

Sailing With Paul

Simple Papers for Young Christians

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Chapter 16

The Coming of the Lord

Some time ago I listened to a well-known clergyman giving a lecture upon a recently completed world tour. He frankly told his audience that he did not believe in the personal pre-millennial coming of the Lord. Yet in candor he felt compelled to make the following admission; Wherever he had found special devotedness among missionaries laboring in distant lands, and inquired what it was that enabled them not to count their own lives dear, but to toil so earnestly for the salvation of the heathen, the answer had invariably come: "Because the Lord's return is near; I look for Him to come again, and I want to accomplish what I can while waiting for His advent."

This is indeed as it should be. The truth of the second coming of the Lord was the guiding star of Paul's whole life and service as a Christian, and GOD would have the same true of us.

A century ago, almost total ignorance prevailed among Christians as to the manner and object of the Lord's second coming. To-day this precious truth has been carried into practically every nook and corner of the earth. No thoughtful person, it would seem, could fail to recognize in this the sounding forth of the midnight cry: "**Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!**" - though the setting of dates, and confusing the Church's hope with Israel's expectations has been used by the enemy also; for when the Word is not "**rightly divided**" on these two subjects, confusion and uncertainty are sure to result.

The proper hope of the Church is the Lord's return in person, in the clouds, to raise the dead in CHRIST and to change the bodies of the living believers, who shall "**in a moment**" be "**caught up together... to meet the Lord in the air.**" There are no dates or time-periods connected with

this event. The early Christians were taught to wait expectantly for it: **"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from Heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"** (I Thessalonians 1:9, 10).; and it is still our present hope. It is this phase of the coming that I Thessalonians 4:13 to the end also I Corinthians 15:51-56, and many other Scriptures.

Israel's hopes are of a different character, and with them the **"times and seasons"** are linked. They were taught to look for the descent of MESSIAH in great power and glory to the earth, to scatter His foes, regather His chosen people, judge among the nations, and establish His earthly, visible kingdom upon the ruins of all human dominions. Such is the teaching of the Prophets; and Paul shows clearly that all this is not superseded by the Christian revelation: but when the appearing of the Lord to the earth takes place, all the saints of the present age, or Church period, previously changed and glorified will appear with Him in glory as a special bridal company in the day of His triumph. Of this II Thessalonians largely treats.

These two stages of the Lord's return are not two comings, but one. Only He pauses in the air, on His way to earth, to receive the heavenly saints, to reward each one and apportion to each his place in the coming kingdom, according to the measure of their devotedness in the period of their testimony here. Of this I wish to write more particularly in the next paper, so shall not dwell on it now.

It is often said by objectors to what is called the "pre-millennial coming," that the Lord will not return till He comes as JUDGE at the expiration of the thousand years' reign of righteousness. To meet this, I want to put several propositions in logical form, which I believe to be incontrovertible.

1. There can be no millennium till CHRIST comes, because the resurrection of believers takes place prior to the millennium, and at CHRIST's return: consequently there can be no millennium till He returns:

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:5, 6).

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 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 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

2. There can be no millennium till CHRIST comes, because Antichrist is to be destroyed at the

second advent; consequently CHRIST's return must precede the millennium:

1. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,
2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.
3. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.
5. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?
6. And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.
7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.
8. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:
9. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
11. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:
12. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:
14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle.
16. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,
17. Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work. (II Thessalonians 2).

3. There can be no millennium till CHRIST returns, because Satan is to be bound immediately preceding the second advent. There can therefore be no millennium till CHRIST appears:

"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).

4. There can be no millennium till CHRIST returns, because the millennial kingdom is to be the scene of the risen saints' rewards. These get their reward at CHRIST's second coming; so there

can be no millennium till He returns:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

5. There can be no millennium till CHRIST returns, because Israel must be regathered to their land and purged of their sins before the millennium. But Israel are to be regathered at CHRIST's second coming; therefore there can be no millennium till CHRIST comes:

- 1. The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.**
- 2. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.**
- 3. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.**
- 4. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.**
- 5. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God.**
- 6. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.**
- 7. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.**
- 8. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.**
- 9. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.**
- 10. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.**
- 11. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.**
- 12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;**
- 13. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart,**

and their wives apart;

14. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. (Zechariah 12)

1. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

2. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

3. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

4. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

5. But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

6. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

7. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

8. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

9. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God. (Zechariah 13).

6. There can be no millennium till CHRIST returns, because Gentile dominion is abolished at CHRIST's second coming; consequently there can be no millennium till CHRIST returns.

"and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

7. There can be no millennium till CHRIST comes, for the Church age only ends, and the fulness of the Gentiles will have come in, at CHRIST's second coming. There can therefore be no millennium till CHRIST comes:

1. I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3. Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

4. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

6. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

8. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

9. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.

11. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

12. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

13. For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14. If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

16. For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

17. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

18. Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

19. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

20. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:

21. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

22. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

23. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

24. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

25. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

26. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

27. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

28. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

29. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

30. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

31. Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

32. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

35. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.

Amen" (Romans 11).

To these propositions many more might be added, but these are sufficient, I feel certain, to prove the case for any Berean who will search "**the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.**"

But a word of warning ere closing. It is a poor thing to simply hold correct views of the coming the Lord, if the heart be not engaged with the blessed Person who is so soon to return. We are called to "**wait for His Son from Heaven.**" If He be not the object of our souls, correct views will avail little to keep us from the power of the world and in the path of devotion to Himself. But if He indeed be ever precious to us, we shall know the truth of what is written: "**Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.**"

At the sound of His voice we shall fly to Him as the steel to the magnet. Till then, be it ours ever to be held by the power of His attraction.

~ end of chapter 16 ~
