

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

by

Various Authors

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

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Four Great Events, and a Fifth—His Promised Return—Necessary—Unquestionably Asserted—What can Hinder it?—When?—Vividly Realized—Seen of All—Denying, Living, Looking—Be Ready—Waiting Patiently—Notion of Delay Harmful

OUR GREAT EVENTS shine out brightly in our Saviour's story. All Christian minds delight to dwell upon His birth, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. These make four rounds in that ladder of light, the foot of which is upon the earth, but the top whereof reacheth to Heaven.

We could not afford to dispense with any one of those four events, nor would it be profitable for us to forget or underestimate the value of any one of them.

- That the Son of God was born of a woman creates in us the intense delight of a brotherhood springing out of a common humanity.
- That Jesus once suffered unto the death for our sins, and thereby made a full atonement for us, is the rest and life of our spirit. The manger and the cross together are divine seals of love.
- That the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead is the warrant of our justification, and also a transcendently delightful assurance of the resurrection of all His people, and of their eternal life in Him.

Hath He not said, "**Because I live, ye shall live also**"? The resurrection of Christ is the morning star of our future glory. Equally delightful is the remembrance of His ascension. No song is sweeter than this,—"**Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.**"

Each one of those four events points to another, and they all lead up to it. The fifth link in the golden chain is our Lord's second and most glorious advent. Little is mentioned between His ascent and His descent. True, a rich history comes between; but it lies in a valley between two stupendous mountains: we step from alp to alp as we journey in meditation from the ascension to the second advent.

I say that each of the previous four events points to it.

Had He not come a first time in humiliation, born under the law, He could not have come a second time in amazing glory “**without a sin offering unto salvation.**” Because He died once, we rejoice that He dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over Him, and therefore He cometh to destroy that last enemy whom He hath already conquered.

It is our joy, as we think of our Redeemer as risen, to feel that in consequence of His rising, the trump of the archangel shall assuredly sound for the awaking of all His slumbering people, when the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout.

As for His ascension, He could not a second time descend if He had not first ascended; but having perfumed Heaven with His presence, and prepared a place for His people, we may fitly expect that He will come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also.

THE LORD WILL COME AGAIN

He will come again, for He has promised to return. We have His own word for it. That is our first reason for expecting Him. Among the last of the words which He spoke to His servant John are these, “**Surely I come quickly.**” You may read it, “*I am coming quickly. I am even now upon the road. I am traveling as fast as wisdom allows. I am always coming, and coming quickly.*”

Some try to explain the Second Coming of Christ as though it meant the believer dying. You may, if you like, consider that Christ comes to His saints in death. In a certain sense He does; but that sense will never bear out the full meaning of the teaching of the Second Advent with which the Scripture is full. No; “**the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.**”

Christ will as certainly be here again in glory as He once was here in shame. He often assured His disciples that if He went away from them, He would come again to them; and He left us the Lord’s Supper as a parting token to be observed until He comes. As often as we break bread we are reminded of the fact that, though it is a most blessed ordinance, yet it is a temporary one, and will cease to be celebrated when our absent Lord is once again present with us. He promised to die on the cross, and to rise again the third day: and He kept His word. Let us believe His promise to return again.

Moreover, the great scheme of redemption requires Christ’s return. It is a part of that scheme that as He came once with a sin offering, He should come a second time without a sin offering; that as He came once to redeem, He should come a second time to claim the inheritance which He has so dearly bought. He came once that His heel might be bruised; He comes again to bruise the serpent’s head, and with a rod of iron to dash His enemies in pieces, as potter’s vessels. He came once to wear the crown of thorns; He must come again to wear the diadem of universal dominion. He comes to the marriage supper. He comes to gather His saints together. He comes to glorify them with Himself on this same earth where once He and they were despised and rejected of men. Make you sure of this, that the whole drama of redemption cannot be perfected without this last act of the coming of their King.

The complete history of Paradise Regained requires that the New Jerusalem should come down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and it also requires that the heavenly Bridegroom should come riding forth on His white horse, conquering and to conquer, King of kings and Lord of lords, amid the everlasting hallelujahs of saints and angels. It must be so. The man of Nazareth will come again. None shall spit in His face then, but every knee shall bow before Him. The Crucified shall come again, and though the nail prints will be visible, no nails shall then fasten His dear hands to the tree; but instead thereof, He shall grasp the scepter of universal sovereignty, and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!

And next, it is unquestionably asserted. **“Behold, He cometh.”** It is not, “Perhaps He will come”; or, “Peradventure He may yet appear.” **“Behold, He cometh”** is dogmatically asserted as an absolute certainty, which was realized by the heart of the man who proclaims it. **“Behold, He cometh.”** All the prophets say that He will come. From Enoch down to the last that spoke by inspiration, they declare, **“The Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints.”** You shall not find one who has spoken by the authority of God, who does not, either directly or by implication, assert the coming of the Son of Man, when the multitudes born of woman shall be summoned to His bar, to receive the recompense of their deeds. All the promises are travelling with this prognostication, **“Behold, He cometh.”**

What is there to hinder Christ from coming? When I have studied and thought over this word, **“Behold, He cometh,”**

“Yes,” I have said to myself, “indeed He does. Who shall hold Him back? His heart is with His church on earth. In the place where He fought the battle He desires to celebrate the victory. His delights are with the sons of men. All His saints are waiting for the day of His appearing, and He is waiting also. The very earth in her sorrow and her groaning travaileth for His coming, which is to be her redemption. The creation is made subject to vanity for a little while; but when the Lord shall come again, the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

We might question whether He would come a second time if He had not already come the first time; but if He came to Bethlehem, be assured that His feet shall yet stand upon Olivet. If He came to die, doubt not that He will come to reign. If He came to be despised and rejected of men, why should we doubt that He will come to be admired in all them that believe?

WHEN?

When will He come? Ah, that is the question, the question of questions! He will come in His own time. He will come in due time.

A brother minister, calling upon me, said, as we sat together.

“I should like to ask you a lot of questions about the future.”

“Oh, well!” I replied, “I cannot answer you, for I daresay I know no more about it than you do.”

“But,” said he, “what about the Lord’s Second Advent? Will there not be the millennium first?”

I said, “I cannot tell whether there will be the millennium first; but this I know, the Scripture has left the whole matter, as far as I can see, with an intentional indistinctness, that we may be always expecting Christ to come, and that we may be watching for His coming at any hour and every hour. I think that the millennium will commence after His coming, and not before it. I cannot imagine the kingdom with the King absent. It seems to me to be an essential part of the millennial glory that the King shall then be revealed; at the same time, I am not going to lay down anything definite upon that point. He may not come for a thousand years; He may come tonight. The teaching of Scripture is, first of all, **‘in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.’** It is clear that, if it were revealed that a thousand years must elapse before He would come, we might very well go to sleep for that time, for we should have no reason to expect that He would come when Scripture told us He would not.”

“Well,” answered my friend, “but when Christ comes, that will be the general judgment, will it not?”

Then I quoted these texts: **“The dead in Christ shall rise first”; “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.”**

I said, “There is a resurrection from among the dead to which the Apostle Paul labored to attain. We shall all rise; but the righteous shall rise a thousand years before the ungodly. There is to be that interval of time between the one and the other; whether that is the millennial glory, or not, this deponent sayeth not, though he thinks it is. But this is the main point, the Lord shall come. We know not when we are to expect His coming. We are not to lay down as absolutely fixed, any definite prediction or circumstance that would allow us to go to sleep until that prediction was fulfilled, or that circumstance was apparent.”

“Will not the Jews be converted to Christ, and restored to their land?” inquired my friend. I replied, “Yes, I think so. Surely they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son; and God shall give them the kingdom and the glory, for they are His people, whom He has not for ever cast away. The Jews, who are the natural olive branches, shall yet be grafted into their own olive tree again, and then shall be the fullness of the Gentiles.”

“Will that be before Christ comes, or after?” asked my friend.

I answered, “I think it will be after He comes; but whether or no, I am not going to commit myself to any definite opinion on the subject.”

To you, my friends, I say,—Read for yourselves, and search for yourselves; for still this stands first, and is the only thing that I will insist upon, the Lord will come. He may come now; He may come tomorrow; He may come in the first watch of the night, or the second watch, or He may wait until the morning watch.

But the one word that He gives to us all is, "Watch! Watch! Watch!" that whenever He shall come, we may be ready to open to Him, and to say, in the language of the hymn,

Hallelujah!
Welcome, welcome,
Judge divine!

So far I know that we are Scriptural, and therefore perfectly safe in our statements about the Lord's Second Advent.

HIS COMING IS TO BE VIVIDLY REALIZED

I think I see the Apostle John. He is in the spirit; but on a sudden he seems startled into a keener and more solemn attention. His mind is more awake than usual, though he was ever a man of bright eyes that saw afar. We always liken him to the eagle for the height of his flight and the keenness of his vision; yet on a sudden, even he seems startled with a more astounding vision.

He cries out, "Behold! Behold!" He has caught sight of his Lord. He says not, "He will come by-and-by," but, "I can see Him. He is now coming." He has evidently realized the Second Advent. He has so conceived of the second coming of the Lord that it has become a matter of fact to him; a matter to be spoken of, and even to be written down. "**Behold, He cometh!**" Have you and I ever realized the coming of Christ so fully as this?

Brothers and sisters, to this realization I invite you. I wish that we could go together in this, until as we went out of the house we said to one another, "**Behold, He cometh!**" One said to his fellow, after the Lord had risen, "**The Lord has risen indeed.**" I want you now to feel just as certain that the Lord is coming indeed, and I would have you say as much to one another.

SEEN OF ALL

"Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him."

I gather from this expression that it will be a literal appearing and an actual sight. If the Second Advent was to be a spiritual manifestation, to be perceived by the minds of men, the phraseology would be, "Every mind shall perceive Him." But it is not so: we read, "**Every eye shall see Him.**" Now, the mind can behold the spiritual, but the eye can only see that which is distinctly material and visible.

The Lord Jesus Christ will not come spiritually, for in that sense He is always here; but He will come really and substantially, for every eye shall see Him, even those unspiritual eyes which gazed on Him with hate, and pierced Him. Go not away and dream, and say to yourself, "Oh, there is some spiritual meaning about all this." Do not destroy the teaching of the Holy Ghost by the idea that there will be a spiritual manifestation of the Christ of God, but that a literal appearing is out of the question. That would be altering the record.

The Lord Jesus shall come to earth a second time as literally as He has come a first time. The same Christ who ate a piece of broiled fish and of a honeycomb after He had risen from the dead; the same who said, "**Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have**"—this same Jesus with a material body, is to come in the clouds of Heaven. In the same manner as He went up, He shall come down. He shall be literally seen. The words cannot be honestly read in any other way.

"Every eye shall see Him." Yes, I do literally expect to see my Lord Jesus with these eyes of mine, even as that saint Job expected, who long ago fell asleep, believing that though the worms devour his body, yet in his flesh should he see God, whom his eyes should see for himself, and not another. There will be a real resurrection of the body, though the moderns doubt it; such a resurrection that we shall see Jesus with our own eyes.

We shall not find ourselves in a shadowy, dreamy land of floating fictions, where we may perceive, but cannot see. We shall not be airy nothings, mysterious, vague, impalpable; but we shall literally see our glorious Lord, whose appearing will be no phantom show or shadow dance. Never day more real than the Day of Judgment; never sight more true than the Son of Man upon the throne of His glory. Will you take this statement home, that you may feel the force of it? We are getting too far away from facts nowadays, and too much into the realm of myths and notions. **"Every eye shall see Him"**; in this there shall be no delusion.

Note well that He is to be seen of all kinds of living men: every eye shall see Him: the king and; the peasant, the most learned and the most ignorant. Those that were blind before shall see when He appears. I remember a man born blind who loved our Lord most intensely, and he was wont to glory in this that his eyes had been reserved for his Lord. He said, "The first whom I shall ever see will be the Lord Jesus Christ. The first sight that greets my newly-opened eyes will be the Son of man in His glory."

Small pleasure is this to eyes that are full of filthiness and pride: they care not for this sight, and yet they must see it whether they please or do not please. They have hitherto shut their eyes to good things but when Jesus comes they must see Him. They will not be able to hide themselves, nor to hide Him from their eyes. They will dread the sight, but it will come upon them, even as the sun shines upon the thief who delights in the darkness. They will be obliged to own in dismay that they behold the Son of Man: they will be so overwhelmed with the sight that there will be no denying it.

He will be seen of those who have been long since dead. What a sight that will be for Judas, and for Pilate, and for Caiaphas, and for Herod! What a sight it will be for those who, in their lifetime, said that there was no Saviour, and no need of one; or that Jesus was a mere man, and that His blood was not a propitiation for sin!

Those that scoffed and reviled Him have long since died, but they shall all rise again, and rise to this heritage among the rest that they shall see Him whom they blasphemed sitting in the clouds of Heaven. Prisoners are troubled at the sight of the judge. The trumpet of assize brings no music to the ears of criminals. But thou must hear it, O impenitent sinner!

Even in your grave you must hear the voice of the Son of God, and live, and come forth from the tomb, to receive the things done in thy body, whether they were good or bad. Death cannot hide thee, nor the vault conceal thee, nor rottenness and corruption deliver thee. Thou art bound to see in thy body the Lord who will judge both thee and thy fellows.

DENYING—LIVING—LOOKING

We read in Scripture: **“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; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”**

You see there are three words before you—denying, living, looking.

When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, He finds that we are conceited, puffed up. We have learned lessons of worldly wisdom and carnal policy, which we need to unlearn and deny. What have we to deny? First, we have to deny ungodliness. That is a lesson which many of you have great need to learn. Listen to the workingman:

“Oh,” they say, “we have to work hard, we cannot think about God or religion.”

This is ungodliness! The grace of God teaches us to deny this; we come to loathe such atheism.

Others are prospering in the world, and they cry, “If you had as much business to look after as I have you would have no time to think about your soul or another world. Trying to battle with the competition of the times leaves me no opportunity for prayer or Bible-reading; I have enough to do with my daybook and ledger.”

This also is ungodliness! The grace of God leads us to deny this; we abhor such forgetfulness of God. God cannot be forgotten with impunity. If we treat Him as if He were nothing, and leave Him out of our calculations for life, we shall make a fatal mistake.

O my hearer, there is a God, and as surely as you live, you are accountable to Him. When the Spirit of God comes with the grace of the Gospel, He removes our inveterate ungodliness, and causes us to deny it with joyful earnestness.

We next deny **“worldly lusts”**; that is, the lusts of the present world or age. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life are yet with us. Wherever the grace of God comes effectually,

- It makes the loose liver deny the desires of the flesh;
- It causes the man who lusted after gold to conquer his greediness;
- It brings the proud man away from his ambitions;
- It trains the idler to diligence;

- It sobers the wanton mind which cared only for the frivolities of life.

The grace of God has made us deny the prevailing philosophies, glories, maxims and fashions of this present world.

But then, brethren, you cannot be complete with a merely negative religion; you must have something positive; and so the next word is living—that “**we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.**”

Observe, brethren, that the Holy Ghost expects us to live in this present world, and therefore we are not to exclude ourselves from it. This age is the battlefield in which the soldier of Christ is to fight. Society is the place in which Christianity is to exhibit the graces of Christ. It is of no use for you to scheme to escape from it. You are bound to breast this torrent, and buffet all its waves. If the grace of God is in you, that grace is meant to be displayed, not in a select and secluded retreat, but in this present world.

This life is described in a threefold way. You are, first, to live “**soberly**”—that is, for yourself. “**Soberly**” in all your eating and your drinking, and in the indulgence of all bodily appetites—that goes without saying. You are to live soberly in all your thinking, all your speaking, all your acting. There is to be sobriety in all your worldly pursuits. You are to have yourself well in hand; you are to be self-restrained.

The man who is disciplined by the grace of God becomes thoughtful, considerate, self-contained; and he is no longer tossed about by passion, or swayed by prejudice.

As to his fellowman the believer lives “**righteously.**” I cannot understand that Christian who can do a dirty thing in business.

If you mean to go the way of the devil, say so, and take the consequences, but if you profess to be servants of God, deny all partnership with unrighteousness. Dishonesty and falsehood are the opposites of godliness.

A Christian man may be poor, but he must live righteously; he may lack sharpness, but he must not lack integrity. A Christian profession without uprightness is a lie. Grace must discipline us to righteous living.

Toward God we are told that we are to be godly. Every man who has the grace of God in him indeed and of a truth, will think much of God, and will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

- God will enter into all his calculations,
- God’s presence will be his joy,
- God’s strength will be his confidence,
- God’s providence will be his inheritance,
- God’s glory will be the chief end of his being,
- God’s law the guide of his conversation.

Now, if the grace of God, which has appeared so plainly to all men, has really come with its sacred discipline upon us, it is teaching us to live in this threefold manner.

Once more, there is looking, as well as living. One work of the grace of God is to cause us to be **“looking for that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”**

This hope is not of debt, but of grace; though our Lord will give us a reward, it will not be according to the law of works. The Lord cometh, and in the coming of the Lord lies the great hope of the believer, his great stimulus to overcome evil, his main incentive to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Oh, to be found blameless in the day of the manifestation of our Lord! God grant us this!

BE READY

I beg you to get ready to meet our returning Lord.

What is the way to be ready to meet Jesus?

- If it is the same Jesus that went away from us who is coming, then let us be doing what He was doing before He went away.
- If it is the same Jesus that is coming, we cannot possibly put ourselves into a posture of which He will better approve than by going about, doing good.
- If you would meet Him with joy, serve Him with earnestness.

If the Lord Jesus Christ were to come today I should like Him to find me at my studying, praying, or preaching. Would you not like Him to find you in your Sunday school, in your class, or out there at the corner of the street preaching, or doing whatever you have the privilege of doing in His name? Would you meet your Lord in idleness? Do not think of it.

I called one day on one of my church members, and she was whitening the front steps. She got up all in confusion, and said:

“Oh dear, sir, I did not know you were coming today, or I would have been ready.”

I replied, “Dear friend, you could not be in better trim than you are; you are doing your duty like a good housewife, and may God bless you.”

She had no money to spare for a servant, and she was doing her duty by keeping the home tidy. I thought she looked more beautiful with her pail beside her than if she had been dressed according to the latest fashion. I said to her:

“When the Lord Jesus Christ comes suddenly, I hope He will find me doing as you were doing, namely, fulfilling the duty of the hour.”

I want you all to get to your pails without being ashamed of them. Serve the Lord in some way or other. Serve Him always. Serve Him intensely. Serve Him more and more.

- Go tomorrow and serve the Lord at the counter, or in the workshop, or in the field.
- Go and serve the Lord by helping the poor and the needy, the widow and the fatherless.
- Go and Serve Him by teaching the children, especially by endeavoring to train your own children.
- Go and show the drunkard that there is hope for him in Christ, or let the fallen woman know that Jesus can restore her.

Do what Jesus has given you the power to do.

THE DELAY

But the notion of the delay of Christ's coming is always harmful, however you arrive at it, whether it be by studying prophecy, or in any other way. **"If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maiden, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."**

Do not, therefore, get the idea that the Lord delayeth His coming, and that He will not or cannot come as yet. Far better would it be for you to stand on the tiptoe of expectation, and to be rather disappointed to think that He does not come.

I do not wish you to be shaken in mind so as to act fanatically or foolishly, as certain people did when they went out in the woods with ascension-dresses on, so as to go straight up all of a sudden. Fall into none of those absurd ideas that have led people to leave a chair vacant at the table, and put an empty plate, because the Lord might come and want it; and try to avoid all other superstitious nonsense. To stand stargazing at the prophecies, with your mouth wide open, is just the wrong thing. Far better will it be to go on working for your Lord getting yourself and your service ready for His appearing, and cheering yourself all the while with this thought:

"While I am at work, my Master may come. Before I get weary, my Master may return. While others are mocking at me, my Master may appear; and whether they mock or applaud, is nothing to me. I live before the great Taskmaster's eye, and do my service knowing that He sees me, and expecting that by-and-by He will reveal Himself to me, and then He will reveal me and my right intention to misrepresenting men."

May the Lord keep you waiting, working, watching, that when He comes, you may have the blessedness of entering upon some larger, higher, nobler service than you could accomplish now, for which you are preparing by the lowlier and more arduous service of this world! God bless you, beloved, and if you do not know my Lord, and therefore do not look for His appearing, remember that He will come whether you look for Him or not; and when He comes you will have to stand at His bar.

One of the events that will follow His coming will be your being summoned before His judgment seat, and how will you answer Him then? How will you answer Him if you refused His love, and turned a deaf ear to the invitations of His mercy? If you have delayed, and delayed, and delayed, and delayed, how will you answer Him? If you stand speechless, your silence will condemn you, and the King will say, “**Bind him hand and foot and take him away.**”

God grant that we may all believe in the Lord Jesus unto life eternal, and then wait for His appearing from Heaven, for His love’s sake! Amen.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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