



Today, we continue our series, “Unreasonable God.” To be unreasonable means to be beyond the limits of fairness. When God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, it was beyond the limits of fairness. What is fair is for us to be judged by God because of our sins. Yet God went beyond normal and fairness and, in His grace, gave us Jesus. As we approach Christmas and remember Jesus’ first coming (born of a virgin in the form of a baby), today we’ll turn our attention to His second coming and consider his “Unreasonable Return.” It’s beyond the limits of fairness that He would come once, much less twice.

Key Passage: Mark 13:24-27

Discussion Questions:

1. How do the differences between Jesus' first and second comings demonstrate humility and glory?

Jesus' first coming is characterized by humility—born as a baby in poverty and suffering rejection. His second coming, by contrast, will be in glory and power, reflecting His role as the sovereign King and Judge. This contrast reinforces the duality of Jesus' mission: suffering for salvation and reigning in ultimate glory and justice.

Theologian J.C. Ryle - “The second coming of Christ shall be utterly unlike the first. He came the first time in weakness, a tender infant, born of a poor woman in the manger at Bethlehem, unnoticed, unhonored, and scarcely known. He shall come the second time in royal dignity, with the armies of heaven around Him, to be known, recognized, and feared by all the tribes of the earth. He came the first time to suffer – to bear our sins, to be reckoned a curse, to be despised, rejected, unjustly condemned, and slain. He shall come the second time to reign – to put down every enemy beneath His feet, to take the kingdom of this world for His inheritance, to rule them with righteousness, to judge all men, and to live forevermore. How vast the difference! How mighty the contrast!”

2. What signs of the end times does Jesus mention? How does the "birth pains" metaphor deepen our understanding of the signs leading to Christ's return?

Jesus mentions wars, famines, and natural disasters as signs. These events are echoed in today’s conflicts, hunger crises, and natural disasters, indicating the brokenness of the world and the need for Christ’s return. The metaphor of “birth pains” suggests a process of increasing intensity and inevitability, culminating in relief and new life. It illustrates that while the signs may involve suffering and turmoil, they lead to the ultimate joy and restoration of Christ's return.

3. How does Paul's description of creation "groaning" in Romans 8:22-23 relate to the idea of a broken world awaiting redemption?

Paul's imagery of groaning portrays the deep yearning for renewal and restoration, not just in humanity but all creation. It aligns with the narrative that the world is fundamentally broken by sin and awaits the transformative return of Christ to set all things right.

4. What is the significance of Jesus' warnings about false messiahs and global turmoil (wars, famines, earthquakes) as signs of the end?

These warnings emphasize vigilance and discernment for believers. They suggest that such events are precursors or "birth pains" of the end, urging believers to remain steadfast in faith and not be misled by false claims or fear.

5. What is the "rapture," and how is it described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17? How was the tribulation described in the sermon, and what purpose does it serve?

The rapture refers to the sudden gathering of believers to meet Christ in the air. It is a moment of immediate transformation for those in Christ, signaling hope for believers but urgency for those unprepared. The tribulation is a seven-year period marked by God's unrestrained judgment, deception, and the rise of the Antichrist. It serves as a warning to humanity about God's imminent judgment and the need for repentance.

David Jeremiah - "The tribulation is a seven-year period that will begin immediately following the Rapture. Evil will spread without restraint. The diseases, natural disasters, wars, and devastation we see in our world today are but a taste of the atrocities to come. Toward the end, the Antichrist will sit at the center of the Tribulation's evil as he personifies Satan. The tribulation will be a terrible time, but it will serve a purpose: it will warn mankind of God's imminent judgment."

6. Why is it important to distinguish between "first-tier" and "second-tier" beliefs in discussions about the end times (Rapture, Tribulation)?

As you might imagine, there are various views on the return of Christ. Some believe that Christians will live through the tribulation. Some believe the rapture and return of Christ will occur at the same time (we will be caught up in the air, then immediately return to earth with Christ). It's good to remind ourselves of first-tier and second-tier issues in the Christian faith. Recognizing the distinction helps maintain unity among Christians despite differing interpretations of secondary issues, such as the rapture's timing or tribulation. This focus preserves the core doctrine of Christ's return as a shared foundational belief.

7. How should believers respond to the uncertainty of the timing of Christ's return, according to Mark 13:32-33?

No one knows when Christ will return. The Bible says that not even Jesus knows, but only God the Father. In fact, anyone who tells you a specific date goes directly in contrast to this passage in the Word of God. Believers are called to stay vigilant, spiritually alert, and ready. This means living faithfully, avoiding complacency, and focusing on preparing for Christ's return rather than speculating about specific dates.

8. What practical steps can someone take to “be ready” for Christ’s return, as urged in the conclusion?

Readiness involves personal repentance, faith in Jesus, living obediently, staying spiritually alert, and sharing the hope of Christ with others while maintaining an eternal perspective. A.W. Tozer said, “When He returns is not as important as the fact that we are ready for Him when He does return.” Tozer’s statement emphasizes the importance of daily faithfulness and readiness over speculation about timing.

Are you ready for the return of Christ?