

The Spectacular Supremacy of God's Son Today

Who Christ Is TO Us Today

Who Christ Is FOR Us Today

Who Christ Is OVER Us Today

Who Christ Is BEFORE Us Today

Who Christ Is WITHIN Us Today

Who Christ Is THROUGH Us Today

■ Who Christ Is UPON Us Today

upon Exploring and Experiencing **Who Christ is UPON Us Today**



Return with me to the metaphor we used in the opening three “Meditations on His Majesty,” describing the extraordinary nature of our journey into more of our living Lord Jesus Christ:

Niagara Falls.

Like the daily boat tour that navigates breathless tourists up to the base of Niagara’s deafening cascades, we’ve been transported into awesome sightings of the “high-ness” and the “high-ness” of Christ. We’ve witnessed how God’s Son, alive and ascended, occupies the throne of the universe, with

a reign that surges outward and onward unrelentingly like Niagara's river.

That dynamic metaphor perfectly portrays one of *CIN's* foundational Scriptures: Colossians 1:18-19. In these verses, God's Word asserts that in everything and forever God's Son retains unconditional, unbounded dominion. As we've seen, this is true for two major reasons: The first is because in Jesus the full nature of God abides; the second is because through him we have every reason to expect heaven and earth will be redeemed and reconciled back to God.

Therefore, the Church must jubilantly proclaim that Christ is *now!*

All he will be Lord of at the end he is Lord of *now!*

All of the glory he will display ultimately belongs to him *now!*

All of the promises he will fulfill one day he has already inherited *now!*

Let me be more specific as relates to this seventh "key": Just as he will come **upon** the *universe* at his glorious, visible return, causing it to rise fully alive to him, even so he desires to come **upon** his people right here and *now*, causing *us* to rise more fully alive in him.

Like dwelling every day at the unrelenting confluence of multiple cataracts, Christians reside permanently at the footstool of the Lion of Judah who is ready to pour **upon** us even *more* of his presence — to descend **upon** us with so much more of his power — and then do so even *more*.

Of course, *chronologically speaking* the full displays of his transforming kingdom still lie ahead of us, reserved for the Day of the Lord, the day of his visible return.

But *Christologically speaking* every facet of his *end times* reign is operative in significant measures around us, within us, and through us during *these* times.

In this chapter we want to welcome God's Son to come — to come **upon** us — and to do so today in ways that thoroughly *saturate* us with himself. Like tourists who decide they don't simply want to *look at* the falls, who instead choose to go *straight under* the falls, we want to open ourselves up to a much fuller permeation of our lives with Christ and his spectacular supremacy.

Beyond such an encounter with the Son of God, there is nothing more the Father has for us.

Who Christ Is UPON Us Today: The Prevailing Promise of Scripture



Take a look at another prayer agenda, similar to our “Prayer of Invitation,” once spoken by an ancient Hebrew prophet:

I wish you would open up your heavens and come down to us . . . come down and make yourself known . . . cause the nations to shake with fear when they see your power . . . No one’s ears have ever heard of a God like you. No one’s eyes have ever seen a God who is greater than you. No God but you acts for the good of those who trust in him (Isaiah 64, emphasis added).

Paul claims in 1 Corinthians 2 that Isaiah’s forecast of divinely disruptive interventions found its fullest expression in God’s equally startling, stunning actions toward us when the Son of God himself came down **upon** the earth to shake the nations by becoming our one and only Savior:

But before time began, God planned that his wisdom would bring us heavenly glory. None of the rulers of this world understood God’s wisdom. If they had, they would not have nailed the Lord of glory to the cross. It is written that “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has known” (Isaiah 64:4). God has prepared these things for those who love him. God has shown these things to us through his Spirit . . . we have the mind of Christ.

Heaven opened and Jesus came down. By his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension he overtook the world — making himself known to humankind in no uncertain terms.

But 1 Corinthians 2 promises us an additional fulfillment of Isaiah 64. This happens as the Holy Spirit comes **upon** all who belong to Christ today to pour into us the “deep things of God,” giving us “the mind of Christ” — that is, the ability to see everything as it relates to Christ.

It should not come as a surprise then, that the last prayer of the Bible expands on the passionate appeal of Isaiah 64: “**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!**” (Revelation 22, emphasis added).

In fact, in hundreds of other texts the Bible summons God’s people to tackle life with the same spirit of *expectancy* because our King has a whole lot more of himself to share with us — but not only at some future apocalyptic visitation. He wants to come **upon** us in much deeper ways *today!*

Any time Christ comes **upon** his followers — any time he “opens up the heavens and comes down” — whether on this day or the Final Day, he comes with one grand intention: to permeate our lives with the one abounding blessing Paul describes so forcefully. He wrote:

God said, “Let light shine out of darkness.” (Genesis 1:3) He made his light shine in our hearts. His light gives us the light to know God’s glory. His glory is shown in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4).

Therefore, we should encourage one another along these lines:

- **Heads up!** Right now something awesome from Jesus is on its way. He draws near. He is at the door. A fresh inbreaking from our Lord is at hand, promising us more manifestations of his kingdom **upon** us than we’ve known before.
- **Be prepared!** This “**upon** us” dimension may prove to be the most unsettling expression of his supremacy we’ve explored so far. The transformative possibilities it holds for both our present and future walk with Jesus supersede our dreams and are most certainly out of our control.
- **Get ready!** There’s a climatic hour not long from now when Christ will return triumphantly, coming **upon** all the saints in resurrection power while simultaneously coming **upon** the whole creation in redemption and judgment, to forever take charge, visibly and unchallenged, at the consummation of all things. Each one of us will be there! Each one of us will witness this glorious culmination with our own eyes.

- **Stay alert!** The impending nature of this cosmic cataclysm should reshape our walk with the Lord of Glory right now because as personally and purposefully as he will bring all things under his dominion at the end, even so Jesus wants to come **upon** disciples walking planet Earth today to bring about life-giving changes around us and in us and through us.
- **Watch out!** Both then and now, our Savior intends to come **upon** his own in order to bring us into *more* of himself — in order to intensify and deepen and extend and multiply and accelerate whatever experiences of his spectacular supremacy we currently enjoy.
- **Be advised!** Whenever Christ floods any believer or any church with more of himself — with greater displays of his presence and power — anticipate nothing less than marvelous *approximations* of the Consummation, as the Spirit of God comes **upon** the people of God to provide us substantial foretastes of the coming kingdom of God.

Who Christ Is UPON Us Today: **The Greatest Longing of Our Hearts**



For decades Christian leaders and their churches have gathered in hundreds of prayer rallies dedicated to seeking God for church renewal and gospel advance. Convened in communities across America and beyond, sometimes they congregate in stadiums and arenas, weaving together Christians from every expression of the Body of Christ. Frequently these rallies are referred to as *Concerts of Prayer*.

It's a term initially coined by the renowned Puritan pastor and scholar Jonathan Edwards. He gave leadership to what church historians identify as America's first spiritual firestorm, called the First Great Awakening, which emerged during the early to mid-1700s.

This extensive, Bible-based revival was preceded by Christians praying together in what many called "concerts of prayer," fostered on both sides of the Atlantic. It not only transformed Edwards' parish, the second largest church in New England, but also swept through many of the colonies. For multitudes of believers it provided fresh encounters with Christ — what we would describe today as Christ Awakenings.

Unfortunately, by 1745 the hottest coals of this mighty work of the Holy Spirit began to cool. As was true in Reverend Edwards' congregation, many Christians fell back into the level of spiritual lethargy and moral indifference that had marked them before the awakening began.

Eventually, this burdened pastor determined that the decline occurred because too many New England believers falsely concluded that the opening phase of their renewal in Christ was the *only* phase God intended for them; that for the moment nothing else remained of God's kingdom promises for them to experience; that they had encountered all of the fullness of Christ they should expect to enjoy for now.

Contrary to that tragic assumption, Edwards' study of Scripture convinced him that the revitalization that the churches of New England recently had experienced was only the *beginning* of all God wanted to share with them through his Son. Far too many were willing to stop far short of the long-lasting, all-pervasive awakening to Jesus the Father desired for them.

Taking the matter in hand, in 1747 this prolific author (already a shelf full of books bore his name) penned his next volume. In it he appealed for a renewed effort in corporate prayer, urging believers to join in offering bold prayers that refused to settle for less than God's best for the glory of God's Son.

In his treatise, Edwards alerted Christians to how there was so much more of the reign of Christ that the Holy Spirit wanted to unleash in their lives if only they increasingly pursued it, if only they would unite in sustained, heartfelt intercession until God granted it.

His hundred-page book bears a rather lengthy title, typical of authors in those days who worded titles as a way to summarize the book's contents. This one read:

*An Humble Attempt
to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union
of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer
for the Revival of Religion
and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth,
Pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies
Concerning the Last Time.*



Selah

pause | think | pray

Recently a major Christian publisher in Great Britain decided to reissue the work. They invited me to write an introductory interpretive essay to provide 21st-century readers an overview of its main theses. (Thankfully the new edition carries a briefer title: *A Call to United Extraordinary Prayer*).

Reviewing Edwards' arguments, I rediscovered that his emphasis was not about the doctrine of prayer per se, or about united prayer or about how to pray correctly.

Rather, it was a study on the greatness of Christ and the outworking of his kingship now and later. Here's how he approached it: He highlighted many marvels that lie ahead for the saints at the consummation of all things. Then he reasoned that because of Jesus' ascension many of those future blessings could be entered into here and now, which led him to what many consider to be the scholar's most profound insight:

If Christians are not uniting regularly in "extraordinary prayer" — that is, prayer for the revival of the Church and the global advance of Christ's saving reign — it is not because they lack sufficient sermons on the topic of prayer. *It is because they lack a clear focus on the triumphs and dominion of Christ right now* — a focus centered on (as I would say it) who he is, where he's headed, what he's doing, and how he gets blessed.

Only as the Church grasps more fully the extent of the awesome authority inherent in the person seated at the Father's right hand, and concludes that therefore much more of Christ's fullness awaits those who are eager to move deeper into him at this very moment, will we be motivated to pray — to pray aggressively the way we should, and for *what* we should.

More specifically, using words from the title of his book, Edwards appealed for united prayer "*pursuant to the Scripture-promises and prophecies concerning the last times.*"

In other words, let our agenda in prayer begin with what Scripture teaches about the end of the age when Jesus comes **upon** us to bring to climax everything God has purposed. That is, first we should shape our requests based on what we expect to behold when God's plan for the universe is consummated in Christ. Mark how the kingdom will prevail once the King of Glory visibly reappears to renovate and rule over a new heaven and earth.

Then, walk that vision back to the current generation and ask this one basic question:

How much of what God's Word has promised us in Christ at the inauguration of the *age to come* is God's Spirit willing to unleash **upon** God's people in this *current age* through fresh kingdom initiatives by God's Son taking place here and now?

We should also ask: How many of the dynamics to be displayed when all prophecies and promises are fulfilled in the last times — when Jesus “comes down” in finality — are available for us to experience today, at least in preliminary fashions, if he would come **upon** his Church right now by the power of the Holy Spirit?

Edwards concluded that every expectation we hold of increased applications of God's promises today should stir the Church to pray with greater clarity, stronger convictions, unshakeable hope, and unwavering perseverance — to pray prayers that will not relent until the Father blesses his people with more of the favor and fullness found in his risen, reigning Son.

The Puritan writers in Edwards' day referred to this effort as praying for (this was their specific phrase) “*the manifest presence of Christ*,” which meant to pray for Christ to come **upon** his followers in ways that provide us *substantial foretastes* of how ultimately he will reveal himself when he comes **upon** the whole creation.

To put it in a simple phrase we're about to unpack: We need to pray for *approximations of the Consummation*.



Selah

pause | think | pray

Who Christ Is UPON Us Today: **Impending, Like Thunderclouds Hovering**



Chapter 1 of Mark's gospel (NLT) reports that Jesus opened up his public campaign by preaching a four-part message:

- (1) The time promised by God has come at last.
- (2) The Kingdom of God is near!
- (3) Repent of your sins.
- (4) Believe the Good News!

In the original language, the phrase "is near" can be translated "*is at hand*" — or more literally "*the kingdom is bearing down on top of you.*"

Christ bearing down on top of us? Many find the thought of that rather unsettling. Here is one way to explain what's going on:

Picture yourself picnicking with friends on a humid summer afternoon. Taking a bite of your sandwich, you scan the horizon. In the distance you notice thunderclouds rapidly forming. First they come *toward* you. Then they come *at* you. Soon they are directly *on top* of you, casting foreboding shadows over your little band. You feel the electricity in the air. You know a downpour threatens — soon!

True, the storm hasn't let loose yet; but clearly it's "at hand." It's impending, hovering — primed to release a suffusion of showers **upon** you, requiring a rapid change of plans!

In a similar sense, whenever our Redeemer comes **upon** his Church, sovereignly he intrudes like a portending downpour, intending to permeate, even saturate, his people — individually and corporately — with fresh revelations of his glory and greatness, challenging our plans and priorities. You could say he *invades* his followers, bringing normal routines to a halt in order to take us with him where we've never gone before.

This brings us to a central question of this chapter: How open are we — how open are *you* — for Jesus to come **upon** us in ways far more intensive and decisive than the most potent thunderstorm?

In other words, how willing are we for him to disrupt our routines and overturn our plans? To reconstitute every facet of our relationship with him? To reengage us with himself in a way that increases, accelerates, intensifies, enlarges, and deepens all he already has begun to accomplish in us and through us in our walk with him?

Samuel Rutherford, a devout Scottish reformer of the 1600s, was so deeply committed to Christ he willingly endured multiple imprisonments for preaching the gospel. So how do we explain the extraordinary confession he placed in his journal when he wrote:

After I've committed to him everything and after I have given him my heart, I still must pray, every day: *Lord Jesus, come and conquer me*" (emphasis added).

Quite simply, Rutherford was expressing an unquenchable desire for Christ to come **upon** him — to *recapture* him in whole new ways that would immerse him into even greater depths of ministry for his Savior.

Moment by moment, Christ hovers over *every* disciple for this very same purpose — to "rend the heavens and come down" **upon** us, in order to conquer us afresh for his sake.

T

o unpack more of this seventh “key” to a fuller vision of his supremacy, let’s break the remainder of the chapter into three major segments:

Who Christ Is UPON Us Today:

At the Consummation of All Things

Through Approximations of the Consummation

As We Embrace a Lifestyle of Anticipation

First, we’ll begin with the end, the *Consummation* itself, exploring what will transpire at a *cosmic* level when Christ comes **upon** the Church, **upon** all of earth’s peoples, as well as **upon** the whole created universe — the culminating revelation of his greatness and goodness and glory at the climax of God’s plan for the ages.

Then we’ll take up *current* expressions of Christ **upon** us, appropriately termed “*approximations of the Consummation*” because they draw on themes of the Consummation. Such transactions take place every time Jesus reasserts his kingship among his people to carry out transformative initiatives within us and through us that are totally separate from, but clearly reflective of, what will happen in fullest measure in the age to come.

Finally, we’ll take stock of how this great truth — Christ **upon** us — should impact daily discipleship and create a lifestyle of *anticipation* for every follower of Jesus, so that:

. . . by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope *and* overflow with confidence in His promises (Romans 15, AMP).

Who Christ Is Upon Us Today: **At the Consummation of All Things**



As revealed in Scripture, the ascended Christ shows himself to be someone fully engaged, clearly decisive, always proactive, and resolutely goal-oriented. The one “who is, and who was, and who is to come” (Revelation 1, NIV) is driving toward the Consummation; the future glory resides in his very nature. In fact, one might say that for him his ascension and coronation meant the “inauguration” of the Consummation.

That may be why the book of Revelation speaks of Christ’s return as coming “soon” and “suddenly” and “unexpectedly.” He’s that *eager* to bring everything to its climax — when it’s the right time.

The verb “consummate” means to fully achieve, to bring to completion; to finish; to perfect; to raise to the highest point or degree. Accordingly, Bible scholars define *the Consummation* as both *the ultimate goal itself* and *the completion of that goal*.

Using the analogy of American football, the Consummation is a combination of the celebration of victory at the end of the game *plus* the success of running plays that get you across the goal line so that you have something to celebrate.

Looking at it another way, Scripture marks the Consummation as the *arrival* of both *something* and *someone*. It is the tangible and total dominance of God’s purposes over human affairs when Jesus returns, ratifying once and

for all that the kingdom of this world truly has been subsumed into the reign of our God and of his Christ forever (Revelation 11:15).

With those definitions in mind, let's dig deeper.



Snapshots and Starter Thoughts

- **We are promised that Christ will come upon the whole world in Acts 17:**

But now he commands all people everywhere to turn away from their sins. He has set a day when he will judge the world fairly. He has appointed a man to be its judge. God has proved this to everyone by raising that man from the dead.

- **We are promised it in Philippians 2 (NLT):**

Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him a name above all other names that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

- **We are promised it in Titus 2 (NLT):**

For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people . . . but we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed.

- **We are promised it in Philippians 3:**

But we are citizens of heaven. And we can hardly wait for a Savior from there. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He has the power to bring everything under his control. By his power he will change our earthly bodies. They will become like his glorious body.

- **We are promised it in 2 Thessalonians 1:**

All these things will happen when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come in blazing fire. He will come with his powerful angels. He will punish those who don't know God. He will punish those who don't obey the good news about our Lord Jesus . . . On that day his glory will be seen in his holy people. Everyone who has believed will be amazed when they see him. This includes you, because you believed the witness we gave you.

- **We are promised it in Revelation 21 and 22:**

I didn't see a temple in the city. That's because the Lamb and the Lord God who rules over all are its temple. The city does not need the sun or moon to shine on it. God's glory is its light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by the light of the city. The kings of the world will bring their glory into it (Revelation 21).

There will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will serve him. They will see his face. His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun. The Lord God will give them light. They will rule for ever and ever (Revelation 22).

- In its profoundest sense, ultimately the Consummation is all about revelation. Because the Bible ends with Jesus returning to earth, the Consummation becomes the *culmination* of the glorious revelation of God's Son — previously displayed by creation, in Scripture, during his mission for our redemption, with the coming of his Spirit, and throughout the myriad advances of the gospel across the history of the Church.
- In other words, our questions about the future are not about when or what but about *who*. In the Climax everything will be engulfed with Christ alone. The universe will become permanently enthralled with Christ alone. The responsibility of all beings will be to Christ alone. The outcome of all decisions will be determined by Christ alone. The worship of all creation will be directed by Christ alone. Despite the magnitude of all that transpires at the Consummation, and despite the massive heavenly bounty we as believers will inherit, the focus and desire of all the saints remain forever on Christ alone.

Before that day appears, therefore, each of us should ask himself: "Could I remain satisfied with the colossal promises fulfilled in the Consummation IF I discovered when the time came that Jesus — the true source and substance *of*, and the reason *for* all those benefits — was nowhere to be found once I got there?" In other words, could I enjoy the blessings minus the Bless-er? That deserves some honest reflection.

To put it another way: Can the Consummation even commence until, first of all, Christ comes *upon* the redeemed in heaven and earth to consume us (that is, to "consummate" us) with himself and his kingdom agenda exclusively?

The truth is that how we view what the singular role and renown of Jesus will be *then* determines in no small measure how we choose to love him and live for him *now*.

- **A day is coming when the conflict of the ages will cease — when the grandest expression of the preeminence of Christ’s kingdom will prevail.** Its strategies will be perfected, its claims vindicated, its promises implemented, its judgments activated, its enemies eliminated, its dominion renovated, its moral order instituted, its citizens resurrected, and its King universally celebrated. Thus, to study the breadth and depth of all that will unfold in the Consummation is to know what Christ’s kingdom purposes are all about *today*.
- **In the Consummation the supremacy of Christ will become irresistibly spectacular.** That’s why every knee will bow (even in hell), confessing the truth of his primacy as Lord (Philippians 2). Our Redeemer will be acknowledged as supreme enough to complete God’s plan in every detail — supreme enough to seal the destiny of the people of God with the glory of God in the presence of God; supreme enough to bring all heaven and earth into subjection to himself (Philippians 3); supreme enough to saturate everything, visible and invisible, with the fullness of life that flows from his innermost being (Ephesians 1).
- **The whole creation looks forward to its day of regeneration, when the Son of Man returns to sit on his glorious throne (Matthew 25; Romans 8).** The cosmos will be rescued from oblivion and transferred into the beauty and blessedness of “Paradise Regained.” Death itself will die, the grave will be no more, mortality will be swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15) — all of this is not only guaranteed to the saints but also to the whole universe. Church father Irenaeus called it the “recapitulation” of all things in Christ.
- **Jesus’ return will bring about the convergence of every biblical truth related to the end.** These include the Day of the Lord; the resurrection of the dead; reunion with all of God’s people; the final judgment of all evil, sin, sickness, and death; the re-creation of a new heaven and earth; the love and peace and justice of Christ saturating the nations.
- **When Christ comes down at the close of history, he will do so visibly, tangibly, unmistakably.** In the same way that every Old Testament

prophecy about Jesus' first coming to earth was *literally* and *publically* fulfilled, likewise his second coming will achieve in an equally concrete fashion every outcome promised in Scripture.

There's a great day just ahead when Christ will be *confrontational* like never before. One way or another, the entire universe will be forced to engage directly with Christ himself — immediately, unavoidably, radically, and permanently. Everything will be summed up in our Lord forever when he comes *upon* everything and everyone, either by *final judgment* or by *final redemption*. Paul describes it this way:

He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth. It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for (Ephesians 1, MSG).



By Final Judgment

- **Here's what we know about King Jesus' descent in *judgment* at the Consummation:** All evil and sin will be exposed, defeated, and purged once and for all. Despite generations who have long rejected his claims, he will be vindicated. He will sweep away all opposition and all competition. He will humble all the proud powers of this world so as to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory. The nature of evil is such that the end can come no other way. The intervention of Christ to shut down age-old conflicts with sin and Satan is required. This is our only

hope for bringing the wicked to total destruction and the righteous (in Christ) to total deliverance and wholeness.

- **As the indisputable judge of all peoples of all generations, he will come upon the earth to bring each and every person to account before him.** Every heart will be revealed. The Consummation will settle the ultimate destiny of all. Scripture teaches that Christ's judgment of the secrets of every heart is part of the Good News we preach to the nations (Romans 2)! How so? When everything is brought into the light, then the *full* extent of Jesus' saving reign will be revealed, to his increasing and unceasing praise, and to our everlasting joy.
- **At the end of this age, every person who has ever lived either will be consumed *with* Christ or consumed *by* Christ.** Consumed *with* him means caught up with all the saints into everlasting adoration of him and loving service to him. Consumed *by* him means brought into accountability and judgment before him — banished forever by him from his presence and the love and life of God found in him. Our eternal destiny comes down to the one outcome or the other. This is utterly unavoidable. No one will be exempt.
- **Through Jesus, God's will and God's kingdom will come upon the earth just as it already prevails throughout the heavens.** The Lamb on the throne will overwhelm the nations with himself so as to put all things right. He will bring an end to all injustice and deception, all brutality and violence.
- **The hosts of darkness will be obliterated.** Due to the nature of evil, their full and final defeat requires a direct, decisive intervention to come *upon* them in the Consummation. In that hour, Satan and all his minions will experience the fury of our King, as described, for example, in Revelation 19:

Then I saw Heaven open wide — and oh! a white horse and its Rider. The Rider, named Faithful and True, judges and makes war in pure righteousness. His eyes are a blaze of fire, on his head many crowns . . . *A sharp sword comes out of his mouth so he can subdue the nations, then rule them with a rod of iron . . .* I saw the Beast and, assembled with him, earth's kings and their armies, ready to make war against the One on the horse and his army. The Beast was taken, and with him, his puppet, the False Prophet, who used signs to dazzle and

deceive . . . They were thrown alive, those two, into Lake Fire and Brimstone (MSG, emphasis added).

- **Christ will permanently banish everything that is *incompatible* with his eternal kingdom purposes.** All that's good he will embrace. All that's evil he will destroy. Notice: In Revelation 19 at the siege of Armageddon (see text above) there is no clashing of armies. Rather the enemy is repudiated, routed, and ruined by Christ's command alone, pictured as Jesus wielding a sharp sword coming out of his mouth.
- **In the judgment at the climax of history, Christ personally engages with all humankind, taking us so seriously he will refuse to treat any one of us casually or with indifference.** Instead, he'll bring to closure all sin and rebellion against God, not only as expressed by the human race as a whole but also as exhibited by every member of that race, dealing each person one by one (Revelation 20). He will expose all of our deeds to the light of his truth, holiness, and righteousness. As the judge of all, he will honor our choices, either for or against God's will, taking those decisions seriously — including our choice to reject the gospel. Face-to-face with each one he will execute just verdicts with no hesitation, reservation, or condition.
- **When it comes to hell, the greatest tragedy of all is that *Jesus will not be there*.** It will be populated by those who, because of their unbelief, have been excluded from the presence of Christ and his life-giving reign. Whatever other torments may be found there, the greatest of all will be the agony of knowing there is no further opportunity to experience the joy of the King's love or ever again see the glory of God in his dear Son.

By Final Redemption

- **But at the same time, in the Consummation our Lord Jesus will come upon the entire cosmos by a work of *final redemption*.** In that hour we will witness the fulfillment of creation's destiny through *simultaneous realizations* of all God's promises ratified in God's Son, for the sake of heaven and earth. Everything of Christ's current work in our lives will culminate in inexhaustible blessings throughout endless ages.
- **Everything in the universe that's dysfunctional or disordered or**

dislocated or diseased will be healed when Christ comes upon us in the Consummation. Peace with God will unite the saints by peace with one another, bringing about peace throughout the whole earth, all because the reign of the great Peacemaker has come *upon* us fully and totally and forever. Saturated with the grace and glory of Christ's supremacy the entire cosmos will prosper in peace — in *shalom* (Hebrew for wholeness, well-being, harmony, prosperity).

- **At the final hour, when God's people stand before their Savior, one of two conclusions will be evident for each believer.** Either the Consummation reveals how much of this life was spent, as Christians, in indifference to or even resistance towards the wide-ranging reign of Christ, or it provides convincing evidence that our commitment to Jesus was lived in willing response to, and in active pursuit of, his lordship in all things. As Paul cautions all of us:

No one can lay any other foundation than what has already been laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ. A person may build on it using gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay or straw. But each person's work will be shown for what it is. On judgment day it will be brought to light. It will be put through fire. The fire will test how good each person's work is. If the building doesn't burn up, God will give the builder a reward for the work. If the building burns up, the builder will lose everything. The builder will be saved, but only like one escaping through the flames (1 Corinthians 3).

- **In view of our great hope, fixed on the consummation of all things in Christ, the spiritual dynamic evident in the early Thessalonian church sets a worthy standard for every church everywhere, at all times.**

People come up and tell us how you received us with open arms, how you deserted the dead idols of your old life so that you could embrace and serve God, the true God. *They marvel at how expectantly you await the arrival of his Son, whom he raised from the dead — Jesus, who rescued us from certain doom* (1 Thessalonians 1, MSG, emphasis added).

- **We must never forget, however, that his grand work of redemption at what theologians refer to as the Final Assize, was purchased at the price of the King's own life.** The cross remains the ultimate declaration, as well as the unqualified guarantee, that his final victory over Satan and sin and death is inevitable. No wonder heaven's choirs sing:

You are worthy because you were put to death. With your blood you bought people for God. They come from every tribe, people and nation, no matter what language they speak. You have made them members of a royal family. You have made them priests to serve our God. They will rule on the earth . . . The Lamb, who was put to death, is worthy! He is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength! He is worthy to receive honor and glory and praise! (Revelation 5).



A Trinitarian Consummation

- **When Jesus comes again, the whole Trinity will be involved in consummating the universal supremacy of Christ.** About the Trinity, Tim Keller writes:

Each of the divine persons centers upon the others . . . Each voluntarily circles the other two pouring love, delight, and adoration into them . . . That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love.

Here's how Paul sets the stage to help us see this "dance" of the Trinity as displayed *at the Consummation*:

Then the end will come after Christ destroys all rule, authority, and power. Then he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father. Christ must rule until he has put all his enemies under his control. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death . . . When he has done that, the Son also will be under God's rule. God put everything under the Son. In that way, God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15).

- **In the magnificent drama of Revelation 5, the Consummation is unveiled as a collaboration of the triune God to bring about the fulfillment of all that Scripture has promised about the reign of Christ.**

In that great throne room scene, we witness the Father on the throne with the Lamb (Jesus) standing at the center of the throne. Like a lamb he is humble and yielded, exhibiting the permanent wounds from his sufferings for our salvation. However, he is portrayed simultaneously as the “Lion of Judah” — that is, our Lord remains the dominant focus of the throne.

This is what Scripture predicts in Philippians 2: Every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue will proclaim him as Christ and Lord of all, which will become the paramount way to bring glory to God the Father.

Nothing in Scripture suggests that when Jesus submits himself to the Father he ceases to be supreme. No, all things *remain* under his feet; he is supreme in the universe forever, even as, at the same time, he designates all aspects of his reign to exist for the glory of the Father, so that (as 1 Corinthians 15 states) God, the three in one, might be “all in all” — in every way.

It’s almost as if the Father were saying: “Son, I put the whole universe under your feet so that you have the supremacy in everything.” Then, Jesus responds: “Father, in turn I bring back to you all that I have redeemed and conquered, all that comprises my kingdom, and surrender it over to you to bring you the greatest possible glory.”

- **Within this eternal “dance of the Trinity” (as early church fathers phrased it), think of Jesus serving forever as the *prime minister of the universe*.** Literally, that official title used by democratic governments translates as “the supreme servant.” Have you ever thought of Jesus as the *supreme servant* of the universe? An earthly prime minister should function as the supreme servant of his or her nation. Transcending all authorities, Jesus has become the supreme servant of the Father’s purposes for all the nations.
- * **But then, consider this: Since Jesus has become the *servant of all* does that not make him (based on his own teachings) the *greatest of all*?** Days before his death, he reminded his disciples:

The most important person among you will be your servant. People who lift themselves up will be made humble. And people who make themselves humble will be lifted up (Matthew 23).

So at the Consummation who will be the greatest, the Father or the Son? The answer is that both are great and glorious, in distinctive ways. The Father is the final beneficiary of all things, glorified by all things placed in his hands. But the Son is the final ruler of all things, ensuring that everything under his scepter always resounds to the Father's praise.

But when Jesus has defeated all of his enemies, when everything in heaven and earth is laid at his feet, when he turns around to submit himself and everything under his reign to the Father, God will become "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15).

- **The Holy Spirit has an irreplaceable role he must fulfill in this "dance."** As we highlighted in the chapter on "Who Christ Is TO Us Today," at the Consummation he will focus everything on Christ, just as he seeks to do today, as the Son transfers all he has redeemed to the honor of the Father.

In the dazzling scene in Revelation 5, how was John able to see the action and the players before him, especially the Lord Jesus Christ himself in the thick of the worship? Answer: In God's throne room John observed seven lampstands, which he is told represent the "sevenfold" Spirit of God — describing the Spirit in all his fullness as God.

Thus, in the drama of Revelation 5, the sovereign Third Person of the Trinity ("sent out into all the earth") provides the light source for the throne room, making all things visible.

- **Behold, then, the symphony of the Trinity as God fills eternity with his praise.** Though the Father dominates his glorious throne, the Son remains the central focus of angel choirs, while redeemed saints fall facedown at the Lamb's feet offering undiluted homage. As we've just noted, in Revelation 5 the Holy Spirit provides the massive cosmic floodlight the whole time, as it were, to illuminate the entire scene so all creation can become captivated and involved in the chorus of praise.



Selah

pause | think | pray



The Wrap

Prayer leaders from all over the United States were gathered in Washington, DC, one evening before America's National Day of Prayer in May. They represented diverse prayer movements and respected national prayer ministries; many had been involved in the work of prayer mobilization for decades.

The Chaplain of the United States Senate was invited to address them. A Christian leader loved all across the Body of Christ, Dr. Richard Halverson began by asking the audience a simple question, one few had ever been asked before: "How many of you pray on a consistent basis for the second coming of Jesus Christ? If you do, please raise your hands."

Not a single hand went up!

Many were thinking to themselves: "This is embarrassing. I thought I understood the power and purpose of prayer and yet I have failed to pray for the most important promise of Scripture, the one that will permanently settle the destiny of nations."

Then Dr. Halverson followed up with this astute observation:

We cannot legitimately pray for revival if we do not, first of all, consistently pray for the second coming, because the one is simply a foretaste of the other. To be serious about one is to be serious about the other. To want the one is to want the other.

Most that evening will never forget his sobering rebuke.

Later, one member recalled how 2 Thessalonians backs up the chaplain's point with these words toward the end of chapter 1:

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus . . . *on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all of those who have believed.* This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you (NIV, emphasis added).

Next, carefully consider the subsequent verses, opening with the words "With this in mind":

With this in mind [that is, the coming of Jesus, the judgment, the gathering of his people around him, the consummation of the age — this glorious hope of Christ coming upon the entire universe] *we constantly pray for you*, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he will bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this [note that he is praying this for Christians right here and now] so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in you, and you in him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (NIV, emphasis added).

Notice the progression: Paul describes how Jesus will come **upon** us in his victorious return, and how he'll gather the Church to himself that he might be glorified in the midst of all whom he has redeemed. But then Paul goes further. In light of these glorious prospects — "with this in mind" — he prays that right now, in their own generation, God's people might experience a foretaste, *a substantial installment*, of that grand reunion by how their current relationship with Jesus focuses on his glory in ways similar to what we will share together at the consummation of everything.

Happily, this practical insight provides a nice segue into the second, but more *immediate*, expression of the spectacular supremacy of Christ **upon** us.

Who Christ Is UPON Us Today: Through Approximations of the Consummation



More than once in our journey we have been reminded:

What Jesus will be lord of on *that* day he is
lord of on *this* day.

All the glory that he will display on *that* day is
the glory that belongs to him on *this* day.

All that will flow to the foot of his throne for final disposition
on *that* day already forms his inheritance
on *this* day.

All the promises of God he will fulfill on *that* day are
summed up in him on *this* day —
fully, with nothing left out.

That is why not only *at* the end but also unlimited times along the way *before* the end we should expect our Savior to come **upon** generations of his people with what I have chosen to call "approximations of the Consummation."

Approximations of the Consummation are those times when Jesus acts to deepen and intensify and accelerate all he is already accomplishing in our lives, our churches, and our mission to the world. These exceptional divine

initiatives take their direction from the Consummation — and so become approximations of the foretaste of outcomes we'll experience in their full display at his final coming when he brings forth the most stunning miracle of all ages: his re-creation of new heavens and earth.

In one sense, we might retitl the end of time itself as God's "Come-summation." In other words, the close of history will involve the Father *summing up* and fulfilling the purpose for all of Jesus' other "comings" **upon** his people and **upon** the nations as the gospel has spread its blessings throughout the centuries to the ends of the earth.



Snapshots and Starter Thoughts

- **The Bible records how the Spirit comes upon God's people to usher us into encounters with Christ that are reflective of what it will be like when Christ comes upon the whole cosmos and we engage him face-to-face.** As we learned in previous chapters, fundamentally the Holy Spirit provides the world with the extension of Christ's ascension. In essence, the ministry of God the Spirit is the same as God the Son descending **upon** his people here and now in order to (repeating these key verbs one more time) invade, intensify, accelerate, deepen, sharpen, expand, multiply, magnify, and empower (*all of this activity!*) every way the Son is manifesting his reign in the life of his church today.
- **In Acts 2, Peter's Pentecost sermon put approximations of the Consummation front and center.** He declared:

God has raised this same Jesus back to life. We are all witnesses of this. Jesus has been given a place of honor at the right hand of God. He has received the Holy Spirit from the Father. This is what God had promised. It is Jesus who has poured out what you now see and hear.

But before he said that Peter quoted from Joel 2 to confirm that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a *preliminary* fulfillment of Israel's end times expectations:

In the last days God says, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams."

Even though Joel actually referred to outcomes slated for the Consummation (see the entire context by reading Joel 3), Peter concluded that when the Holy Spirit came **upon** them in power at Pentecost, his mission was to transform the Church in ways dramatically similar to what all saints will experience when Jesus visibly returns to reign forever. Such amazing developments remain God's daily promise to believers in this age.

- **Right before he ascended, in fact, Jesus used “consummation language” when he promised that all of his followers would experience “power” when the Holy Spirit comes upon us.** “Power” in the original Greek is the root word of the English word “dynamite.” Explosively, the Holy Spirit would propel God's people outward to proclaim Christ among all nations — a power amplified by what Scripture predicts when summing up another dimension of the Consummation with these words:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. Fire will destroy everything in them . . . So everything will be destroyed in this way . . . On that day fire will destroy the heavens. Its heat will melt everything in them. But we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3).

- **In this age, Christians will never experience the *quantity* of the aftereffects of the Consummation; but often we will experience the *quality* of those promises because of Christ's reign now taking place in the midst of God's people by God's Spirit.** The Spirit provides us “interim” experiences of how Christ's lordship will prevail in the eternal state. Recall that the seven lampstands around the throne, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God (Revelation 4-5), are duplicated by the seven lampstands among which Jesus walks, which represent seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation ~1-3). The point? Like flames on candles, the churches' very existence embodies a foretaste of the age to come as the “breath of life” keeps their fires burning — that is, as the Spirit continues his indwelling ministry to them for Jesus' sake.
- **Without a doubt, Christ Awakening-style breakthroughs, which we've frequently discussed in *Christ Is NOW!*, form some of the most vivid approximations of the Consummation one could ever hope to witness in this age.** Some scholars refer to a Christian revival as “a

visitation of the Lord." Christians experience it as a welcome home party — as if someone has walked in to visit with us whom we've not hosted for a long time, someone we've missed, someone we've desperately needed to come back to take over.

Of course, Jesus never really leaves his Church; he remains steadily active with us and within us in one way or another. But the *sense* of his presence and the *reality* of the powerful working of his Spirit among us can *seem* to be faint, distant, even absent at times. A Christ Awakening becomes an approximation of the Consummation because in it Jesus by his Spirit "shows up" — he manifests the wonders of his presence and power in new ways; he reveals more of himself in a fashion that foreshadows the day when he will be revealed unavoidably in majestic splendor before the eyes of the whole world.

- **A Christ Awakening resembles the Second Coming because in true revival Christ becomes more openly proactive, a foretaste of how he will operate at the end.** He comes *upon* us to reconquer, restore, revitalize, and then redeploy us as individual Christians and local churches. Sometimes this awakening catches up an entire generation of Christians. When Jesus comes *upon* us like this, he does so to give us far more than *survival* — actually, far more than what many mean by *revival*. Every genuine Christ Awakening should be described as Christ's *arrival*, as he bursts in to reassert his lordship over us, before us, within us, and through us — in displays of his spectacular supremacy analogous to the impact of his second advent not long from now.



- **We might say, therefore, that Christ Awakenings come about when the Spirit pulls back the curtain before God's people to expose to us much more of the fullness of God's Son, the Head of the Church, who like an actor behind a closed curtain, has been present among us all along.** As a result, God's people are revitalized in their worship and fellowship and mission, sharing in preliminary but substantial foretastes of the full "drama" awaiting us when everything comes fully alive to the glory of Christ.
- **In the final revival (i.e., the Consummation), the *universe* will become fully alive to the supremacy of Christ. Even so, in every prior, preliminary revival (i.e., Christ Awakenings), the *Church* becomes more fully alive to the supremacy of Christ.** Biblically speaking, are there any *limits* to how extensively God might choose to transform the Body of Christ through a Christ Awakening? Potentially, could not any Christ Awakening bring us right up to the edge of the Consummation itself, where the next installment is the return of Jesus in victory?

If not, then God's people must wrestle with this core question: How far are we *willing* for any contemporary revival to take us into an involvement with Christ today that mirrors what is waiting for us in the final revival?

Following that, we also must ask: Are we willing to seek God for nothing less for the Church — for *our own* church — than to bring us into a God-given Christ Awakening that makes us more fully alive to the glory of Christ *even if* it results in the final conflagration between the kingdom of God and the powers of darkness, ushering all of creation into the climax of history?

Are we ready to invite Jesus to come *upon* us to intensify and accelerate his reign in us and through us *that* much — even if it would lead to *that*?

- **Paul's recorded *prayers* show us he a disciple always looking for more of the fullness of Christ, for more of the reign of Christ — for more foretastes of eternity with Christ to come *upon* believers today.** The apostle's prayers confirm how the Father longs to give his people multiple experiences of the arrival of his Son *upon* us right now.

To take one example (and there are many), in Ephesians Paul writes out a prayer for a group of sincere and growing Christians shortly after he

founded the church. His focus tells us that even though they had experienced a massive revival (laid out in Acts 19), still there remained much more of the Lord Jesus Christ for them to explore and experience.

I pray to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . I keep asking him to give you the wisdom and understanding that come from the Holy Spirit . . . Then you will know . . . God's great power. It can't be compared with anything else. His power works for us who believe . . . He showed this when he raised Christ from the dead. God seated him at his right hand in his heavenly kingdom . . . He appointed him to be ruler over everything for the church (Ephesians 1).

- **In a very real sense, every answer to any Christian's prayer that comes from the Father represents an approximation of the Consummation.** That's because ultimately, one way or another, *all* legitimate Christian prayers open doors wide to invite Jesus to come down, to come **upon** us, to manifest to us more of who he is by revealing more of his reigning presence among us and through us for the sake of his Church and the nations. In other words, every biblically-based prayer, rooted in God's promises and priorities, extends a hearty welcome to God's Son to sovereignly flood us with more of himself, doing so "far more than we could ever ask for or imagine . . . by his power that is working in us" (Ephesians 3).
- **Throughout the Church age, one special form of Christ's coming upon his people to give them approximations of the Consummation involves miracles and signs and wonders.** In this age, such extraordinary phenomena certify to the world Jesus' claim that one day he will come **upon** creation as the ultimate healer and deliverer of everything and every place and everyone that is broken.

Miracles are not *salutary* only, bringing wholeness and blessing; but also they are *revelatory*. When, for example, Jesus chooses to come **upon** a weakened body to restore a person to full health, this miracle serves to validate the Good News of his saving power, temporarily displaying the authority waiting to be displayed permanently at the bodily resurrection of the saints.

- **In summary, all approximations offer us "sneak peeks" at the final denouement when all heaven and earth will be thoroughly transformed by the anointed Lamb.** Call them "*previews of coming*

attractions” — extraordinary though provisional inbreakings of Christ’s sovereign activity to remind us of an appointment just ahead when, through Jesus, God will:

... shake the heavens and the earth once more . . . I will shake all the nations. Then what is desired by all nations will come to my temple. And I will fill the temple with glory (Haggai 2).

- **Approximations reaffirm for us as Christians that we must live by *hope*.** We dwell in a time of tension between redemption *inaugurated* (by our salvation, by our worship, by our mission as well as by miracles of all kinds) and redemption *consummated* (by the second advent of Jesus).

All approximations, even the most widely celebrated healings, are partial and incomplete; they serve only to make us aware that we will not be completely satisfied until we finally enter into the depths of the riches of Christ that are waiting for us in the Day of the Lord.

- **In the end, approximations are, at best, like “photos” of Christ — the Christ we will see, savor, and celebrate *in person* in his coming kingdom.** Christians must never forget that whatever we experience of Christ’s glory and power today is always *less* than who he really is in his fullness, *less* than how we will soon behold him on the day he fills the universe with himself (Ephesians 1).

Augustine, the brilliant fourth-century North African church leader, who scholars note wrote more about Jesus than any other Christian author, spoke of his encounter with Christ in nearly apocalyptic terms:

You called, you cried, you shattered my deafness. You sparkled, you burned, you drove away my blindness. You shed your fragrance and I drew in my breath and now I pant for you alone.

Surely what Augustine expressed in his own experience is an unmistakable example of what an approximation of the Consummation looks like.

That being said, imagine yourself using the very same words the hour you see Christ when he visibly comes **upon** the world followed by the armies of heaven as we read in Revelation 19. Can’t you hear yourself saying something like this to him during that unprecedented encounter?

Lord Jesus, the trumpet has sounded. I am arrested by your call and cry. You have shattered all my deafness, once and for all. I am marveling at how you sparkle and burn. You have driven away all of my blindness, once and for all. As you shed forth the fragrance of your everlasting redemption, I am drawing in my breath, and as I do I find myself savoring you alone and singing out for you alone as I have never done before!

Selah

pause | think | pray



The Wrap

As it will be at the culmination of God's eternal plan, even so in every Christ Awakening, God's people become newly saturated with very practical outworkings of the supremacy of Jesus.

In the generation following Jonathan Edwards, another Christ Awakening took place, global in scope. Identified by historians as the Second Great Awakening, it surfaced in the late 1700s and spilled over into the early decades of the 1800s. During that era many streams in the Church came alive to the Savior in whole new ways, culminating in the modern missionary movement and much more.

There was a Christian leader who lived through that extraordinary work of the Spirit. He tasted the thrill of observing a Christ Awakening *first-hand*.

During much of that time, Dr. Ebenezer Porter was the president of one of the leading seminaries in New England.

Around 1830, as their president emeritus, he was invited back to the school to present a series of lectures on revival based on what he had witnessed up close and personal as he ministered in the midst of it. Halfway through a subsequent publication of his lectures appears a single paragraph that sums up his personal observation of how any Christ Awakening embodies, as we've discussed here, an approximation of the Consummation. Dr. Porter wrote:

*When the Redeemer comes in the triumphs of his grace to visit his churches, then his true followers are seen waking from their apathy [note that even Jesus' true followers may need to be awakened to him in new ways], and going forth to welcome the King of Zion with an energy and an earnestness and ardor of affection *greatly surpassing their first love* (emphasis added).*

His bottom line: In revival Christ comes **upon** his Church with a more direct, more intimate, more transformative impact, like the entrance of a conquering king. This revelation causes many believers to awake and rise to welcome him, to yield to him, to love him, and to follow him wherever he wants to take them.

This conclusion matches nicely with insights from another academician from the late 20th century. Dr. J. Edwin Orr held three earned doctorates in the study of the history of Christ Awakenings. An author of many well-researched works on the subject, Professor Orr clearly understood what a Christ Awakening entailed. With one paragraph he boiled down his years of teaching on the topic, writing that a Christ Awakening is:

... a movement of the Holy Spirit bringing about a revival of New Testament Christianity in the church of Christ and in its related community. *The outpouring of Christ upon his people by his Spirit affects the reviving of the church, the awakening of the masses, and the movement of instructed peoples toward the Christian faith; the revived church, by many or few, is moved to engage in evangelism, in teaching, and in social action* (emphasis added).

The outpouring of Christ **upon** his people today, by his Spirit, provides a foreshowing of the final and fullest outpouring of Christ's glory and greatness **upon** every square inch of the universe — that is, the all-encompassing revelation of the spectacular supremacy of God's Son, of which there will be no end.



A Postscript

For anyone wanting a more detailed example of a Christ Awakening, here's a well-documented synopsis of one. It overtook New York City.

Ponder these actual headlines in the New York Times in 1857: "Biggest Church Packed Twice a Day for Prayer"; "Businesses Shut Down Daily for One Hour of Prayer"; "Political Leaders Get Down on Their Knees Before God"; "Revival Sweeps City."

That year in the Big Apple, what began as a prayer meeting of seven people mushroomed into tens of thousands gathered every day at noon to pray desperately for spiritual renewal, doing so in places of commerce during the day and filling all the city's church buildings with united prayer at night. Soon conversions to Christ started transpiring so rapidly and with such impact on the life of the city that the newspaper felt compelled to report each day the names of hundreds of New Yorkers who had committed their lives to Christ.

This is not a screenplay idea for a Christian movie. This was a genuine spiritual revolution — an overwhelming, overpowering phenomenon that resulted in what many historians call "the Third Great Awakening."

It was nothing less than an awakening to the glory of Christ that for a time not only spread across America from coast to coast but also to other lands. Hundreds of new mission organizations sprang up in response, both domestic and international. It impacted the civil war and the emancipation of slaves. The movement continued for decades.

Similar stories throughout Church history are countless. They all share one thing in common: They are approximations of the Consummation that the Father offers gladly to the Church in every generation. You may want to google “stories of spiritual awakenings and revival” to learn more about the history of these extraordinary awakenings to more of Christ and be inspired by the testimonies of those whose lives were transformed.

We always must remember whenever we read these exciting accounts, however, not to allow ourselves to be so taken with the result that we fail to keep our focus on Christ. The study of any church renewal must hone in specifically on how the movement revealed more of the person of God’s Son. After all, it is a *Christ* Awakening above all.

We should ask: How did a specific revival season or movement evidence (in the words of our original definition of a “Christ Awakening”) “God’s Spirit using God’s Word to reintroduce God’s people to God’s Son for ALL he is”?

Failure to fix our attention on that outcome as our main agenda in our studies of revivals renders all other characteristics essentially irrelevant because in the end revival is found in Christ alone. More than that, all true revival IS Christ!

Who Christ Is UPON Us Today: **As We Embrace a Lifestyle of Anticipation**



The Church is summoned to gaze at the horizon, to persist in watching for the promised prevailing of Christ's kingdom purposes. After all, our whole destiny is tied up with Jesus' triumphant return.

Everything about the Christian walk, therefore, should be shaped by that expectation. In truth, we are urged to *rejoice* because of that hope — to rejoice in anticipation of seeing so much more of his glory revealed in his Son; to rejoice in the one expectation that will never leave us disappointed (Romans 5).

Once Christians are captured by a living hope in Christ — a hope based on prospects inherent in the Consummation as well as in more immediate approximations of the Consummation — quite naturally we want to embrace a *lifestyle* of anticipation. Looking for and seeking after more of the fullness of Christ and his kingdom agenda should be the hallmark of every believer's walk with him every day.

In his book *The Puritan Hope*, Reformed church historian Dr. Iain Murray describes how (what he calls) a "*theology of hope*" not only became the biblical underpinning of the First, Second, and Third Great Awakenings, but also the driving passion behind the incomparable spread of the gospel into all nations for the past 150 years. The fact is that an abounding hope in the reign of Christ, both his current and future kingdom, has *always* propelled

the Church forward in a lifestyle focused on renewal, evangelism, church planting, and cultural transformation among earth's peoples.

A lifestyle of dynamic hope includes a lifestyle of active *preparation*, as we get ready for our future involvement in the new heaven and earth — so much so that we begin to “*act as if*” the Consummation was just around the corner. We deliberately build lifestyles compatible with how we expect to think and respond and act when Christ comes *upon* us to complete us — to “consummate” us, one could say — at the end.

The Christian life is less like a *dressing room*, where believers spend a lifetime trying to get themselves fixed up to inhabit their eternal home (like getting ready for a date). It is more like joining with a troop of actors in an exciting *dress rehearsal* where disciples practice together how to love and worship and serve and walk with Jesus — how to foster his kingdom concerns here and now — the way we expect to be involved for him and with him for unending days in the grand finale so close at hand.

When Jesus returns, don't you want to be so alive to him, abounding in him with first fruits of the new creation, that you'll experience nothing of shame as you stand before him (1 John 2)? That your current responses to him will be vindicated, not repudiated? That you'll be able to transition freely, not fearfully, into the New Jerusalem when it appears (Revelation 21)? That with no regrets but with great joy you'll sit down at that grand marriage supper hosted by the Lamb of God for his bride, the Church (Revelation 19)?

Until then, we are called to embrace a walk with Christ permeated with God's promises in Christ (2 Corinthians 1). The fact is, there will always be *so much more of him* for us to discover and delight in, so much more from here to eternity — *so much more of the Son* the Father has designed for us, decreed for us, and desires for us. For example:

- **We read in Romans 5** that with Christ, where sin and all of its destructive poisons abound, God's gracious intentions and saving work in Christ abound far more, with transforming power that none of the disabling powers of darkness can match.
- **We're told in Romans 15** that out of our trust in Christ we should be overflowing with a hope unleashed in us by the ministry of the Holy Spirit — a hope regarding the power of Christ to bring salvation not only to his own people but to all the nations.

- **Colossians 1 assures us** that the greatest riches of the gospel of our redemption distill down to the person of Christ himself, who in the fullness of his supremacy dwells in the midst of his people in order to take us with him into the fulfillment of all the glorious things yet to come.
- **Paul urges Christians in Romans 13** to properly interpret their current situation in light of the Consummation, and then wake up to be ready for the culmination of the outworking of our salvation because it draws nearer with each passing day. The morning of the new day is almost here; the darkness is quickly fading. Therefore, be on guard for the final battle, wearing the armor of light. Remain so consumed with Christ that it's as if we're *wearing* Christ as our only apparel.
- **The apostle encourages us in 1 John 2-3** to maintain an abiding relationship with God's Son, so that when he appears we may be confident to stand before him in the Consummation just the way we've walked with him beforehand. Our motivation is to hold to the certainty that when he appears we will become like him on the day we meet him in his ascended, triumphant glory. Thriving with anticipation toward Christ, we will purify ourselves today the way he is pure. In other words, in anticipation of the Consummation we want to develop a lifestyle every day that's preparing us to be ready to live with Jesus for endless days to come.
- **In Philippians 4, Paul puts it simply:** We're to rejoice in the Lord and do so always. Why? We rejoice always because the Lord is near — which means he's forever ready to come *upon* us, to invade us, to conquer us. Therefore, we have *no* reason to be anxious about anything, and we have *every* reason to practice a lifestyle of hopefulness.
- **1 Peter 1 reminds us** that when we were born again, we were deposited into the lap of a hope that is jubilant and confident and resonant with the victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Consequently, we celebrate him with an inexpressible gladness full of God's glory, as we look toward all that is yet to be revealed through the Savior whom we love even without actually seeing him — yet.

Our greatest expectation is found in this: Our Savior is so wonder-filled we can expect his interventions always to be surprising, unprecedented, inexplicable, and amazing!

- **Our highest anticipation focuses on this:** Now and always, our Lord Jesus Christ is not only able, he's not only willing, but he's also *ready* to come **upon** us afresh again and again and again and again!
- **Our boldest confidence rests with this:** At any moment Christ may come **upon** us in new ways to do all that needs to be done in order to build and accelerate and intensify all he is already doing within us and through us, individually and together — to give us more of himself.
- **Our unceasing prayers arise from this:** As said earlier, essentially every authentic prayer consists of inviting Jesus to come down, to come **upon** us, to manifest more of his glory, authority, and sufficiency to us and to those for whom we pray. The promise of that creates in us hearts that seek God's face for nothing less.
- **That's why the fundamental issue for all Jesus followers comes back to this:**

First of all, how much do we *really* want Christ to come down **upon** us — at the end?

Then, how much do we *really* want him to come down **upon** us — right now?

How much do we *really* want him to minister to us and through us in ways that strongly prefigure how he will one day come **upon** and conquer the entire universe?

How willing are we *really* to seek God for nothing less than fresh revelations of all Christ is — to us and for us, over us and before us, within us and through us?

How prepared are we *really* to receive and participate in fresh approximations of the Consummation — as they touch and change our lives? our churches? our nation? the peoples of the earth?



Selah

pause | think | pray

The Wrap

The next time you catch a flight at the airport, get to the gate early enough to watch your plane approach for landing.

Notice how off on the distant horizon, for a brief time, the aircraft appears to be stalled, not moving at all, hanging in suspended animation. Of course, as you know, it's an optical illusion. In reality, every incoming flight is traveling around 200 miles an hour as it descends to the runway!

First it comes *toward* you. Then it comes *at* you. Then it feels as though it is coming down *on top* of you. Suddenly, what seemed far away, static and motionless, swoops over you to land safely on the runway right next to you.

Not once during the entire maneuver did the plane pull back on its descent to the airport. It just kept coming **upon** you, quite rapidly, even though it appeared to spectators as if nothing was happening, as if the flight was frozen in time.

It is like that today: Even while (and because) multitudes of Christians are praying for a nationwide Christ Awakening, answers are already on their way. In response to years of unified appeals to the Father for the spread of Christ's kingdom in our land, many of us believe that not long from now the Son will come **upon** the Church from sea to sea to effectively unleash more of his saving, transforming, spectacular supremacy.

Jesus is not stuck on the skyline. Our Lord is about to arrive, to come **upon** this generation to awaken us to what the Spirit has been doing in us and through us all along — and then he will accelerate, deepen, sharpen, inflame, expand, multiply, and empower all of it in renewed manifestations of his glorious salvation.

Look up! Do you hear him approaching? Can you feel him bearing down on top of us right now? Have you begun to sense him drawing near to overtake us with *himself*?

Who Christ Is UPON Us Today: **A Tribute**

Paraphrasing and personalizing a wide selection of Scriptures

Father, we come to you to proclaim the name of your Son together — to spread his fame, embrace his reign, increase his gain, and honor his claim about who he is **upon** us. As we do, awaken us to him afresh for ALL that he is. May the praise we bring to him in these moments come forth alive in us by your Spirit and rise as a blessing to you forever. We use your Word to magnify your Son, without whom we are nothing and can do nothing. This tribute is all for Christ alone, our one and only Hope of Glory, and the hope of all the nations.

**Lord Jesus Christ, this is our tribute to you —
our tribute to who you are UPON us.**

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down. Come down to make your name known to your enemies. Come down to cause the nations to quake before you. For whenever you have done awesome things that we did not expect, you came down.

You said a day would dawn when the heavenly bodies will be shaken, and all will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory, causing our full redemption to draw near. You said that when you come in your glory with all the angels with you, you will sit on your throne in heavenly majesty and all the nations will be gathered before you. You said the Father has given you authority to judge because you are the Son of Man, and therefore a day is approaching when all who are in their graves will hear your voice and will rise to face your verdict as it comes **upon** all peoples with perfect justice.

Christ Is NOW!

Jude says you are coming with thousands and thousands of your holy ones, to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of their ungodly acts. Truly, one day you will come **upon** the nations, even the

whole creation, resulting in the heavens disappearing with a roar. On that day, when you come **upon** all nations, the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. O King of kings and Lord of lords, we tremble in anticipation of that hour when you will be revealed from heaven in blazing fire. We tremble because you will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the good news of who you really are as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of all, however, we tremble knowing that on that day you will come **upon** us too — as your people. You will descend to us to be glorified among your saints as you deserve, and to be marveled at among all who have believed. You will appear this second time, not to bear sin but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for you. And we are waiting for you!

As the righteous Judge, you will present a crown of righteousness to those who have longed for your appearing. And we long for your appearing! We do not fear your appearing. We look forward to that day when you will come **upon** a new heaven and new earth, bringing us forth to dwell in a habitation where righteousness forever will be our home.

Christ Is NOW!

But until that hour arrives, please come **upon** us now by the outpouring of your Spirit to awaken us, to revive us, to renew us, to empower us. Come **upon** us right now, by your Spirit, to fulfill every good purpose we have intended and every act of love prompted by our faith in you. Come **upon** us now, by your Spirit, so that your name, Lord Jesus, may be glorified in us and we may be victorious in you, more and more and more. Come **upon** us now, by your Spirit, that we might enjoy foretastes today of the powers of the age to come. Come **upon** us now with approximations of the Consummation, that we might be revitalized and redeployed by you alone. Wherever sin abounds, come **upon** your people now, abounding with grace far greater than our sin. Let your grace reign throughout your Church to bring forth the fruits of eternal life.

Christ Is NOW!

Behold, the night is nearly over; behold, the day is at hand. Therefore, you deserve to be the one with whom we clothe ourselves right now, losing ourselves in new ways in you and you alone. You deserve for us to awake from any form of deadly slumber that you might shine on us in new ways. Come **upon** the eyes of our hearts; heal our blindness, Lord! Dazzle us with the full extent of all we have in you.

Focus us afresh on the sure and victorious hope you have won for your people. Set our hearts on the riches in glory you have inherited for your people. Lift our eyes to behold the resurrection power you have unleashed in your people — the same power the Father exerted when he brought you out of the tomb, the same power which seated you at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the age to come.

Focus us afresh on our destiny in the plan of the Father who works everything according to his good pleasure. We celebrate the plan which he purposed in you, the plan to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — his plan to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under you as the one and only Head. Yes, awaken us! Reintroduce us and reconvert us back to these awesome truths that proclaim the majesty of your everlasting supremacy **upon** us all.

Christ Is NOW!

Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you with reverence and awe. We worship you, the consuming fire you are. Even so, we invite you, as an act of devotion, to come like fire **upon** us right now so that we might live and labor in a way that hastens the day of the Lord. As Malachi envisioned, we invite you to suddenly come **upon** your temple. Come! Be a refiner's fire. Come! Purify your leaders! Refine them like gold so that all of your people might again bring you offerings in righteousness.

Great God and Savior, as we wait for the blessed hope of your glorious

appearing, come **upon** us now to purify those you have already redeemed from all wickedness so that increasingly we become a people eager to do for you what is good. As we wait for that blessed hope, come **upon** us now in such a way that we might be confident and unashamed before you at your coming. As we wait for that blessed hope, help us *even now* to increasingly purify ourselves even as you are so pure, knowing that when you appear we shall be like you, because we shall see you as you really are.

Open the floodgates of heaven! Pour out **upon** us blessings that are so full of YOU, Lord Jesus, that it will feel to us as if there is not enough room for all that your visitation accomplishes. Pour out **upon** us your manifest presence so totally, that we, with all your saints, might have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is your unfathomable love, so that, in unexplored dimensions, we might be filled with the full measure of the fullness of God. Bring **upon** us immeasurably more than we ask or imagine by your power at work in us, so there might be even greater glory for the triune God, amplified in you and then in the people you have redeemed.

Christ Is NOW!

But we also stand in holy fear before you, for behold, your judgments have already begun with the household of God.

So in holy fear, we pray: Restore in us a supreme love for you, so that you will not need to come **upon** us to remove our lampstand.

In holy fear, we pray: Convict us of everything that offends you or denies you, so that you will not need to come **upon** us to fight us with the sword of your mouth.

In holy fear, we pray: Show us how to walk fully in the truth of *who* you are and *all* that you are, so that you, the One who searches hearts and minds with eyes like blazing fire, will not need to come **upon** us to discipline us for our spiritual adultery.

In holy fear, we pray: Wherever you find lukewarmness among us,

come to the door of your Church. Speak! Knock! Be for us gold refined in the fire. Be for us clothes to cover our nakedness. Be for us salve to heal our blindness. Come **upon** us! Dine with us, then take us with you to sit with you on your Father's throne.

Christ Is NOW!

You are the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. You have triumphed! You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals. Slain, you have purchased people from every tribe, language, and nation to make them a kingdom and priests to your God, and they shall reign with you on the earth. You are the Lamb at the center of the Throne, destined to be our shepherd forever. You are the lamp of the New Jerusalem where the brilliance of your reign will invade the ends of the earth so that nations will walk in your light and kings in the brightness of your rising. From that day forward there will be no more night. Instead, your servants will see your face clearly, even as you inscribe your name of total ownership **upon** us.

Behold, on tiptoe we await the grand finale promised at your return. You said that your return is coming soon. So come! Come **upon** the redeemed of all the ages. Come! Come **upon** the entire cosmos. The Spirit and the bride say, "COME!" Even so, all of us here and now say to you, "COME! Come, Lord Jesus! Come!"

This tribute expresses only a small part of the inexhaustible riches of who you are UPON us and all peoples.

So, Father, here is how we celebrate your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in this hour. We exalt him. We exult in him. We do so because of all he is **upon** us — now. Therefore, everything we are and have, every breath we breathe, every step we take, every service we render, every prayer we pray, every praise we bring, is possible only by him and him alone. For without him — without all he is **upon** us — we are nothing, and we can do nothing. More and more, by the revealing work of your Spirit, awaken us to Christ alone — awaken your whole Church to Christ alone — so that increasingly he might become **upon** us our all in all.

AMEN!