

24. The Return of Jesus

“ONE Of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ’s second coming, to complete the great work of redemption. . . . The doctrine of the Second Advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer’s power and bring them again to the lost Paradise. Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope.” - GC 299.

“This doctrine is one of the fundamental doctrines of Holy Scripture. It finds a larger place in the pages of Holy Writ than any other doctrine of the church, this glorious event being mentioned more than three hundred times in the New Testament alone. To the devout believer in the Bible there can be no doubt that Jesus will come again.”-C. B. Haynes, in “Our Lord’s Return,” page 9.

Dwight L. Moody, in writing on this subject, says: “The moment a man takes hold of the truth that Jesus Christ is coming back again to receive His followers to Himself, this world loses its hold on him. Gas stocks and water stocks, and stocks in banks and railroads are of very much less consequence to him then. His heart is free, and he looks for the blessed appearing of his Lord, who, at his coming, will take him into His blessed kingdom.”-“The Second Coming of Christ,” pages 6, 7.

SELECTED REFERENCES

GC 299-303; 640-645; COL 405-421; [3] Pages 15-18; 26-40. [6] Pages 161-174. [7] Pages 325-358.

Memorize: John 14:1.3.

A. THE PROMISE OF JESUS HIMSELF.

John 14:1-3; Matt. 23:39; 16:27; Acts 1:9-11; Rev. 22:12,20.

“The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Savior’s parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, ‘the appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ’ was the ‘blessed hope.’” - GC 302.

B. TESTIMONY OF INSPIRATION IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES.

Jude 14,15; Ps. 96:13; Isaiah 26:21; 40:10; 66:15.

“About His coming cluster the glories of that ‘restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.’ Then the long-continued rule of evil shall be broken; ‘the kingdoms of this world’ will become ‘the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.’” - GC 301.

“Enoch, only the seventh in descent from them that dwelt in Eden, he who for three centuries on earth walked with his God, was permitted to behold from afar the coming of the Deliverer.” - GC 299.

C. TESTIMONY OF INSPIRATION IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES.

Philippians 3:20, 21; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1.16.

“On the rocky Patmos the beloved disciple hears the promise, ‘Surely I come quickly,’ and His longing response voices the prayer of the church in all her pilgrimage, ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’” - GC 302.

D. THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS.

“Luther declared: ‘I persuade myself verily, that the day of judgment will not be absent full three hundred years. God will not, cannot, suffer this wicked world much longer.’ ‘The great day is drawing near in which the kingdom of abominations shall be overthrown.’”

“ ‘This aged world is not far from its end,’ said Melancthon. Calvin bids Christians ‘not to hesitate, ardently desiring the day of Christ’s coming as of all events most auspicious,’ and declares that ‘the whole family of the faithful will keep in view that day.’”

“We must hunger after Christ, we must seek, contemplate,’ he says, ‘till the dawning of that great

day, when our Lord will fully manifest the glory of His kingdom.”

“ ‘Has not our Lord Jesus carried up our flesh into heaven?’ said Knox, the Scotch Reformer, ‘and shall He not return? We know that He shall return, and that with expedition.’ Ridley and Latimer, who laid down their lives for the truth, looked in faith for the Lord’s coming. Ridley wrote: ‘The world without doubt-this I do believe, and therefore I say it draws to an end. Let us with John, the servant of God, cry in our hearts unto our Savior Christ, Come, Lord Jesus, come.’

“ ‘The thoughts of the coming of the Lord,’ said Baxter, ‘are most sweet and joyful to me.’ ” -GC 303.

E. THE PURPOSES OF HIS COMING.

2 Tim. 4:1,8; Matthew 16:27; Luke 14:14; 1 John 3:2; Isaiah 13:9.

Christ’s work of redemption in His first advent, His work since in heaven and in earth, His own claim to kingship, require a return to earth to complete and establish. His life and teachings would be meaningless without it. His agony and death on the cross would be in vain unless He comes again to gather the sinners saved by grace. His resurrection in glorious power over the grave has gained little unless its power is again exercised on behalf of those who sleep. All this necessitates a return. He will return and finish the work of the restoration of the lost kingdom. The first advent makes certain the second.

However, “when He comes, He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. . . . This [refining work] is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us.” - 2T 355.

F. THE MANNER OF HIS COMING.

Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27, 30; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Acts 1:941; Luke 9:26; 12:40; 17:29.31.

G. THE ATTEMPTED COUNTERFEIT.

Matthew 24:2,4,5,23.27; 2 Thessalonians. 2:9-11.

“As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Savior’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. (Revelation 1:13-15.) The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air, ‘Christ has come! Christ has come!’ The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands, and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Savior uttered. He heals the diseases of the people, and then in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angel sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion.”

“But the people of God will not be misled. The teachings of this false Christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures. His blessing is pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image, the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God’s unmingled wrath shall be poured out.

“And, furthermore, Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ’s advent. The Savior has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. . . .

“Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures, and who have received the love of the truth, will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all, the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation, the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible, and the

Bible only? Satan will, if possible, prevent them from obtaining a preparation to stand in that day.” - GC 624, 625.

H. THE EVENT OF HIS COMING.

Revelation 6:14; Psalm 50:3,4; Isaiah 25:9; Matthew 24:30,31; Isaiah 2:17,21; Revelation 6:15,17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

1. The scroll rolls apart.

“In the close of time, the great curtain of the skies will roll back. As it does so, instinctively every eye will look upward. Something portentous is about to occur in the heavens. As the atmosphere parts and rolls back, men will be brought, as it were, into the very midst of the stars. Whereas now the light of these celestial bodies shines to the eye of man with broken, uncertain gleam, it will then shine with a strong, bright light, as the eye of an avenger. Every star will seem to come thousands of miles nearer. What now seems far away, and vague and uncertain, will then become thrillingly imminent.”-Lucas A. Reed, M. S., in “Astronomy and the Bible,” page 264.

Thus the heavy atmosphere, which now obscures the vision even of our most powerful telescopes, because of its weight of moisture, of varied gases, of many tons of finest dust particles, will be withdrawn, to give every mortal, whoever he may be, an unobstructed, clear view of the coming King and His numberless army of angels. Mankind will face the great judge.

2. Through the open space in Orion.

December 16, 1848, Mrs. E. G. White saw the gateway through the stellar heaven. She writes: “Dark, heavy clouds came up, and clashed against each other. The atmosphere parted and rolled back; then we could look up through the open space in Orion, whence came the voice of God. The Holy City will come down through that open space.” - EW 41.

“Mrs. White, without astronomical knowledge, told something about Orion that no astronomer of that time had yet measured up to. Now, without knowing a thing about her statement, and probably not caring to know, they tell us facts which bear out her statement about an ‘open space in Orion.’

“Since what she said about Orion is now proved to be true, it seals her further statement about the voice of God sounding down through that zone of glory from His eternal throne.

“Orion is a wonderful spectacle to the eye of man, even at the enormous distance from which he views it; but, oh, what must it be to sweep through those avenues of brilliant and radiant glory!”--Lucas A. Reed, M. S., in “Astronomy and the Bible,” page 253.

An astronomer’s description is quoted from an article written for the Signs of the Times by Edgar Lucien Larkin, director of Mount Lowe Observatory: “As to the size of this cavern, or corridor, Mr. Larkin has said: ‘These photographic negatives reveal the opening and interior of a cavern so stupendous that our entire solar system, including the orbit of Neptune would be lost therein. In all ordinary telescopes, the nebula looks like a flat surface. I have watched it since the days of youth, in many telescopes of many powers, but never dreamed that the central region is the mouth of a colossal cave.

“‘Human speech is impotent. Pen of writer, brush of artist, alike are lifeless and inert in any attempt even to describe this interior. . . . Torn, twisted, and riven masses of shining gas, irregular pillars, columns and stalactites in glittering splendor, and stalagmites rising from the mighty floor! The appearance is that of light shining and glowing behind Herculean walls of ivory or pearl, and these studded with millions of diamond points-shining stars.’ “-Id., pages 253, 254.

3. The King comes!

“Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a small black cloud had appeared, about half as large as a man’s hand, which we all knew was the sign of the Son of man. We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer, and became lighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. The bottom appeared like fire; a rainbow was over the cloud, while around it were ten thousand angels, singing a most lovely song; and upon it sat the Son of man. His hair was white and curly, and lay on His shoulders; and upon His head were many crowns. His feet had the appearance of fire; in His right hand was a sharp sickle; in His left, a silver trumpet. His eyes were as a flame of fire, which searched His children through and through. Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. Then we all cried out, ‘Who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless?’ Then the angels ceased to sing, and there was some time of awful silence, when Jesus spoke: ‘Those who have clean hands and pure hearts shall be able to stand; My grace is sufficient for you.’ At this our faces lighted up, and joy filled every

heart. And the angels struck a note higher and sang again, while the cloud drew still nearer the earth.

“Then Jesus’ silver trumpet sounded as He descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised His eyes and hands to heaven, and cried, ‘Awake! Awake! Awake! You that sleep in the dust, and arise.’ Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, ‘Alleluia!’ as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

“We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. Here on the sea of glass the 144,000 stood in a perfect square. Some of them had very bright crowns, others not so bright. Some crowns appeared heavy with stars, while others had but few. All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle from their shoulders to their feet. Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city. Jesus raised His mighty, glorious arm, laid hold of the pearly gate, swung it back on its glittering hinges, and said to us, ‘You have washed your robes in My blood, stood stiffly for My truth, enter in.’ We all marched in, and felt that we had a perfect right in the city.” - EW 15-17.

KEY TEXTS

Jude 14, 15

Revelation 6:14-17

Revelation 1:7

John 14:1-3

Matthew 24:30, 31

2 Peter 1: 16

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What facts indicate the importance and necessity of a soon-coming Savior?
2. What works must of necessity precede the Second Advent?
3. What warnings are given of counterfeits and delusions?
4. What is meant by the sign of Matthew 24:30?
5. What divine counsel is given in view of the suddenness of Christ’s return to earth?

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer With Ample Bible Proof

1. What chief prophecies directly state Christ’s literal, visible, universally acknowledged return?
2. How does the Bible describe His coming in glory?
3. What will Christ accomplish at His next coming?
4. Was this looked at as the consummation of the hope of the faithful who lived before His first advent?
5. What will be the state of the world at His coming? After His coming?