throughout the ages... learning the details of their life and story with God?

Can you imagine learning, perhaps for the first time, how your efforts contributed to God's glorious plan... bringing even greater joy and worship as you see how your simple efforts were a part of completing His perfect plan.

In this process we will also reveal the Glory of God. As Dallas Willard writes: "We will not sit around looking at one another or God for eternity, but will join the eternal Logos, 'reign with Him' in the endlessly ongoing creative work of God. It is for this that we were individually created, as both kings and priests (Ex 19:6; Rev 5:10). His plan is for us to develop, as apprentices to Jesus, to the point where we can take our place in ongoing creativity of the universe."²⁶

Is 65:21 states: "They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit". Is 61:4 goes to another level saying: "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations".

²³ N.T. Wright. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (Fortress Press, 2002), p. 138

²⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt, 1952) p. 106

²⁵ John Eldridge, *All Things New* (Nelson Books, 2017) p. 183

²⁶ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy; Rediscovering our Hidden Life In God*, (HarperOne, 1999), p. 378

Will we rebuild the ancient city of Rome? The beautiful Persian hanging gardens? The ancient cities of Egypt? Only God knows... but we are told that He will make all things new. Will He use us in that process... redeeming the best of culture? I believe so!

That will be part of our reward for abiding in Him... faithful with a few talents, He will allow us rule over multiple cities or regions. "Well done good and faithful servant! You have faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your Master's happiness" (Matt 24:21).

This is the happy glorious Gospel: Jesus died, buried, rose again and is coming back to give us glorified bodies to rule and reign with Him (I Cor 15). As Russell D. Moore emphasized, "The point of the Gospel is not that we should go to heaven when we die. Instead, it is that heaven will come down, transforming and renewing the earth and the entire universe."²⁷

Richard Middleton says it this way: "Full redemption is a future hope, not yet a present reality. Instead, we live between the times—between the inauguration of the kingdom through Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension, on the one hand, and the consummation of kingdom, which awaits Christ's return or parousia, on the other hand."²⁸

Questions to Discuss:

1. Why was the return of Christ so central to Paul's core discipling content with the Thessalonians? What can happen when we fail to disciple in prophetic truth?
2. Why, when properly understood, does prophecy cause us to "purify our lives"?

Conclusion; A Call to All Disciple-Makers... the best is yet to come

The story is told of the woman who devoted her life to serving the young people at a camp in Texas. For years she served as head cook for 1000's of young people. Known for her great cooking and surprise desserts, after each meal she would tell the campers to take their dishes to the kitchen, but save their fork... as the "best is yet to come".

After 45 years of serving young people... she only had one request upon her death. At her funeral she wanted an open casket... and she wanted an upright fork placed in each hand... as a reminder to all the campers: "The Best is Yet to Come".



²⁷ Russell D. Moore, *Personal and Cosmic Eschatology*, in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H, 2007), p. 913

²⁸ J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, (Baker academics, 2014), p. 212

The early church lived with that powerful awareness that Jesus Christ would return and that the “best was yet to come”!

That expectation shaped their courage, their holiness, and their missionary passion.

Today the next generation of disciples desperately needs this same vision.

As C.S Lewis wrote: “The historic church held the return of Christ to be so central to the Christian faith that they felt it could not be put aside or buried as some peripheral doctrine without losing Christianity itself.”

He then went on to say: “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this”.²⁹

My prayer is that we would fully recover and champion the biblical hope of Christ’s return, to help us continue to see an expanded generation of young disciples who live with courage, holiness, and missionary passion.

Because of Jesus Christ soon return, the future is filled with hope.

Truly, the best is yet to come!

²⁹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 1952), p. 135

My 10 Favorite Resources

(For those who want to do more study)

Quick overview books:

1. **A Quick Reference Guide to the End Times** by Jeff Kinley and Todd Hampson

A 50-page overview of end times and the value of prophecy. Easy to read for someone who wants a simple presentation. Very well done... my wife Char loved this simple overview.

2. **What Happens Next** by Max Lucado

In typical Max Lucado fashion, he makes prophecy come alive for everyday living. Having been taught amillennialism early on, Max tells his journey of studying the scriptures and reworking his complete understanding of what the Scriptures teach about Christ's return. Simply written and clearly laid out... prophecy comes alive.

3. **The Non-Prophets Guide to End Times** by Todd Hampson.

This book takes their simple reference guide (above) and goes deeper with charts, graphs, and graphic design... done by Todd himself. It is loaded with facts about the value of studying prophecy. Easy to read and a great overview.

4. **The Non-Prophets Guide to DANIEL** by Todd Hampson.

The first step in understanding prophecy is clearly understanding the book of Daniel. I thought this book might be very basic, but it was a great study of Daniel with tons of insight and biblical understanding. I have taught Daniel several times and yet I learned so much as I read this work. Todd has a whole series of books on prophecy and all of them are excellent.

Brand new resource: *The King is Coming* by John Bevere. 2026 Best seller by Thomas Nelson publishers. An excellent book, which paints the return of Christ... not as an event to be analyzed but as a Father gathering his children and as a husband marrying His bride.

Hermeneutics:

5. **Dispensational Hermeneutics** by Michael Vlach.

Your understanding of eschatology is shaped by your hermeneutics. In this simple 100-page book, Michael clearly lays out the different approaches to hermeneutics and prophecy... with clear principles and clear differences of each view. An excellent resource which describes with fairness and clarity... the varying approaches.

6. **Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics** by Walt Kaiser

While described as an introduction to biblical hermeneutics, this is one of the richest and deepest resources on the subject. Not necessarily a quick read... it is filled with profound data and biblical facts that will amaze any reader. Walt Kaiser was my favorite professor in all my Bible School and Seminary training and I took every course he offered.

Replacement Theology:

7. **Forsaking Israel... How it Happened and Why it Matters** by Larry D. Pettegrew and other contributors.

Perhaps my favorite book in terms of explaining the history of how Israel got left out of prophecy... it traces the roots of Amillennialism, Covenant and Reformed Theology... along with clearly showing their strengths and weaknesses. A very respectful study, it is filled with historical insight and **perhaps one of the most helpful theological works I have read**. It gave me clarity on the development of historical systematic thoughts.

8. Has the Church Replaced Israel by Michael Vlach

This is a history and evaluation of replacement theology (Supersessionism). Giving clear definitions, Michael traces the views held during the various stages of church history... the Patristic Era, the Medieval Era, Reformation Era and Modern Era... clearly helping the reader grasp the back-drop of antisemitism. He then presents fairly the various scriptural passages used to argue for replacement theology with a clear defense of those passages from a non-replacement theology framework.

9. The Harvest Handbook of Bible Prophecy by Ed Hinson, Mark Hitchcock, and Tim LaHaye.

With almost 400 pages of stats, data, resources and questions and answers... this resource will answer almost any question you may have about biblical prophecy.

Podcasts:

10. The Prophecy Pros Podcast with Jeff Kinley and Todd Hampson (both are excellent bible teachers with many good books) <https://prophecyprospodcast.com> I love how they so carefully handle the biblical texts. I have teamed up with these two prophecy experts to create our new ministry: "Future Hope" <https://futurehope.now> We have just finished our second "youth prophecy conference" with amazing results... we hope to multiply online our Fall 2026 event... "The Olivet Discourse... Jesus' own words on His return".

They recently did a series of podcasts on why reaching the next generation with "future hope" is so needed. One excellent podcast is: <https://prophecyprospodcast.com/s18e8/> with Joel Pickett, youth pastor at Calvary Chapel in Chino Hills... where we have conducted the "Youth Prophecy Conferences". I also did a recent podcast with them: <https://prophecyprospodcast.com/s18e5/>

Additional recommendations:

Prophecy Today with Jimmy DeYoung. A longer weekly podcast but it gives weekly Middle East current events, with various experts and the legacy preaching of their father... Jimmy DeYoung.