



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 145

**Physical return in final judgment and glory** – The fourth and culminating stage of Christ’s exaltation is His physical return in final judgment and glory at the last day (Matthew 25:31-34, 41; John 5:26-29; Acts 10:42; 17:30-31; Romans 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1-2, 8; James 5:8-9).

**The nature of Christ’s return** – Even though in the church today there is a great deal of fascination with regards to the return of Christ and the end of the world, sadly in majority of cases the modern understanding of such topics is unbiblical, suffering from two main errors. The first error is dispensationalism, which teaches that Christ will return seven years prior to His final coming, known as the “secret rapture,” to resurrect the righteous dead and rapture them along with the living believers, taking them out of this world. The second is known as hyper-preterism, which teaches that Christ’s second coming already occurred in the first century, in the destruction of the temple and the fall of Jerusalem. Both views rely on the misinterpretation of a number of prophetic passages.

The Bible clearly and solely talks about two comings of Christ – His first coming in humiliation, and His second coming in exaltation. There is no third coming (Hebrews 9:27-28). The second coming of Christ will be a personal, physical and visible event (Acts 1:9-11). The two angels told the disciples that the return of Christ will be personal, that is, the same person who left them will return; that it will be visible, that is, as they saw Him leave, so they will see Him return; and that it will be physical, that is, as Christ ascended physically up to the sky, so He will descend physically from the sky. It will not be a secret or spiritual return, but a public and physical return (Luke 17:24; 21:35; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The second coming of Christ will be a glorious event. At His first coming, Jesus came in His humiliation, came having voluntarily set aside His heavenly glory, honor, authority and prerogatives; He came as a lowly babe in a manger, grew and lived a seemingly unnoticed life, suffered tremendously, and died an extremely painful and shameful death. But at His second coming, Jesus will return in His glory, majesty and power as the King of the universe, in order to manifest His kingdom to all (Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 4:13). The second coming of Christ will be a sudden and unexpected event, and its timing will be unknown to all (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). The second coming of Christ will be a triumphant event (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 20:1-15). Jesus will come as the all-conquering King, and will fully and finally vanquish all of His enemies (Romans 8:18-25; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Philippians 2:9-11).

The second coming of Christ will be a day of final judgment. The one who suffered at the hands of His enemies will return as Judge to judge all humanity on behalf of His Father (2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5). All people of all times will be resurrected to stand before Christ’s judgment seat. Christ’s judgment will be based on works, as men will give an account for all they have done, in thought, word or deed (Matthew 12:36; John 5:28-29; Romans 2:6-12; 14:12; Revelation 20:12; 22:12). Christ will judge all according to their response to the revelation they have received from God (Romans 1:19-20; 2:12-16).

It will be an awful and dreadful day for unbelievers, who will be thrown into hell and suffer unending torment and agony, in body and soul, without any rest or relief (Matthew 10:28; 13:41-42; 25:41). But for believers it will be a glorious day, whose faith in their Lord will be publicly vindicated. And though they will not suffer the condemnation of hell (Romans 8:1-4), they will nevertheless be judged in order to receive eternal rewards (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Then they will be ushered into the eternal and glorious kingdom of God (Matthew 13:43; 25:34; Romans 8:17-18; Colossians 3:4; Revelation 21:3-4). With this the Lord will bring an end to history, consummate His kingdom, and bring to perfect fulfillment all the redemptive purposes and promises of God. This is a “blessed hope,” and with the apostle we likewise say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Titus 2:13; Revelation 22:20).