



## What happened when Christ appeared?

### Discussion Questions

Read: Hebrews 9:24 – 28

#### **Something big was started.**

1. Discuss if you learnt something new or gained a fresh insight into the coming of Jesus.
2. What do you understand by “something big was started” when Jesus came.
3. Christians have various interpretations for “the last days”. According to Hebrews 1:1-2, what are the last days? Do we know how long they will last?
4. There are some views about the return of Jesus that say “the last days” are yet to come –that there will be a time of great suffering immediately before Christ returns. What do you think of this idea in the light of Hebrews 1:1-2?
5. What are the implications of the fact that we are now in “the last days”?

#### **Something big was ended**

6. What did Jesus come to bring an end to?
7. Discuss the difference between “forgiving” sin and “disabling/making sin powerless”? What are the implications for us today? What would have happened if Jesus had just “forgiven” our sins? (That is a wonderful thing, but is only part of the story)
8. How do we deal with the times we remember and weep over sins committed in the past; sins that may have ongoing consequences?

#### **Something big was anticipated**

9. What was anticipated at the first advent (coming) of Christ?
10. How will his second advent be different from his first?
11. Matthew 25:13 tells us to “keep watch, because we do not know the day or the hour” when Jesus will return. Give some practical examples of how we can “keep watch”.

Are you ready if Jesus returns tomorrow???

**Date:** 1 December 2019  
**Services:** Sunshine Beach and Tewantin  
**Series:** The Coming of Christ  
**Title:** What happened when Christ appeared?  
**Passage:** Hebrews 9:24-28  
**Outline:**

- 1. Something big was started**
- 2. Something big was ended**
- 3. Something big was anticipated**

“But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him”. (Hebrews 9:26-28)

### **1. Something big was started**

*“But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages”.* “The end of the ages” is not still coming ... it is here. It has happened with the coming of Christ. The Bible’s view of history says we are now in the end-times! The very first sentence of this book declares that we are *“in the last days”*:

*“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”* (1:1-2). So the birth of Christ announces something final. The tide of time is going out. Human history is virtually spent. God has said all he wants to say in Jesus. His final message is the New Testament, the infallible truth about Christ. This fact is repeated often.

Peter says *“the end of all things is near”* (1 Peter 4:7). John is even more emphatic: *“children, it is the last hour”* (1 John 2:18). In the next chapter of Hebrews we are told, *“For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay”* (Hebrews 10:37). The last book in the Bible announces *“the time is near”* (Revelation 1:3) and closes with the words of Jesus: *“Yes, I am coming quickly”* (22:20).

But some people deny this, ridiculing the notion that the end is near. *“In the last days mockers will come with their mocking ... saying ‘Where is the promise of his coming?’”* (2 Peter 3:3-4). All they can think about is clock-time ... ‘tick-tock, tick-tock’, and since that still goes on 2000 years after Christ appeared they mock the idea of the end being near. So Peter corrects them: *“With the Lord one day is as 1000 years and 1000 years are as one day”.* *“The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness”* (2 Peter 3:8-9). They are counting chronologically, thus wrongly. Peter is saying ‘throw away the clocks’! They cannot measure “nearness” of the end.

I urge you to resist the dangerous but common interpretation that claims God’s time-scale bears no resemblance to ours: that what we call a day could be a thousand years to God – and what we call a millennium he calls a day. That view has two disastrous consequences.

Firstly, it utterly destroys revelation! If God condescends to speak human words with meanings contrary to normal use then all communication with him is impossible. If by “year” or “day” God means something foreign to me, how can I ever understand him about anything?

Secondly, it plays into the hands of the mockers. On that view they could justifiably say ... *‘Tell us, you Christians, what does God mean by ‘the end is near’? You cannot know because (as you claim) God’s near is not the same as yours. You think of near in terms of days but he thinks of near in terms of 1000’s of years! Even if you asked him ‘Lord, tell us exactly how near’ any answer would be meaningless. If he answered ‘just 1000 years away’ that could mean tomorrow morning for all you know! Since God’s communications are so meaningless we have good reason to mock the promise of his coming. Who knows what God means when he speaks about anything?’*

God is talking about 'near' on the *program* not 'near' on the clock! It means Christ has brought us into the last stage of God's saving program, the last stage of salvation history. He has fully kept the covenant on our behalf. Nothing more has to be done. We live in that final epoch, variously described as "*these last days*" (Hebrews 1:1), "*the climax of the ages*" (Hebrews 9:26), and "*the fullness of time*" (Galatians 4:4). Even more pointed is John's remark "*Children, it is the last hour*" (1 John 2:18). None of this means clock/calendar time. Such hours, days, and years are entirely irrelevant concepts here. To illustrate:-

Imagine holding a paper copy of God's program for saving sinful mankind. It begins with his promise to Adam and Eve ... to send the seed of the woman and crush the serpent's head.

Act 1: Beyond Eden, sin spreads, Noah's flood (tick that off the list)

Act 2: Patriarchs, more sin, 400 years Egyptian slavery

Act 3: Moses, Exodus, Monarchy, Divided Kingdom, more sin

Act 4: Babylon, more sin, rebuilt Zion, Malachi, Messiah on horizon

Act 5: Messiah comes, death, resurrection, ascension .

Then on the last line, the program says ...

The End: Christ returns, Judgement day, sin abolished, and all God's people safe forever. That's the only item you can't tick yet. Only at Act 5 (the birth of Christ) can it be truly said "*the end is near*" ... meaning it is the next (and final) item on the program!

Since Christ came, it is closing time in this earthly theatre. The curtain is about to fall. We are in the last days! The New Testament has no interest in how much longer is left on the clock. It asserts we cannot know and warns us not to speculate. The plan of salvation has completed all its historical stages. This gospel age is the last one.

## 2. Something big was ended

He came ... "*to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself*". This is a very radical expression in the original language. It is stronger than saying Jesus came to *forgive* sin. And it is stronger than saying he came to pay for sin, to meet the debt of sin, to ransom sinners (though he did that too). It is even stronger than saying Christ came to save his people from sin. Literally he came to "abrogate" sin (eivj avqe,thsin îth/jÐ a`marti,aj), to make it null and void. He came to 'knock sin on the head', to render it powerless. He came to disable sin, to break its deathly grip, stopping it from continuing to be a barrier between God and his people.

Christ stood in for his people. The sins that condemned us condemned him. The sins that shut us off from fellowship with God are the very sins that shut him off from fellowship with God. He was abandoned in our place. God turned his back on Christ because our sins were upon him. He bore the pains of hell, the withdrawal of God. **He was the God-forsaken God!** So those sins have been done away with. They will never get another hearing. They had their day in court. They are now cast into the depths of the sea. What a big thing was ended! What extreme grace!

## 3. Something big was anticipated

Christ's first advent anticipates his second advent. His lowly coming anticipates his triumphant return. "*He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him*". The circumstances will be very different to his first appearing. Not in lowliness as a babe in a manger. Not in humiliation (under the law). Not to be threatened by a Herod or betrayed by a Judas. Not to be cut off from the land of the living. This time he comes in sublime majesty, surrounded by myriads of angels. He comes as Judge of all the earth.

No one will oppose or reject him. No one will deny or betray him or tell lies about him. No one will be asking 'Who is that'?

*“At the name of Jesus every knee will bow ... and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:10-11). His human nature no longer veils his divine nature. The herald angels will no longer sing *“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see.”* On the contrary, his deity will be magnified, revealed, and exalted in his flesh! The Apostle John gives us a preview of that scene ... just a glimpse, but so awesome that he had to be rescued from the terror of the moment, falling down like a dead man before the exalted Jesus:

*“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”* (Revelation 1:14-16).

The return of Christ is, for believers, everything we are waiting for. *“He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him”*. It says *“waiting”* because, though it is anticipated, it will come without warning. Jesus taught parables to emphasize that point. *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour”* (Matthew 25:13).

This could be our last Sunday. This sermon could be the last one I ever preach, and the last one you ever hear. Are you ready for that? Do you have faith in Christ now? Do you love him now? Do you live for him now? Don't let that day overtake you!

May God grant us all believing hearts as we wait for our Saviour from heaven.