BC 37; Matthew 24:29-44; Dan. 12:1-4; The Coming Judgement I. The Timing of Judgement II. The Manner of His Coming III. The Work of His Coming

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, endings are bittersweet in this world. Like watching the end of a good movie, you are sad that it has to end. But what if the end is just the beginning? What if- after the end- there is a new start to something that is better? Something that lasts and never ends! Today as we come to the end of our series through the BC, and we come to end of all things- not just the end of the BC but the end of this age. A popular song by Chrystal Lewis in the 90’s put it like this- “people get ready, Jesus is coming, soon we’ll be going home.” The truth is, Jesus is coming. Everything that is hidden will be revealed, the wicked will be judged and the righteous vindicated. That which was lost will be restored- those who are gone will be bought back! As we consider the end of this age, it is important to avoid speculation. But that does not mean we have nothing say! In fact, we can find in our reading from Daniel that the OT saints were already looking forward to resurrection and the life of the world to come. So this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals that He is coming to judge the world at the end of time.

**I. The Timing of Judgement**

In our first point, we consider the timing at which this judgement will come. When you are watching a movie with your family, you can pause the show and see how much time is remaining. Back in the old days, when you watched broadcast TV you knew that when the hour was over the show had to be finished. Unless the producers tricked you by adding- To Be Continued; it was almost certain that the conflict needed to be resolved by a set time. In a similar way, there is an end to this world order that is set. At a specific time, this age will have aged out. This end is called the last day or the day of judgement. However, unlike when you are watching a movie, it is impossible for us to know how much time is left before the end. As we read in Matthew 24:44, Jesus will come back like a thief in the night. Or as Mt. 24:36 says, no one knows the day or the hour. Not even the angels in heaven. So the time remaining in this world is unknown to all creatures- it remains a question mark- something that we cannot know or answer. This is a good reminder to those who like to read world history events as if they can help us pin down a date. For example, the outcome of the war in Gaza right now is not a historical marker by which we can put a date on the calendar for Jesus’ return. No, the timing of this event is secret and hidden. But this fact does not mean that Jesus is not coming back. The delay in His return is not indicating that He is not going to return. His return is certain. The return of Jesus will be like the days of Noah- as Mt. 24:38 teaches. People will be going on with their lives thinking that everything is fine. Life goes on as it always has- nothing changes. People will be getting married on the day Jesus returns- they will be going to work or going to sleep- doing their normal daily things. But then, suddenly Jesus will arrive! His return will be like a thief in the night- v. 44 puts it. Unexpected! Jesus is not going to send a postcard to let us know that He is on the way- He is not going to send a text telling us to get ready. No- the Bible has made it clear that no other warning will be heard! But He is coming- so you had better be ready! In fact, He is coming soon- as v. 33 puts it. Near- at the very gates. Well, if Jesus’ return was near for these disciples, how much more near it is for us! So the return of Jesus is certain but unknown. Near but not yet. The not yet is due to the fact that our God is patient- not wanting any to be destroyed! He has not come back yet because He is giving us time to repent and flee from the coming wrath! For His arrival will be sudden, without warning and final. After the gospel has bee spread to all nations- after all of the elect are brought to faith- then suddenly Jesus will come! The Judge of the earth will arrive when the time foretold arrives- when the timing is just right- the Father’s promise will be fulfilled. Since this is the case, what kind of people ought we to be? This is the very question that Peter asks in II Peter 3. Knowing that Jesus is coming back- and His return is soon- even at hand- how should we be living? Children, if your parents leave you at home for a few hours and they ask you to clean your room- do you think that it is wise to wait until the last moment to do this work? Should you wait until the last moment to do this task? Well- the problem is you don’t know when they will get home- right?! In a similar way, we need to be prepared for Jesus to come home at any moment! Not knowing when Jesus will come back helps keep us faithful and motivated! The unknown time of His arrival spurs us on in faithful expectation! Today could be the day! This could be the hour! So stay awake- persevere in good work- be ready for His coming! Don’t be like the wicked servant in v. 49 who used the delay as ground for rebellion. Rather, be ready! When Jesus returns, don’t you want Him to see you busy at work- living obediently! Surely you do! So be ready, the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.

**II. The Manner of His Coming**

Now that we have seen the unknown timing of Jesus’ return, in our second point we consider the manner of His coming. In other words, what will His return be like? When Jesus comes back to judge the earth, His coming will be a physical return. As the angels promised His disciples in Acts 1, Jesus will come back in the same way He left. So Jesus is going to physically return on the last day. But this return will not just be witnessed by a few disciples on the top of the Mt. of Olives, rather His return will be seen by everyone. His return will be like a flash of lightning- visible for all to see. The sign of the Son of Man will be in the clouds as Mt. 24:30 puts it. In this we find it clear, the return of Jesus will not be secret. His return will not be a private event for only a few to behold- it will be a public display of power for all to see! Last week I saw a few pictures of the Northern Lights. They looked so beautiful- but try I could not see them! Some people got great pictures of this event- but I missed out! I did not see it! This event passed by, and I was not able to see! But rest assured- no one is going to miss out when Jesus returns! Every eye will see! Added to that, every ear will hear! The return of Jesus will also be an audible event. As v. 31 puts it, the angel will let out a loud trumpet call. The voice of the archangel will be heard- and everyone will hear that the end has come! And in order to make sure that no one misses this event, the angels are going to gather all the elect together. So the return of Jesus will be visible and audible. His return will be a physical return- He will come back in the flesh. And the flesh that He has is has remains our flesh! We will see our elder brother- we will see our flesh and blood descent as He once ascended! He will come down on a cloud of glory- with power and great glory as v. 30 puts it. The very one who took on our flesh was raised in the flesh and will return with our flesh! The one who sits on the white throne is the last Adam- a man who took on our flesh is now glorified in the flesh! Having received the name above all names- being crowned with every crown! All flesh will see Him together! Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that He is the Lord of glory- the King of Kings! So His coming will not be hidden, secret or private. Rather it will be known and seen by all- even those who do not want to see Him will be forced to acknowledge the truth- Jesus is the Lord of glory and He has returned!

**III. The Work of His Coming**

But what will Jesus do when He comes? What work will He perform after He arrives again on the earth? There are two main works that we will consider. The first work that Jesus will do relates to His changes of this world. The creation itself will be recipient of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. As it stands, creation itself is eagerly waiting for this day because it longs to be made new, right and whole again. This time, instead of being cleansed by water, our created order will be cleansed by fire as II Peter 3 reveals. This is what is called the purifying of the created order- when the elements will melt with a cleansing fire. Anything that is good will be purged- making all things new and clean. As BC 37 says, He will burn this old world in fire in order to cleanse it. If any work withstands this test- that work will remain. If anything is wicked, it will be burned up like chaff. Heaven will come down to earth, and the heavenly Jerusalem will be located here. And God’s dwelling place will be with man. This fact proves that this world was created good and will be restored to a good state. But this work of Jesus as important and encouraging it is, is not the focus of our BC article. BC 37 focuses on the work of Jesus specifically as it relates to humankind. When Jesus comes back, what will He do to us? What will happen to humanity? Well, the first thing that will happen is that all humanity will be raised. Every human who is living or who has ever lived will receive a new body that will live forever. And then Jesus will make this great division. Jesus will sit on His white throne, and He will separate His sheep from the goats. The righteous will be placed on Jesus right hand- with the wicked removed to Jesus’ left. To His people Jesus will say, well done good and faithful servants. As Mt. 24:47 puts it, Blessed are you- and they will be set over all the master’s possessions. Or as Rev. 21 puts it, those who have trusted in the Lord will be welcomed into eternal glory. In that place there will be no more weeping, crying or pain. Death will be cast out- and we will live forever in the glory of our God! That is what is in store for God’s people- those who have loved and served Him below. Crowned with glory and honor our article says- made like Christ’s glorious body. But not so the wicked. Although the wicked will also be raised- they will be given a body that never dies- but their eternity will not be in a place of blessing and peace. No, rather to the wicked Jesus will say- away from Me, I never knew you. As v. 51 continues, these will be cut into pieces and their place will be one of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The rebel who refused to love the Lord while they lived will be cast into everlasting judgement. Since this is true- since this is the end that is coming- what side of Jesus do you want to be? Do you want to be on His right or left? A sheep or a goat? The application of this passage is clear- for those who have loved Jesus and look forward to His coming- the future judgement is a topic of joy! The righteous look forward to seeing the Savior’s face! As BC art. 37 says- it is a pleasant and comforting day for the elect! For us- for those who already know who the judge is- who already know the verdict- the day of judgment should not fill us with worry and anxiety! But rather- what joy we can have knowing that Jesus will make everything right! That He will make all things new! However, the prospect of seeing Jesus face to face is a horrible and dreadful thing for wicked and evil people. For these will be cast out- to suffer the consequences of their wickedness for all eternity. So when people think about the future- when they hear that Jesus is coming back to judge the living and the dead- their response to this fact depends on their relationship to the Judge! Added to this, the extent of joy or the extent of suffering is also linked to our actions in this world. Jesus will reward each according to their works. BC art. 37 talks about the books being opened- our consciences will be put on display. Jesus sees what you do- the work that you perform- and the just judge of the earth will do what is right! As Mt. 6 puts, the Father who sees the work you do in secret will reward you.

To conclude, the ultimate end of this age is a topic that we should not be afraid of! God’s people will be rescued and vindicated. His enemies will be judged and cast out. All things will be made right and new! This is good news for us! We who live in Christ are victorious! Jesus Christ reveals that He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. So we can say with Isaiah 25:9- Behold, this is our God. We have waited for Him, that He might save us! Let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation! Amen, come Lord Jesus!