



### Part 7: I believe in Jesus' second coming | Pastor Joe Wittwer | Mar. 1, 2009

#### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

#### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

We live in a world filled with injustice, and something inside us wishes it were different. We long for justice, for wrongs to be put right, for fairness and equity. The Apostles' Creed reflects the Bible's teaching that Jesus "shall come to judge the living and the dead." When Jesus comes, He will bring justice and will make all things right.

##### 1. I believe Jesus will come again.

The New Testament has over 300 references to Jesus' second coming. The theological term for the study of the end times is "eschatology." Christians have different opinions on when and how the second coming will happen, but here are three things you need to know:

- a. **Jesus is coming again.** Jesus says in **Mark 13:26-27**, "*At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.*" Christians believe in a literal, physical second coming of Christ.
- b. **No one knows when.** Jesus also says in **Mark 13:32**, "*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*"
- c. **Be ready!** So Jesus concludes in **Mark 13:33-34**, "*Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.*" Jesus is coming back, and we don't know when. So as He teaches in three stories in **Matthew 25**, we ought to always be ready, make the most of whatever God has given us, and do whatever we can for the poor and needy until the day of our death or the day Jesus returns.

**2. I believe Jesus will judge the living and the dead.** The Bible presents the final judgment as a time when justice finally comes, when all wrongs are put right, both personally and globally. There are lots of verses in the Bible about the final judgment. In fact 14 of Jesus' 26 parables were about the final judgment—He had a lot to say about it. However, like the second coming, there is a lot of speculation about the final judgment and how it works. Below are five things that are very clear:

- a. **There is a day of judgment.** **2 Corinthians 5:10** says: "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*" [Here and in brackets below, for similar Scriptures as time and desire allow, see **1 Corinthians 4:5** and **Revelation 20:13**.]
- b. **We will give an account for what we've done.** **Romans 14:12** says: "*So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*" [See **Matthew 12:36** and **1 Peter 4:5**.]
- c. **Christians are saved from God's wrath.** In **John 5:24** Jesus says, "*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*" We deserve wrath and punishment, but Jesus took our sin upon Himself and absorbed our punishment and God's wrath so we wouldn't have to. The ultimate final exam will come when we stand before God. On our own we cannot

pass that exam; we're sure to fail. But we have someone who will stand in for us. With Him beside us, we cannot fail. [See **John 3:36, Romans 5:9, 1Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9.**]

**d. God's judgment is just.** All of us make judgments that are unjust, but God's judgment is just—always. No one will be able to say, "That's not fair." God's judgment is based on truth; it's righteous. When we examine what various Scriptures tell us about God's judgment, we learn that it is based on truth, it is righteous, and it is just. God judges with justice. The bottom line is that God is the righteous judge and judges impartially. He will never short anyone. He will never treat anyone unfairly. He will never be unjust.

**e. Justice will be done.** **2 Peter 3:13** says, "*But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*" The words "righteousness" and "justice" are both the same in Greek. When Jesus comes, He makes all things new; He will bring a new heaven and a new earth, where justice (or righteousness) will be at home. We say it every time we pray the Lord's Prayer. "May your kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Until then, let's roll up our sleeves and do God's will on earth. We won't right every wrong or make heaven on earth. That's God's job, and it won't happen until Jesus comes again. But in the meantime, we're the vanguard of His coming. We're the firstfruits of His reign. We're the harbingers of a new heaven and earth where righteousness and justice are at home.

### **C. Life Group Questions** (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. We Christians continue to remind ourselves, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." What does the Apostles' Creed say is *essential* about Jesus' second coming, and what's so important about it?
2. Read **Matthew 25:14-30**. In the parable of the talents, the master asked the three servants how they had managed their talents. What "talents" has God provided you, how are you using them now, and how can you further "invest" them wisely?
3. The Apostles' Creed says "I believe God will judge the living and the dead." Read **Matthew 25:31-46**. What does the parable of the sheep and goats tell us about what concerns God's heart and about His judgment?
4. Read **Romans 5:9** and **John 3:18**. What does it mean to be "saved from God's wrath"? What *doesn't* it mean? The American Heritage Dictionary defines justice as fair handling, due reward or treatment. Why will no one be able to say to God, "I was treated unjustly"?
5. Reread **2 Corinthians 5:10** and **2 Peter 3:13** above. Why is God's final judgment good news? What are you most looking forward to from the promise of "a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness"? What do you love about this life now that you want even more of, or what do we experience only in part now that you're looking forward to experiencing in full? [E.g., love, acceptance, satisfaction, contentment, etc.]

### **D. Personal Application** (1-3 Minutes)

- As a part of daily prayer time, consider starting by reciting the Apostle's Creed from memory, and keep practicing if it's not all quite there yet.
- Are you "ready"? What "business" can you take action on this week to "be ready"? If you took notes during the "30 Days to Live" series, review them.
- This week be *intentional* about applying at least one of the talents God has gifted you with.

### **E. Prayer Time** (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)

- Thank God for His mercy, His reconciliation through Christ, and that His final judgment will be just and righteous—it will be good news, not bad news, as it sets all things to rights.
- Pray that God will help you this week apply the talents he's gifted you with. Pray that He will help you act to "be ready," including reaching out to people in need you encounter.
- Bring any other praises and requests before the Lord that arose during your discussion.

## The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,  
whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting. Amen.

### For further reading on Christian doctrine:

- *The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why They Believe it, and Why it Matters*, Charles Colson and Harold Fickett, Zondervan, 2008.
- *Christian Basics: An Invitation to Discipleship*, John Stott, Baker, 1991.
- *Basic Christianity*, John Stott, InterVarsity Press.
- *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*, N. T. Wright, Harper, 2006.
- *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis, Macmillan, 1952.
- *Christian Theology in Plain Language*, Bruce Shelley, Word, 1985

### For further reading on the Apostles' Creed:

- *The Apostles' Creed*, William Barclay, Knox, 1998.
- *I Believe: Exploring the Apostles Creed*, Alister McGrath, Intervarsity Press, 1997.
- *Affirming the Apostles' Creed*, J. I. Packer, Crossway, 2008.
- *Credo: Believing in Something to Die For*, Ray Pritchard, 2005.