

Week beginning: 4th Dec 2005

Theme: The Hope of the Church – the Second Coming of Christ the Lord.

Welcome: The Hope of the Church is that the Light of the world will return. Have you ever experienced a lengthy power cut in your home? How did you manage when the lights went out? – Share your stories with your cell.

Worship: Don't forget to worship in your cell meeting. It is through worship that we draw near to God! (If you have musicians you can sing or listen/sing along with a worship CD or do something even more creative!) *Also – read together the song 'If Christ comes back in winter' which is printed on page 2 then discuss the following:*

Discuss -

- Do you think there will be an obvious build-up to the Second Coming of Christ – or might it happen tomorrow evening? What do you base your opinion on?
- How did Jesus advise us to be ready? How ready do you feel?

Word: Jesus used parables to teach us how we should prepare and behave as we await His return to earth. (Read Matthew 25:1-13 and 25:14-30) In contrast, the language He used to intimate the certainty of His return was clear and unambiguous. (Read out loud Matthew 24:30-31 and 24:37-41 as well as Matthew 25:31-32)

Teaching Slot: As Peter predicted in 2 Peter 3:3-4, skepticism about the return of Christ has become widespread.

The Message translates his warning like this: *'First off, you need to know that in the last days, mockers are going to have a heyday. Reducing everything to the level of their puny feelings, they'll mock, "So what's happened to the promise of His Coming? Our ancestors are dead and buried, and everything's going on just as it has from the first day of creation. Nothing's changed."*

Foremost of all, belief in the Second Coming of Christ is paramount to Christians because it is clearly what the Bible teaches. To doubt the reality of the Second Coming is to doubt the reliability and validity of God's Word. The Second Coming is doubly worthy of belief because Jesus Himself promised it. A non-believer might argue - 'If Jesus was wrong about the Second Coming, how can one trust anything else He taught?'

The Second Coming of Christ is our hope and confidence that God is in control of all things and is faithful to His Word and His promises.

Discuss -

- How do *you* feel about the Second Coming of the Lord? Be honest – does it thrill you or make you feel a little apprehensive or even frightened?
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Witness:

‘Prepare to meet your God, Oh Israel’ – (Amos 4:12)

"About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up, who will turn their attention to the prophesies, **and insist upon their literal interpretation** in the midst of much clamor and opposition." Sir Isaac Newton

- ✓ This week, like the wise young women in the parable (Matthew 25:1-13), make a point of ensuring your lamp is re-fuelled with prayer and Bible-reading.
- ✓ Then, like the successful trustees of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 make new efforts to use the gifts God has given you to spread the Good News through your words and actions!

If Christ comes back in winter

If Christ comes back in winter, when earth lies cold and pale,
Will He find pilgrims watching, or will our hearts' love fail?
O hail our King in white!
He comes from heaven to save us from tribulation's night.

If Christ comes back in springtime, when burst the buds leaf green,
He will gather up His garlands, God's saints, from earth's dark scene.
O hail our Bridegroom-King!
He comes His Bride to rapture: how can we help but sing?

If Christ comes back in summer, when shines the orange sun,
Will He find Christians toiling in love, with hearts as one?
O hail the King of kings,
With healing splendour rising to draw us to His wings!

If Christ comes back in autumn when glow the fields with gold,
He will reap with joy His wheat sheaves which He did plant of old.
O hail! Our Lord shall come!
To gather in His loved ones and shout His "Harvest Home!"