

SERMON BY REV W HUIZINGA

ON GOD'S WORD

AS WE CONFESS IT IN

LORD'S DAY 19 (52)

OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Liturgy

Votum and Salutation

Psalm 96:1,2

Confession of Faith

Hymn 1A

Prayer

Thankofferings

Psalm 96:3,4,5,6

Read - L.D.19 and Art.37,B.C.

- Matthew 25

Sermon

CHRIST COMES!

- 1. Be ready to welcome Him!***
- 2. Be ready to render an account!***

Hymn 54

Prayer

Psalm 96:7,8

Benediction

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

King Jesus exercises dominion from sea to sea, as we read in Psalm 72:8:

*He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the river to the ends of the earth.*

This Psalm speaks of the king in terms which no OT king could attain. No wonder we look to King Jesus for its fulfilment. From the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean King Jesus holds sway. Yes, from heaven, from the Father's right hand, Jesus rules as King to the ends of the earth.

Many deny this dominion and kingship of our King Jesus. You see that all around you in our society. People reject his commands, his gospel and his instructions. They need not obey King Jesus. They follow whatever motto holds sway – mottos about the environmental agenda or mottos about the sexual agenda. They do not obey God's revelation about Jesus as King. As Proverbs 29:18 (NIV) says:

*Where there is no revelation,
The people cast off restraint;
But blessed is he who keep the law.*

Do you not witness this? Our society does not want to know about God's revelation of his Son, his beloved Son who died, but who rose and ascended into heaven to assume the throne over the whole world. As a result they cast off all restraints. The restraints against abortions are gone. The restraints against same-sex relations weaken till the gay lobby has almost succeeded.

But blessed are you who keep the gospel of the ascended Lord, the Lord, who comes to judge the living and the dead.

Usually Christ's coming to judge the living and the dead acts as an afterthought, a brief word of conclusion for a sermon on Lord's Day 19. Yet the subject is too important for that. It occupies a climactic position in the teachings of the Bible. This highlight of our age, "our blessed hope" as it is called, deserves full attention. Indeed, Christ's coming determines our lifestyles.

Consequently, we concentrate on Q. & A.52 about Jesus' coming to judge this world. I preach to you God's Word as you confessed it in L.D.19, especially Q.& A.52 under this *THEME:

CHRIST COMES!

And thus,

- 1. Be ready to welcome Him!***
- 2. Be ready to render an account!***

1. Be ready to welcome Him!

King Jesus rules as king over all things for the sake of his church. During this whole NT age our King propels his gospel to the ends of the earth so that the ends of the earth learn to love Him and to obey

Him. To do so our King rules with an eye on his church. For Scripture also says that our King, **as Head of the church**, rules over the whole world. It may not look like it, but it is true. Behind the scenes our King tears down the Iron Curtain, to allow the gospel in. One day King Jesus will tear down the Bamboo Curtain, to open the door for his gospel.

Meanwhile King Jesus:

- 1 Pours out heavenly gifts on you, his church. These are gifts from heaven from your heavenly King.
- 2 Defends and preserves you against all enemies. Remember how King Jesus defended his apostles. Jesus also defends you in the salvation He obtained for you at the price of his lifeblood.

So you confess that from his ascension and coronation until He comes in glory, for these 2000 years and more, Jesus controls all things for your sake.

Jesus even ruled and over-ruled kings and courts during the time of our Belgic Confession, when in the market-places the rope, the sword and fire took the thousands of lives of our brothers and sisters. For did the gospel not spread like a bush-fire through Europe?

Comparatively speaking, you live in much quieter times. No threats and persecution intimidate you or terrorise your homes. If you wrote art.37,B.C. today you probably would stress the need to remain sober and awake since the Devil lulls many to sleep. Humanism - that man is his own god and that man is basically good - rules our land. A materialistic spirit deadens the burning hope of christians. The Devil does not mind. Let christians pursue Mammon. Let them carve out their own place in the world. Let them devote themselves to projects which have no "salt." Let them fill themselves with the things of this world - wine, women and song. Or let them quarrel among themselves in church circles, says the Devil. It keeps Christians ineffective and harmless, as far as he is concerned.

So our situation here in Australia differs from that of reformed christians in the 16th century.

Art.37, B.C., first reminds us that no one knows the day or the hour when our Lord will come in glory. God keeps that a surprise. It will come as a thief in the night - suddenly, swiftly and surprisingly. *Be on the alert therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour* (Matth.25:13). This is the main lesson of Jesus' parable of the five wise and the five foolish maidens. When the Bridegroom comes, unexpectedly and even later than some think, you must be ready. Even at midnight, when most people lie on one ear, fast asleep! Paul's preaching indicated Jesus could come today! Many did not and do not think it should take as long as it does for Jesus to come in glory. Yet you must be ready. Otherwise the door will be shut. Jesus will say, *I do not know you*.

Are you on the alert, brothers and sisters? Are you expecting Jesus? Or do you just drift from one day to the next? Some just manage to

complete each day's, each week's tasks and are happy to be at the end of the day or week, let alone think about the end of all things. Others still have so much to do. Their minds are on tomorrow – the agenda is already full. No thought can be spared for Christ's coming today or tomorrow. No prayer mentions that important date. What about you?

Jesus shows longsuffering, patience. You see, not Jesus, but people are slow and slack. Jesus waits for people, for sinners, for their repentance. Jesus does not want those whom the Father gave to Him to go lost. So He waits. Therefore we read in 2 Peter 3:15, *and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord **is salvation!*** Without that longsuffering of God we all perish in our ungodly unbelief. If our Lord did not show that patience none of us would be saved.

People ask, why does it take so horribly long? All those cliches about his coming in glory help us nothing! What do they amount to? Instead of patient endurance, they begin to mock, along with the world. But Peter turns the argument around. The Lord waits for you; the Lord is patient.

Mind you, Jesus does not keep you waiting any longer than necessary. Jesus knows for example how terribly difficult the days just before his coming will be. If He did not shorten those days, even the very elect would be lost. I tell you the truth and I do not lie, the Lord hastens his coming!

But the flip side of this truth about Jesus' patience is that you must not keep the Lord waiting. You must truly repent, and truly believe in Jesus Christ's coming. You must truly allow Him to develop those talents in your life so that He can use them to make his kingdom come. Do not keep Him waiting.

That applies to you youth, who might be inclined to think, *I will become serious later on, but not now; I have too many unfinished plans for myself first.* It also applies to you middle-aged members who have settled into your own domain or dominion, forgetting about the Lord and his coming kingdom.

The Lord is longsuffering, already for 2000 years. He waits. He waits for you too! He is also patient toward you.

The time is short. Redeem the time. Hasten his coming. Be ready. For the Lord could come today!

Though you cannot tell the exact time, Jesus did tell you how to discern the approach of his royal visit. When the fig tree's branches become tender, you know summer draws near. Yes, the leaves appear on the fig tree, the start of those beautiful big leaves. You know these signs.

Then learn to discern the signs of the times, spiritually.

So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates (Matth.24:33). All these things! In the context of that statement Jesus mentioned **the increase of lawlessness** - living without any norms, **the man of lawlessness, wars and rumours of**

war, earthquakes and disasters, false Christs and false prophets, love growing cold, persecution of the church, and the proclamation of the gospel around the world. These **signs** constitute Christ's continuous knocking on mankind's door. They warn the world but comfort the church, because *see, He comes!* The **signs of the times!**

They accelerate and intensify. Jesus' knocking becomes louder, more insistent!

Does the world pay attention? Sects keep frightening people by predicting the year. For example, in PNG many sects said Jesus would come in 2000. They are wrong. The predictions have been consistently wrong. They are even wrong to predict.

But the signs are there. Jesus' coming approaches. Jesus makes haste.

Yet in spite of all these signs, these warnings and indications of the coming judgment, people do not take Christ's coming seriously. They have discarded it as religious superstition. Many mock at the idea of Christ's coming. *You can wait till kingdom come*, is a mocking proverb of unbelief. Noah's contemporaries mocked his building of the ark for the judgment to come. *How will you get the ocean liner to the sea, Noah*, they raucously ridiculed. Noah quietly told them, *the LORD will bring the waters here; you must be ready!*

You have a similar message for modern mockers.

Be ready! Jesus comes! Look at all these disasters! They warn you of the coming judgment.

Yet the media silences any mention of Jesus' coming, when disasters hit.

Fanatical muslims frighten people more than Armageddon, the last world war when Jesus comes with the chariots and horses of heaven to defeat Satan and his hordes. Brothers and sisters, do not become acclimatised to the mocking thought, which says, *where is the promise of His coming?*

The threat of environmental disaster and nuclear holocaust scare people much more than Christ's coming with the angels. Yet this world starts to wear out, ageing fast like an older person whose outward frame deteriorates. The environment is endangered through man's greed and bloodthirstiness; many species of animals are endangered; the ozone layer has holes in it; and man's pride and hate fill the earth with the threat of nuclear holocaust. This world will not last but wear out like our human frames, like a garment, as the Psalmist says.

People do not admit this. Like horses with blinders on they gallop toward...doom! Pathetic! Do they think that this world exists, rotates daily on its axis at an angle of 23 ½ degrees just by itself? Do some mysterious laws of nature keep everything going just perfectly? Also, will this world just keep going and keep going, all by itself?

No, three times **no!** Peter the apostle points to how the early world before the flood did not just exist by itself. No, the Word of God brought this world into existence. This Word also continues to provide for it. By God's decree a world-wide flood drowned this world. The depths of earth opened up with earthquakes and volcanoes; the windows of heaven opened with a deluge of rain. God let the forces loose. No longer did his Word keep those forces under control for mankind's sake. All the mockery of unbelievers choked in their water-filled lungs. See, you must believe Jesus' coming to judge the living and dead. Yes, the flood is past. Everything returned to normal. It seems. But this present world exists, keeps turning by the Word of God. God **promised** not to flood this whole earth again. That rainbow in the sky reminds God. According to same promise *the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men* (2 Pet 3:7). Thus believe in his coming. Rejoice in that day!

Therefore we look forward to that great day with a great longing to enjoy to the full the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (last sentence of art. 37, B.C.).

Yes, pray, *your kingdom come, here on earth as it has in heaven.*

Repeat what the bride of all times sings, *come Lord Jesus, come with haste!*

Please do not think that this was only for the persecuted church who saw no hope anymore. Yes, your life is good here – peace, freedom, prosperity all make you quite content to keep things as they are. You older members can retire in peace and with dignity. Yet the *Marantha* shout must not die. Do you not see that enemy, *death*, at work also in your members? Do you not age; do you not get colds, influenzas and diseases? Do you not have troubles? Do loved ones not die? Then keep singing that *Maranatha* song. You children love to sing it. But you youth and older ones should keep singing it as well.

The coming of Jesus must also percolate through your lives. Let Jesus' coming prune unnecessary foliage from your lives. Prune away all those unfruitful hours every week in front of a TV or computer screen! Prune away all those unfruitful pursuits! Get involved in the Lord's work in the church or in the community. Let Christ's coming give you a sense of purpose and a set of priorities. And let the coming of Jesus put some godly zeal into your life.

Everything will dissolve. That is why the apostle Paul tells us to own property as though we do not own it, to be married as though not married. Live in this world as though you did not; own properties and cars as though they were not yours. Do not allow the disease of greed to infect you. Do not be like Lot's wife. She could not leave her home, her kitchen, her city behind. Can you? Could you hand it over today, if the Lord asked you what He asked the rich young ruler? Or are you married to your money, to your properties, etc. You see, if you really

believe in the coming of the Lord, then it sets priorities in your life; then you prune certain things that may not be wrong but are unimportant; then the things of this world do not hold on to you; but you develop the mind of Jesus who left behind the glory, the honour, the riches and the position in heaven to come to earth to humble himself to become a man, a servant of men. Yes, to die on the cross for us. That is the mindset the apostle commands you to put on. That attitude prepares you for the coming of Christ. And remember, Jesus comes *to judge the living and the dead*.

2. Be ready to render an account!

God not only fixed a day to judge the world but He also appointed Jesus to be the judge of all men. With that we come to our second point.

Some will flee from Him, while the bride will go out to welcome Him. For Jesus brings judgment for the goats, but vindication/justice for the sheep. He will ask for an accounting.

Men on earth may outrun the policeman or outfox the law but no one will be able to avoid judgment. All mockery turns to utter dread! Christ's angels serve each person with a subpoena, summoning them to appear before the great white throne of judgment. High and low shall stand before Jesus, the Judge.

Then the verdict of Jesus will be made public before the onlooking world. Questions arise here. Maybe you have some questions too.

- 1 Is the verdict not given already here on earth when some believe and others scoff at a resurrection and a judgment Day?
- 2 Is the verdict not given already when you die and go to heaven? Then you reign as kings with Jesus.
- 3 Has the verdict not been given already when Jesus first raises the dead to life before He judges all people? For Jesus raises some to everlasting life and some He raises to eternal judgment.

Allow me to use the example of a graduation. You finish your two year TAFE course as special dental assistant. You receive your marks back for your exam and for your practical hands-on work in a dental room. You have passed. Months later, maybe even a half year later, you attend the official graduation ceremony where you are handed your certificate. It takes some time, does it not? Similarly, Jesus already informs you that by faith in Him you have passed from death unto life. But you must wait till the Judgment Day for the official ceremony. Then it becomes public. Jesus takes great honour in this ceremony, even as the Dean of the Department of Dental Nursing does at your graduation.

This does not mean Jesus will overlook unconfessed sins, sins unresolved and left festering. Jesus is holy God.

It will be a thorough judgment, for the Son of Man knows everything that lives in your hearts and minds, every thought, word and deed. Every word will come under scrutiny - *for by your words shall you be*

justified and by your words shall you be condemned (Matth.12:37). Jesus, the Word, shall lay bare your very thoughts and intents. Before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebr.4:13).

We read together the description Jesus gave of this as recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, about the separation of the sheep and goats and the reasons for placing some on one side and the others on the other side. What did you do **with Jesus** who was **hungry, thirsty, or in prison**? What did you do about Jesus' brother, even the least of his brothers? Yes, from various passages in the NT, e.g. Rev.20:12 - *And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done* - the judgment will be made on the basis of what you have done.

Here in this passage we read the accent falls on what you have done for Jesus. Do your deeds reveal faith in Christ or do they betray indifference and unbelief? Remember that the person who visited Jesus' brother in prison, encouraging his brother with the promises of God puts himself under grave danger. For the jailer and others note he visits that 'heretic!' They will say, *he must be one of them, note that man!* Yet you go. You give the cup of cold water in the name of Jesus to one of his little ones. In the process you do it...**for Jesus!**

Do you put your faith into action to support the needy brothers and sisters of Jesus, whether at home or elsewhere in this world?

Are you, so to speak, standing there holding the coats and urging the people on to stone Stephen to death, or are you kneeling in prayer for Stephen and for those murderers?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Then you will rejoice in that day, but also put your faith into action for the brothers and sisters of Jesus.

The wicked try to bury themselves in the ground like moles. Others will call the mountains to cover them from the sight of Judge. They will be like Israel trying to hide from Midian. But not even death can protect them. On these unbelieving and godless masses Jesus will pronounce that terrible and irrevocable sentence:

"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels"; and again, "They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (Matth.25:41; 2 Thess.1:9).

Your brothers from the 16th century openly testified to their tormentors to warn them. They did not seek revenge but the conversion of their persecutors.

But it is not only a matter of judging the nations – sending them into the kingdom of glory or into the lake of fire. There is also another accounting to take place. In the **parable of the talents** you heard how Jesus also exacts an accounting from each one of you. What have you done with the talents, the money and the gifts bestowed on you by our Lord? For remember, all you have belongs to Jesus; it is actually not

even yours, but Christ's. How have you handled his goods – as a scrooge, as a spendthrift or as a wise steward? Jesus comes to demand a reckoning. Are you ready?

Those who squander their talents, those who hide their talents are in for a shocking surprise! Mt 25:29-30!

But has all of this frightened you? Who would not stand frozen with fear? Each one of you should be mortally embarrassed to have every one of your deeds and thoughts exposed. Will you really have to go through such a trauma? Many of God's humble ones cringe with fear at the mere thought of this final judgment.

In the days of the Great Reformation the common picture of Jesus as Judge was the man in black, with a black robe from head to foot. He holds a set of scales in one hand. In the other He holds a two-edged sword. Fire comes out of his eyes; a shout of command issues from his mouth. A fearful picture! No wonder many did not pray to Him, but rather went through Saint Mary to Jesus.

Note how your confession corrects this wrong image.

The very same person who before submitted himself to the judgment of God for your sake comes to claim you, his Bride! The same Saviour who removed all curse from you via the cursed cross comes in glory on the clouds of heaven to gather you to Himself. He does not change! He is the very same as before.

So seek your hope and protection in Him alone! Do not leave unresolved sins to fester. Confess your sins! Plead his atoning blood. Then rejoice that your names stand written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Then ***without fear*** you may appear before the judgment seat of Christ, as we prayed for you at your baptism.

Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, Jesus will say. You will be crowned. And you will help Jesus to judge the angels!

Therefore, since all these things will be burned up, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:11,12)?

Let the *Maranatha* - echo not fade. Work zealously till the Master comes. Amen.