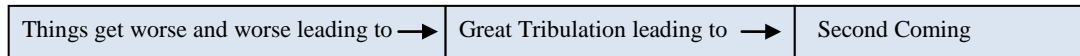


## When Will Jesus Come Again?

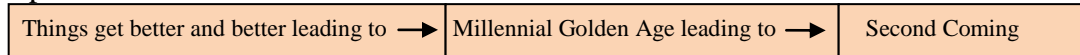
On Sunday we completed our Jesus sermon series by exploring the Second Coming.

1. Warm-up Question: Suppose you could choose the date and time of Jesus' return. When would you schedule his return?
  
2. As Jesus ascended into heaven, an angel said to his disciples, "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. Before his death, Jesus himself said, "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. . . . The sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heaven, and all the tribes of the earth . . . will see him coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24:27. When you hear verses like the foregoing, how do they make you feel? If you had to pick one word to describe how you feel about the Second Coming, what would it be – and why?
  
3. There are many different interpretations of the prophecies of the Second Coming, but most can be grouped into one of three broad categories.

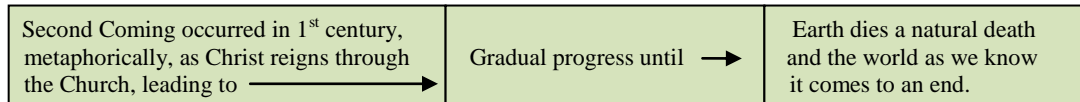
### Pessimistic Scenario



### Optimistic Scenario



### Realist Scenario



- a. Which of these scenarios comes closest to what you were taught by the churches of your past? Which resonates most with you now – and why?
  
- b. Does it matter which view we embrace? Why or why not?
  
4. We have a tendency to want to know which view is "right." In response, Jeff offered several mind-bending possibilities. React to each.
  - a. *Maybe none of the leading theories is right. After all, the Bible is full of prophecies about Jesus' First Coming, but when Jesus came the first time, almost nobody recognized him because everyone was interpreting the prophecies to predict a conquering Messiah, not one who would die. If we got it so wrong the first time, odds are we'll also get it wrong the second time. **Your thoughts?***

- b. *Maybe all three views are right. In other words, maybe the biblical prophecies are deliberately flexible enough to allow for any of several outcomes, so that the precise manner of Jesus' coming depends in part on what we humans do – and don't do – to make the earth better or let it grow worse. **Your thoughts?***
  - c. *Maybe God didn't want us to be able to figure out the prophecies. Maybe their purpose is not so we can figure out when or how Jesus is coming again. Maybe it's enough that we know that somehow, someday, at some point, Jesus is coming again and his Peaceable Kingdom will be established. **Your thoughts?***
  - d. In Matthew 24:36, Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." What does that mean? Which way does it push us?
5. We could debate the precise meaning of the prophecies till the cows come home. What matters most, though, is how the doctrine of the Second Coming (however you interpret it) affects our everyday life. Jeff suggested two practical effects. For the first, read John 13:33 – 14:6.
- a. When Jesus told the disciples he wasn't going to be physically present with them anymore, how do you think they felt? Do you ever feel that way?
  - b. In John 14:2, Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." Jeff compared this to a soldier telling their kids that they will be deployed to Afghanistan, but not to worry because they will come back and then they will be together always. If you were one of those kids, how would your parent's promise help you get through the tough separation? Should Jesus promise to us have the same effect on us? Does it have that effect on you?
  - c. To help us imagine what it will be like to be reunited with Jesus, we watched a video of a soldier surprising his boy upon his return. How do you think you'll feel when you see Jesus? As you imagine it, what will that moment be like?
6. If the first practical effect of the promise of the Second Coming is ***a hope of reunion that sustains us***, the second flows out of it: ***the evil we encounter in our present reality is only temporary***. No matter how bad it gets down here, a better day is coming when evil gives way to God's goodness. Read Isaiah 11:6-9.
- a. What aspect of our present reality – the way your life and the world are now – brings the most darkness into your life? Describe how that darkness feels to you.
  - b. Imagine a time when that darkness is lifted and the goodness of Christ prevails. How will that feel to you? What word would you use to describe it? How does it affect your spirit now when you meditate on that coming day?

**New Sermon Series Starts Sunday:** *The Gifts of Imperfection – Letting go of who you think you're supposed to be, to become who you were meant to be.*