

# THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

by

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

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*Proved from Scripture—Not at Death—Coming Events—1. The First Resurrection—2. The Conversion and Restoration of Israel—3. Satan Bound—4. The Separation Between Wheat and Tares—5. The Destruction of Antichrist—Waiting for His Return—Watching—Working—Rewarded.*

IN THE DAYS of the apostles the disciples were comforted and encouraged by the prospect of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. An angel had said to them, as they watched the Lord depart from the earth, **“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.”**

This was the hope of the Church; and thus it ought to have remained up to His actual return. His coming should have continued to be the hope of the Church; but this, alas! for centuries has not been the case.

In confessions of faith, the truth that the Lord Jesus will come again may still have a place; but practically, to by far the greater number of His disciples, it has been a mere doctrinal statement that has not been enjoyed, and which has had no influence upon their lives.

The Lord, however, desired it should be otherwise. He intended that His Church should look for Him; that she should watch and wait for His return. Again and again, during His personal ministry, the Lord Jesus foretold this great event; and after His ascension the apostle referred continually to it.

Very many passages of Scripture might be quoted in proof of this assertion, but I will only mention the following:

- **“When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.”**

- **“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.”**

- **“As it is appointed unto men once to die, and 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.”**

- **“The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.”**

These quotations suffice to prove that the second coming of the Lord Jesus means that He will return in person, and has no reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, or to His manifesting Himself in an especial manner to the believer in the way of comfort, instruction or help of any kind; nor has it reference to our death, when we, as believers, are taken to be with Him.

If, however, anyone should say, “Why lay such stress upon this; is not our going to Him when we die the same thing?” The reply is, “There is a vast difference between these two events.”

### **NOT DEATH**

(a) As individuals we shall at that time be brought only to a state of partial happiness; we shall have no glorified bodies then, but must await the hour when **“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”** Nor when we fall asleep do we reign with Christ and sit with Him upon His throne; because He will not then be manifestly reigning. Blessed therefore though it is for the child of God, when he departs **“to be absent from the body and present with the Lord,”** it will be unspeakably more blessed still to enter upon that fullness of glory which awaits us only at our Lord’s return.

(b) Satan will not be bound until Jesus comes again, and for this reason, by the permission of God, he still has power here, both in the world and in the Church, though individuals are out of his reach who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

(c) The whole Church will at once be introduced to full eternal happiness and glory at our blessed Lord’s return. Not only as individuals will our cup of joy be full to overflowing, but we shall rejoice throughout eternity with the whole company of the redeemed.

### **COMING EVENTS**

I now proceed to consider briefly some of the events which will take place then.

1. *The first resurrection, when the changed and risen saints together will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be forever with Him.* At this time those only will be raised who, as believers in the Messiah under the old covenant dispensation, or as disciples of the Lord Jesus under that of the new covenant, shall have fallen asleep in Him.

The commonly received opinion is that at our Lord’s return there will be a general resurrection, both of believers and unbelievers; while the Holy Spirit teaches in the Holy Scriptures that they who are Christ’s, and they only, will have part in the first resurrection. In I Corinthians we read thus: **“As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.”**

Notice the words, **“they that are Christ’s.”** Not all who had previously died, but those only who through faith in Jesus are united to Him, and shall have fallen asleep as believers. The same truth is taught in I Thessalonians, where we read: **“The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then (afterward) 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.”**

Notice that only of the dead in Christ it is said they will rise at that time.

**“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

Oh! how should the solemnity and certainty of these events come home to every one of us, and with what earnestness should each person who reads these lines seek upon scriptural grounds to settle for himself that he is really Christ’s. By nature we are lost, ruined and undone, and deserve nothing but punishment; but we have, at the same time, to accept God’s only remedy, namely, salvation through faith in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom alone spiritual life, pardon and justification can be obtained.

2. *The conversion and restoration of Israel nationally.* In Scripture the glory and resurrection of the Church of the firstborn ones is always connected with the time when Israel (who will have returned to their own land in unbelief) **“shall know the Lord.”**

3. *Another event which will take place at the return of the Lord Jesus, is that Satan will be bound.*

**“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.”**

During the present dispensation, before the return of our Lord, Satan will not be bound; therefore sin and open wickedness will continue to the end of it, and instead of becoming better, things, according to Scripture, will become worse and worse. It is impossible to shut one’s eyes to the fearful wickedness now around us everywhere. Murders of the most cruel character, and numerous other atrocious crimes are, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, continually being committed.

How certainly does all this prove that Satan is not yet bound, that he is even now the god of this world, and has power still; and because he knows that his time will be comparatively short, he manifests his hatred against God and against His people to the very utmost.

But this state of things will not always last, for when Jesus comes again he will lose his power in the earth, and will be shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years.

*4. In connection with the return of the Lord Jesus is another event, namely, the separation between the wheat and the tares, which represent Christendom, or the professing Church of Christ.*

Read carefully Matthew, thirteen, verses thirty-seven to forty: **“He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.”**

In this parable, together with our Lord’s own explanation of it, we see what is to be expected during this present dispensation, while Jesus tarries. Civilization, mental cultivation, and advancement in knowledge of every kind, may continue to the utmost; but man, fallen man, remains a ruined creature, except he be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the acceptance of the Gospel. Intellectually he may be improved and polished to the very highest degree, but he is a sinner, and, in his natural condition, remains lost, ruined and undone. He may even possess natural religion and a form of godliness, but if he is not born again he is still at enmity with God, and as assuredly as he does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, **“the wrath of God abideth on him.”**

Sin is not, as some suppose, a comparatively little thing. It is a deadly spiritual disease, as the Word of God declares it to be; and no progress in education, no mental culture, can eradicate it from the heart, or change depraved human nature. Notwithstanding every effort at improvement, the heart remains **“deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”** Until the return of the Lord Jesus, therefore, the present state of things will continue, and, as we shall see presently from the Word of God, will become worse and worse.

This, then, plainly shows the notion entertained by many godly, excellent persons, that the world will be converted during the present dispensation by the preaching of the Gospel, and that the millennium will thus finally be introduced, to be not according to the Holy Scriptures.

The Gospel, indeed, is to be preached **“as a witness to all nations,”** but it is not to be the means of the conversion of the world. Moreover, we learn the character of the present dispensation, which is, that God takes out from among the Gentiles a people for His name, but does not convert all nations.

This is confirmed by the parable of the wheat and the tares; for if the whole world were to be converted before the return of the Lord Jesus, there would be no truth in the explanation given of it by our Lord Himself.

He tells us that the tares (the children of the wicked one) were to grow together with the wheat (the children of the kingdom), until the end of the age, namely up to the time of His own return. This, therefore, the Word of the Lord Jesus, is in direct opposition to the common notion that the world will be converted previous to His coming again.

And in addition to this, we find passage after passage in the New Testament in which we are expressly told either by Christ or by the apostles, that at the close of the present dispensation wickedness will abound both among professed believers and in the world at large, in proof of which I will refer to one single passage of Scripture only.

We read in another place: **“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, inconsistent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.”**

Here we have particularly to keep before us that this is not a description of pagans, but of the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus; for to such a state will Christendom, or the professing Church of Christ, be reduced at the end of the present dispensation.

Notice especially that of these persons it is said, they have a form of godliness. They wish to be considered Christians. They are not avowed infidels and atheists, but professed believers. Are we, then, to expect that things around us will gradually improve, or rather, that, as we approach

### **THE END OF THE AGE**

the darker they will become? True it is that one day, **“The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,”** but this will never be until Jesus Himself comes. In the meantime lawlessness will increase, and the socialism, the communism, the nihilism, etc., of which we now hear so much, will at last be headed up in the personal Antichrist, the man of sin.

This leads me to mention another of the events that will take place at the return of the Lord Jesus, namely:

*5. The destruction of the Antichrist.* **“Now we beseech you brethren, by (or, concerning) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by (or, concerning) our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon (or, hastily) shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word nor by letter as from us, as that (or, as though he had said) the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away (or the apostasy) first, and that (or the) man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God and that is worshipped: that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that when I was yet with you I told you of these things.**

**“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity (or lawlessness) doth already work, only he who now letteth (or, restraineth) will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked (or, lawless one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.”**

We have now in the next place to consider that it is the will of the Lord that we, His disciples, should

### **WAIT FOR HIS RETURN**

A great many passages might be quoted from the New Testament in proof of this; but for the sake of brevity, I will refer only to a few. In Titus, we read, **“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”** Observe how it is laid upon the saints to look for the blissful hope and the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

### **WATCH**

The Lord said to His disciples, **“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.”** Again He said, **“Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”** Again, the Lord says, **“Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”**

Now, are we, as believers, all watching? are we earnestly longing for the return of that blessed One? Do our hearts truly yearn after Him, and long for His glorious appearing? Are we also doing our part to hasten on His coming? And is it habitually our prayer that the Lord will be pleased to hasten the fulfillment of events yet to be fulfilled before that day comes?

### **PRACTICAL EFFECTS**

And now the last part of our subject remains to be considered, namely, the practical effect this truth should have upon our hearts.

If it be really received and entered into, the child of God will say, “What can I do for my blessed Saviour before He comes again? How can I most glorify Him? His will concerning me is that I should occupy ‘until He come.’ How then can I best use for Him the talents with which I am entrusted, by physical strength, my mental powers? How can my sight, my tongue, all my faculties of mind and body, be best devoted to His praise? How should my time, my money, all that I am and have, be used for Him? How can my whole spirit, soul and body be best consecrated to His service?”

These are deeply important practical questions which all believers in the Lord Jesus should ask themselves seeing that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, even with His precious blood. Instead of indulging in inactivity and listlessness on account of the evil state of things around us, we should pray and work, and work and pray, as if it were in our power to stem the torrent of abounding iniquity.

Who can say how much good one single child of God, who is thoroughly in earnest, may accomplish, and how greatly he may glorify God by walking in entire separation from all that is hateful to Him? We have especially also to guard against the temptation of slackening our efforts for the conversion of sinners, because the world will not be converted before Jesus comes. Rather should we say, "The time that He delayeth His coming may be short: what therefore can I do to warn sinners, and to win souls for Him?"

In conclusion, I would direct attention to II Peter, third chapter, verses eleven to fourteen: **"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming (or hastening the coming) of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."**

As assuredly as the practical character of the Lord's second coming is really apprehended in the power of it, the most blessed effects upon the life and deportment of Christians will follow.

By means of it we are taught what awaits the world lying in the wicked one, and what will be the end of the world's glory, pride and pomp. The future destiny of the children of God is also unfolded to us, even that we shall be perfectly conformed to the image of our risen Lord, both in soul and body, when we shall see Him as He is.

Then shall we enter upon the possession of our inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and we shall be seated with Jesus on His throne, to judge the world in union with Him, and to spend a happy eternity together with our Lord in glory. **"Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."**

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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