

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD

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The Practical Bearing of the Doctrine—Seven Cardinal Points—1. Not Death—2. Not the Destruction of Jerusalem—3. Not the Coming of the Holy Spirit—4. Personal and Visible—5. Its Aspect to Israel—6. To the Unbelieving World—7. And to the Church

THE ONLY PEOPLE I have ever found in this country or any other country who show that they have really been stimulated to Christian work, are those who have first got the truth into their hearts; and there is no truth, according to my observation, that has so stimulated men to consecration and work for Christ as the truth of the Scriptures concerning the personal coming of the Lord Jesus.

There is nothing that has so blessed me as to see this truth. Nothing did so much to get me into Christian work. Evangelists throughout the country, as a rule, hold the truth as to the second coming of the Lord and are blessed by it. And when you see ministers from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast that are being blessed and filled with the Spirit, and people love to hear the Word of God from them, you will usually find that this truth has been opened up to them. Then let us dismiss our prejudices. Let us look to the Holy Ghost to be our Teacher.

There is nothing in this truth that is so very mysterious. It is just as plain and simple as can be when you take a common-sense presentation of it. What we want is to take the Bible as it reads—to let the Word of God speak to us just as God has given it, and lay aside all preconceived ideas and notions, and the vagaries of men. The doctrine has been shamefully abused. Dates have been set, ascension robes prepared, and fanatical teachings spread abroad. Hence there has been a great reaction. But all this is the work of the devil. He wants to get God's people away from the truth. Yet the truth is in the Scriptures, and we will find it there if we look for it.

Now there are seven points that I want to make clear in connection with this doctrine:

I

First, the coming of the Lord mentioned in the Scriptures is not death. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

The disciples had an idea that John was not to die, but that he was to tarry on the earth until the Lord Jesus should come again. They did not understand that the coming of the Lord meant death. Again: **“Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”** That is, we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed when the Lord comes. Again, Paul says: **“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.”** That was his idea of what dying was—not the coming of the Lord to him, but his departing to be with the Lord. Dying is departing to be with the Lord, and the coming of the Lord mentioned in the Scriptures is the Lord coming to this earth for us.

John says: **“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the extent that ye might believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him.”** That is: *“He is in the grave. I am going to raise him from the dead; and in his resurrection I am to be glorified, and you will understand My power as you never did before.”* That is where the resurrection came in—God was to be glorified in the resurrection.

Now, Jesus was on His way to Lazarus. Was the death of Lazarus the coming of Christ? Jesus said: **“Let us go to him.”** What for? To raise him from the dead. Then the coming of Christ was not his death, but the very opposite.

I suppose if some of those brethren had been there who explain away the Scriptures by saying that the coming of the Lord means death, and if they had been called upon to preach the funeral sermon, they would have said:

“Dear friends—We know very well that Jesus promised Mary and Martha that He would come and we know very well that He is on His way. We believe He will fulfill His word. But don’t you see, dear friends, that this is the meaning of His words: Lazarus is dead, and the Lord has come. He has come in death. That is how He has fulfilled His word.”

Still, that wasn’t the fulfillment of it at all. Lazarus’ death meant an entirely different thing, and the coming of the Lord meant resurrection. It doesn’t mean death; it means life.

II

The second point I would make is this: The coming of the Lord is not the destruction of Jerusalem. **“When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains . . . And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”** The fulfillment of this prophecy is still going on evidently. Jerusalem is still trodden under foot of the Gentiles.

In this passage there are two things spoken of: first, the destruction of Jerusalem; and then a judgment coming upon corrupt Christendom. I think the destruction of Jerusalem is a type of that which will come upon corrupt Christendom when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Judaism became corrupt.

When Christ came, the people as a whole would not receive Him. And there were Sadducees denying the resurrection. But there was a little company of Jews that were godly—righteous Pharisees, awaiting the coming of the Messiah. The religion of the nation, as a nation, was corrupt. What is Christendom today? We forget that true believers are a mere handful as compared with the great mass that profess the name of Jesus Christ. In the time of our Lord’s ministry the prominent thing in the minds of the disciples was Judaism—the Temple, and all the ritualism of the Jewish religion—and in this passage the first thing Christ said was: “***This is all to be swept away. Your Temple is to be destroyed.***” Then beyond that He told them of further events pertaining to the latter day.

“**Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierceth Him: and all countries of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.**” This is in the last book of the Bible. The book of Revelation was written according to our chronology, nearly the year 96. It was written by John when he was an old man. John wrote his Epistles in the year 90, and the book of Revelation a few years later. And this last book of the inspired volume is full of testimony concerning the second coming of our Lord. Well, Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70. Consequently Jerusalem was destroyed many years before John wrote the book of Revelation. In the writing of Revelation the time of the coming of the Lord was still future. When any one asks you on this point you can just say: “How is it that John, after Jerusalem was destroyed, still bears testimony to the coming of the Lord as a future event?”

III

The third point is that the coming of the Lord is not the coming of the Holy Spirit. “**It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you.**” “**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.**” “**And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.**”

The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. Then, according to the argument that the coming referred to was the coming of the Spirit, after the Spirit has come you will not hear anything more of the coming of Christ. But how is it? After the Holy Ghost came, you hear a great deal more about the coming of Christ than ever before. Again: “**He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.**” Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost while delivering this sermon, and his testimony is to direct the people to the fact that Jesus is coming back to this earth. In view of that he says: “**Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.**”

IV

The fourth point is that the coming of Christ is a personal and visible coming, “**And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them.**”

It was the person of Our risen Lord; not a vision—not an intangible something or other. A real living person stood before them. **“To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs . . . When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”** Could anything be more real than that?

Thank God for facts! Thank God that we have a Gospel based on facts. It is a fact that I am a sinner—that you are a sinner; a hell-deserving sinner condemned by God’s law. It is a fact that you need a Saviour. It is a fact that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, lived on this earth, obeyed the law, was crucified under Pontius Pilate; that His literal body rose again, and that that literal body ascended into Heaven. And it is a fact that angels convoyed Him, and said: **“This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.”** Let us believe. Let us take the Word of God as God has given it to us, and we cannot go astray.

“He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” It was no vision. Paul saw Jesus Christ, and the men that were with him heard a voice. It was the Lord in His personality. **“After that, He was seen of five hundred brethren at once . . . And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”**

On the way to Damascus Paul was placed among the witnesses to Jesus Christ. He saw Him, had an interview with Him—personal and visible. Well, now; if the Lord could come back and be personal and visible on that road to Damascus, cannot He come back again, and be personal and visible on this earth when it shall please Him to do so? **“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.”** **“I go”**; **“I come.”** He went away in person and He says, **“I will come again.”** It is the same **“I”** that comes. **“If I go, I come.”** **“For the Lord Himself shall descend with a shout.”** **“The Lord Himself.”** How blessed, and how comforting!

When an old woman was dying, someone said that the angels would soon come for her.

“Oh, no,” said she; “the Lord Himself will come.”

There is no other comfort for one who is truly born of God. It is the Lord Himself, who was here—personal and visible—that is coming to take His saints to Himself.

V

The fifth heading. There are three things connected with His coming, and it has helped me to view it in three aspects. We must rightly divide the Word of God. The man that has only one pigeonhole, and puts into it everything in the Word of God, is likely to get things badly mixed up. The Holy Ghost has given us three pigeon-holes—*Jew, Gentile, and the Church of God*. One portion of the Word of God is for one, another for the second, and another for the third. *I want, under this fifth heading, to consider the coming of our Lord in its aspect to Israel.*

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets . . . ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

There is the final farewell of Israel’s Messiah to Israel. He withdraws, and shortly after is crucified, and now He is being preached to the Gentiles. Again: **“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?”** Also: **“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery.”** How many of us are ignorant? Seven times this phrase is used in the New Testament. There are seven things the Holy Ghost doesn’t want Christians to be ignorant of. Let us hear what this one is: **“Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer . . . As touching the election they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.”**

Yes; though you may despise them, they are beloved. Every Jew is an object of God’s special love. He may be down in Chatham Street, selling old trousers, or old army-blankets dyed and scoured, or old slouch hats. You may despise the Jews’, but they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. They are the seed of Abraham, and they are dear to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was ready to die that they might have the light of the Gospel.

“In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem . . . And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name One.” These words are just as plain as they can be, if people will only read them, and believe them as they read. Don’t take any commentator and let him explain away the plain sense. John Bunyan was once studying this passage, and when he came to the words foretelling that the feet of the Lord should stand on the Mount of Olives, he thus reasoned: “Some commentators say that the Mount of Olives means the heart of the believer, that it is only a figurative expression, and means that the Lord will reign in the heart of the believer, and the Holy Ghost will dwell there. But I don’t think it means that at all. I just think it means the Mount of Olives, two miles from Jerusalem, on the east.”

Look at poor Israel today. How literally God’s Word regarding them is being fulfilled. They are scattered among all nations. Down in New Orleans, in a Hebrew cemetery, you will see this inscription in Hebrew letters over the roadway: “The dispersed of Judah.” I pity any believing man that isn’t touched by that. At that day, when Christ shall come—oh, what a revelation to Israel! Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, and Christ their Messiah recognized. They will say, **“What are these wounds in thine hands?”**—and He will say, **“I was wounded in the house of My friends”**; and they will bow down before Him and acknowledge Him as King. This aspect of the coming of the Lord fulfills every promise made to Abraham, Isaac Jacob and David.

VI

The sixth point is the aspect of the coming of the Lord to the unbelieving world. “And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.”

That is the present dispensation. There is nothing said about the conversion of the world. But God is now visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. **“To this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down.”** “Fallen down”—what does that mean? Read the whole prophecy from which it is taken, and find a description of Israel. **“I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called.”**

After the tabernacle of David is rebuilt, and the promises to Israel are fulfilled, what then—the destruction of the world? No; there is to be an opportunity for the residue of men to seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles shall learn of Him. **“The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”**

Will there be a judgment? Yes—for the impenitent ones, the ungodly ones, those that have rejected Christ.

Will there be a destruction of the world? No; there is to be a glorious time on this earth. **“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.”**

There is the judgment of those that have rejected the Gospel. They are in danger today. I do not like to put a thousand years between us and the judgment of the wicked. I believe it is an awful error to do so. The impenitent are in danger this very hour, and we are not warning them as we should. I don't see a shadow of hope for those who have heard the Gospel and had Gospel privileges and up to this time are rejecting Christ. The judgment is for them—then punishment is for them. See Zechariah: **“Every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”** At the appearing of the Lord to set up His kingdom the world is not destroyed, evidently. There are nations left to go up.

“I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. And 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 shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Here is where we get the millennium. Now you see the meaning of the word *“premillennial.”* “Pre” means *“before.”* The premillennial advent means Christ coming before the millennium. There will be no millennium till He comes. That is plain Scripture. Many people have an idea that we are going to get the millennium by means of telephones, steam engines, swift Atlantic steamers, and all the appliances of modern civilization. These things, they imagine, are to bring the millennium, and then at the end of the millennium Christ will come.

But it is Scripture that Christ will come first. He must come before His reign of a thousand years. He is to usher in the millennium by His coming. If the postmillennial theory is true, when is the millennium to commence? Certainly it hasn't come yet, nor does it seem to be coming. Look at London, with its millions in degradation and sin. Look at our own country, and its great cities like Chicago, with Anarchists and Communists propagating their doctrines. If the world is to become better first, we are very far from the millennium yet. But death is here; sin is here. Telephones and swift steamships don't change the heart. We may have a wonderful civilization, but that is not regeneration.

The time described in Scriptures has not begun to dawn yet. But it is coming. It is not for us to know the times and seasons; but when it comes it will not be by means of modern inventions and discoveries. The Lord Jesus Christ will get the victory, and He will get the glory.

VII

And now, what is the aspect of the coming of the Lord to His Church? This is my seventh point.
“He said unto His disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here! or, See there! Go not after them, nor follow them. 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.”

That is the warning for us. Some years ago in Jerusalem there was a man who said he was the Lord, and people followed after him. In Cincinnati there was a woman who believed she was the Lord. Christ warns us that there will be people saying **“Lo here!”** and **“Lo, there!”** There will be delusions. Don't be occupied with them. The Lord doesn't give us any dates, but He just tells us to watch. When He comes there will be no deception; it will be plain to us all. It will be like the lightning shining throughout the whole sky. Don't be carried away by those who fix dates and are occupied with delusions. **“It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power.”** Let us rest there, living in an attitude of expectation—living in a spirit of consecration—doing God's work faithfully, so that we are ready to meet Him if He should come today.

“Take heed unto yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this Me, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

That is where some of us feel that we have our hope of the rapture of the Church. Some people think we are going to be put through tribulations-going to be sifted and tested. I think the Lord will give us discipline before His appearing. But if we are watching and ready, we shall be **“accounted worthy to escape all these things.”** See I Thessalonians: **“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.”** And thank God for their inexpressible comfort: **“The dead in Christ shall rise first!”**

You have loved ones laid away in the cemetery. Their bodies are resting—waiting for the resurrection. At the voice of the archangel they shall rise and receive their new bodies. They have followed Jesus in going down into the grave, and they shall have their precedence—or shall have their glorified bodies before us who may be living. But immediately we shall be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air, **“and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”** We are certainly associated with them in His glory. When He sets up His kingdom on earth, His Bride will be with Him. Where shall I be? I shall be with Christ, together with all the saints, and we shall judge the earth. When Christ comes we shall be associated with Him in His reign.

Therefore, dear friends, the aspect to us of Christ’s appearing involves:

(1). *Deliverance from this present evil world.* **“Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”**

(2). *Deliverance from judgment.* **“And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come.”**

(3). *Deliverance from this body of corruption* **“The creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body.”**

(4). *Gathering with loved ones.* Many of our families have been scattered; the dear ones are far away; but when Christ comes there will be a great home gathering.

(5). *Our seeing Jesus.* **“Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”**

I like the thought that our union with Christ is a real union. Everything that concerns me, Christ is concerned in; and everything that concerns Christ, I am concerned in. So it is in regard to this coming of Christ, in regard to the setting up of His kingdom on earth, and in regard to the manifestation of His glory. Oh, how selfish and vain, how narrow is the range of that man’s vision who can only think of these things in connection with his miserable self! These concern the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the Mount of Olives, where they put the mock scepter in His hand, and spat upon Him, and derided Him—in that very place Jesus Christ is to come and be made manifest in His glory. It is all His glory. You poor, miserable, selfish man or woman, do you think that Christ died simply to keep you out of Hell—simply to make you happy? The Bible tells you from beginning to end that your salvation is not your own salvation merely, but that Jesus Christ may be glorified. Your pardon shows His grace; your sanctification shows His holiness; your resurrection shows His power; and your being glorified is to reflect His glory. It all concerns Him, and because it concerns Him it ought to concern us; and we ought to love—oh! How we ought to love!—His glorious appearing.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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