

Christ's Second Coming

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**“He comes not an infant in Bethlehem born,
 He comes not to lie in a manger;
 He comes not again to be treated with scorn,
 He comes not a shelterless stranger;
 He comes not to Gethsemane,
 To weep and sweat blood in the garden;
 He comes not to die on the tree,
 To purchase for rebels a pardon.
 Oh, no; glory, bright glory
 Environs Him now.”**

“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” John 14.1-3

Our Saviour Himself, in His talk to His disciples, spoke these words in the evening of the day on which He was crucified. He had been with them in constant companionship for over three years, and besides the tie of personal love, which bound them to Him, they had given Him reverence as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and had “trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” They had looked for a speedy deliverance from the Roman yoke, and now consternation and grief had taken hold of their hearts as they listened to His words: “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.” John 13.33. Peter voiced the common desire, and said, “Lord, whither goest Thou?” and to this question the Saviour replied, “Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.” And then He proceeded to comfort their troubled hearts, telling them how and when they could follow Him and be with Him.

The “glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2.13), is the “blessed hope” that is set before the church of Christ. It has been the hope of the church in all ages. The ancient prophets foretold in minutest detail “the sufferings of Christ,” and at His first advent the “sure word of prophecy” was fulfilled to the letter; but “the glory that should follow” was no less the theme of inspired penmen, and the followers of Christ were pointed forward to the time when His glory should be revealed, as the time when they also should “appear with Him in glory,” and “be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4.13; Colossians 3.4. It was with this hope that our Saviour comforted His sorrowing disciples.

“I will come *again*.” This means “another time; once more.” Not thousands of times, as they would have us believe, who claim that in fulfillment of His promise He comes whenever a saint dies, but only *once more* will He come again, to consummate the great plan of salvation. To this the apostle bears emphatic testimony, in these words: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the *second time* without sin unto salvation.” Hebrews 9.27, 28. It is appointed unto men once to die; in order that men might have life, Christ was once offered for sin, bearing “our sins in His own body on the tree;” and so, when His work for sinners shall have been finished, He will come once more—“the second time”—not as a sin-bearer, but for the salvation of those, who by means of His sacrifice and mediation, have “put away sin.”

THE MANNER OF HIS COMING

As the disciples stood gazing up into heaven after their ascending Lord, two shining ones—messengers from the heavenly courts—appeared and said to them: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Acts 1.11. And how did He go into heaven? Even “while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” So His coming will be personal and visible. Said the angels, “*This same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Paul says, “*The Lord Himself* shall descend from heaven with a shout.” 1 Thessalonians 4.16. It will be the same one who was baptized by John in the Jordan, and who from that day “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil;” the same one who, wearied and faint, sat by Jacob’s well, and found refreshment in revealing to a poor sinner the fountain of living water.

It was the knowledge that Christ Himself would come in person, that animated the patriarch in his deep affection, when he said: “For I know that My redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” Job 19.25-27. “Whom I shall see for myself, and not a stranger,” is the reading according to the margin. And this serves to connect the hope of the patriarch with the promise of Christ. The disciples mourned the anticipated departure of the Saviour, as that of a dear friend and companion, as well as the one who should redeem Israel; and the patriarch triumphed, even in His sore distress, and the thought that when his Redeemer should stand at the latter day upon the earth, he should see in Him a friend, and not a stranger. Happy is the man whose acquaintance with Christ is such that He can look forward to His return with the same fond anticipation.

Jesus “shall so come in like manner” as He went into heaven. How did He go? While they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Then when He comes a cloud will attend Him, and He will be seen. And the beloved disciple testified: “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.” Revelation 1.7.

Again he says, describing his prophetic vision: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle." Revelation 14.14. Christ, speaking of the events connected with His coming, said: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24.30

He will come as He departed. But whereas only a few saw Him go away, "every eye shall see Him" when He returns. He will come "in the glory of His Father" (Matthew 16.17), accompanied by "all the holy angels." Matthew 25.31. He will then "sit upon the throne of His glory," and "a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him." Psalm 50.3. He shall descend "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thessalonians 4.16), and "the heavens and the earth shall shake" (Joel 3.16). None will be able to hide from their eyes "the brightness of His coming;" "for as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in His day." Luke 17.24. Surely the question, "How will He come?" is sufficiently answered.

THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING

Why will He come? Because if He should not come the second time, His first coming would have been in vain. Said He, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He comes to take to Himself the purchase of His own blood. He has gone to prepare a place for those who become His friends indeed, and He will come and take them to it. His coming will be the great consummation of the plan of salvation. In vain would be all His sufferings for men, if He should not return to complete that which He has begun.

Christ's words imply that if He should not come, His disciples could not be with Him. Notice: He said He would come to receive them to Himself, *that* (in order that) where He was there they might be also. The object of His coming is to take His people to Himself. Now it is evident that Christ does not do things that are unnecessary, but it would be unnecessary for Him to come for His people, if they could be with Him without His coming. Not only so, but it would be the height of folly for Him to come for His disciples if they went to be with Him when they died, hundreds of years ago. So the fact that Christ will come for His people is evidence that they cannot be with Him until He comes.

Since Christ's followers cannot be with Him until He comes, then they all will receive their reward at the same time. To this the apostle bears witness, when, speaking of the faithful of past ages, he says: "These all, have obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11.39, 40. And again the Apostle Paul says: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we

which are alive and remain shall be caught up *together with them* in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4.15-17 “So,” that is by the resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living, at the coming of Christ, will the Savior’s promise be fulfilled, to take His people to Himself, to be with Him.

But the taking of His people to Himself involves something else. The earth is the kingdom, which God prepared for His people “from the foundation of the world.” Compare Matthew 25.34 and Genesis 1.26; Psalm 8.6. To the meek it is promised that they shall inherit the earth. Matthew 5.5. They “shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” Psalm 37.11. But this cannot be done while the wicked remain upon it; for “there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.” Therefore before the righteous can delight themselves in “the abundance of peace,” the wicked must be removed from the earth. And so when, in prophetic vision, John saw the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, he heard the elders around the throne in heaven say: “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them that corrupt the earth.” Revelation 11.17, 18, margin. Christ Himself said that when He should come, it would be to “reward every man according to his works.” Matthew 16.27. So, then, His coming means the salvation of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked.

THE EVENTS OF THE END

A few words as to the manner in which the final redemption of the righteous will be effected, may be in place. The Apostle Paul tells us that it will be by the resurrection of the dead, and the translation of the living. To the Corinthian church he wrote: —

“Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” 1 Corinthians 15.51-54

Thus the righteous enter into their eternal reward; but not immediately do they dwell on the earth. The earth must still be fitted for their dwelling-place, by the destruction of those who have corrupted it. When Christ appears in the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory, the righteous, because they are righteous, are strengthened to behold His glory; but the wicked cannot endure it. Says Isaiah: “He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.” Isaiah 11.4. And the Apostle Paul, speaking of “the man of sin,” the lawless one, says that he

is the one “whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.” 2 Thessalonians 2.3

This, however, is not the final destruction of the wicked, and the cleansing of the earth, for the millions who have died in sin lie all this time in their graves, unconscious of the wonderful events that are taking place on the earth. Not at that time do they receive the recompense for their evil deeds. Neither do the wicked who are alive at the time of Christ's appearing, and who are slain by the brightness of His coming, receive their punishment at that time. They simply drop dead, unable to endure the dazzling glory of Christ's presence. “And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.” Jeremiah 25.33

The prophets thus describe the condition of the earth at that time:

“Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled; suddenly are my tents spoiled, and My curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? For My people are foolish, they have not known Me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. [Compare Genesis 1.2.] I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.” Jeremiah 4.20-27

“Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and *after many days* shall they be visited.” Isaiah 24.17-22

The earth will then be in its original chaotic state; in the condition described as “the deep,” “the abyss” or the “bottomless pit.” Upon the dark, dreary, desolate place, Satan will be left for a thousand years. See the prophet: —

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit,

and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season." Revelation 20.1-3

Unable to practice any of his hellish deceptions upon men, because there are no living men upon the earth, he is most effectually bound. No humble convict in solitary confinement in the dark cell was ever more surely deprived of liberty.

During the thousand years the righteous will be in heaven, engaged with Christ, in passing judgment upon fallen angels and wicked man. See Revelation 20.4; 1 Corinthians 6.1-3. This period of one thousand years comprises the "many days," at the end of which the wicked are to "be visited." At the end of that time Satan shall be loosed from his prison, because the wicked will then be raised (Revelation 20.5), and they will have opportunity to practice for a little season the deceptive arts which are his very life. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, will have descended from God out of heaven, and Satan will gather the hosts of the wicked round it, making them believe that they can capture it for their own. Revelation 20.8, 9. And then fire shall come down from God out of heaven and devour Satan and all his hosts. That fire shall burn as an oven and the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the fire shall burn them up, and shall leave neither root nor branch. Malachi 4.1

The same fire that causes "the perdition of ungodly men," will also melt the earth, and purify it from the curse, so that from it shall come forth a renewed earth, fitted for the abode of righteousness. 2 Peter 3.7, 9, 12, 13. The righteous, safe in the city of God, and thus enabled to "dwell with everlasting burnings" (Isaiah 33.14,15), shall "meditate terror" which shall not come nigh them; for only with their eyes shall they behold and see the reward of the wicked. Then when the wicked shall have been consumed "like stubble fully dry," and the fire cease for lack of fuel upon which to feed, the righteous shall go forth to inherit the land for ever; "they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall prepare the waste cities, the desolations of many generations;" yes, "they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them;" and then they "shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Then the "people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." Isaiah 32.16-18. "For the Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like a garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein; thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord."