Many of us have heard that Jesus will return. But for someone to say that He will return means that He must have come before. And as we know, our Lord Jesus Christ came once—nearly two thousand years ago. He lived, died, was buried, rose again, and ascended into heaven. While He was here on earth, however, He promised His disciples that He would come again.

This teaching is therefore very important. It helps us understand *how* Jesus said He would return, so that we are not lacking in knowledge. Many people misunderstand His words and miss their true meaning. I encourage you to read this teaching carefully and calmly to the end.

The Two Ways Jesus Spoke About His Return

When Jesus spoke about His return to the world, He described it at different times in two distinct ways:

1. His return as the Spirit
2. His return like a thief

Let us examine these two ways closely, with special emphasis on the second.

1. Jesus’ Return as the Spirit

Jesus said the following to His apostles:

John 14:18–20 (NIV)

> *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

He repeats this same message in John 16:16.

The disciples initially thought that once Jesus left, they would never see Him again. But on the day He ascended into heaven, ten days later, the Bible tells us that they were all gathered together in one place. The Holy Spirit came upon them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

From that moment onward, each believer knew that Jesus was

living in their heart. No one asked anymore, “Where is Jesus?” Their sense of being abandoned disappeared completely. Only then did they fully understand what Jesus had meant.

This shows us that His first return after the ascension was through the Holy Spirit. Even today, Christ lives in the hearts of all who believe in Him and have received the Holy Spirit.

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2. Jesus’ Return Like a Thief

Jesus also spoke of His return in another way:

Matthew 24:43–44 (NIV)

> *“But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”*

Notice this carefully: Jesus did not say He would return like a

soldier or a merchant—but like a thief.

To understand this properly, we must look at how the Bible describes a thief.

John 10:10 (NIV)

> *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

The “thief” described here is not a petty pickpocket, but a violent robber—one who comes armed, ready to kill, destroy, and seize what is valuable.

In the same way, Jesus’ return in the last days will reflect these three characteristics:

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1. He Will STEAL

First, He will come at an unexpected hour and take what is most

precious to Him on the earth—His saints. This is what the Bible refers to as the *rapture*.

Matthew 24:40–41 (NIV)

> *“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.”*

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2. His Coming Will Involve JUDGMENT AND DESTRUCTION

If the rapture passes someone by, the world will then move into the period of God’s wrath. These events will culminate in Jesus appearing openly and physically to destroy the nations that gather to fight against Him in the great battle of Armageddon.

Revelation 19:11–16 (NIV)

> *“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With*

> *justice he judges and wages war*

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