

12. HIS SECOND COMING

THE SUBJECT of the Holy Scriptures from beginning to end is Jesus. We might divide the teachings of the Holy Scriptures about Him into three parts: (1) the heretofore, (2) the here, and (3) the hereafter. Or in this way: (1) the Old Testament He is coming; (2) the Four Gospels-He is-here: (3) the Acts to the Book of Revelation-He will come again.

The first promise of Christ recorded in the Bible states that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. (Genesis 3:15.) This is a prophecy of Christ's final victory over Satan. It includes the destruction of the devil and his influence forever and the second coming of Christ in glory and power. The last promise in the Bible is given by Jesus Himself: "He which testifies these things said, Surely I come quickly." To this comes the answer of the church: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20. That is the last prayer in the Bible, too.

Millions of people believe and teach that the time of our Lord's return is near. Others say nothing at all on the subject, citing the fact 'that in the past some have set a time for the Lord to come and have been disappointed, and that they do not wish to be classed with them. Still others are totally indifferent to the doctrine.

What does Jesus have to say on this subject? That is all-important. What men think or believe means little compared to what Christ believed and taught. One ounce of Bible revelation is worth more than a ton of human speculation.

Did Jesus believe He would return to this earth? Jesus gives His own answer in John 14:3: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." There is His reply in straight, plain, clear words. Our Savior said, I will come again." Since He is the "true and faithful witness" (Jeremiah 42:5) and would not deceive us, His literal second coming is just as certain as His already established first appearing. His first coming to this earth had been distinctly foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament. These prophecies were literally fulfilled in His birth in Bethlehem and in the events surrounding His life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

Jesus' second coming is foretold in the Old Testament as well as in the New. To prove it, let us get into the time machine of history and go back, back through the centuries and ages, almost to the beginning of things. Listen now! God is sending a message to the antediluvian world, the world before the Flood, declaring that Christ's coming in glory would end the reign of sin. Here it is in Jude 14, 15: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." We see from this that the hope of Christ's return is not some upstart idea that has just come to popularity in the past few years, but it is the blessed hope which God's people have had from earliest times. The holiest men have predicted it.

Job, the ancient man of patience, believed in the coming of Christ at the last day. His words were written over three thousand years ago and read as follows: "For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Job 19:25-27.

About one thousand years before Christ the psalmist spoke of our Lord's coming to gather His saints: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Psalm 50:3-5.

Seven hundred years before the first advent of Jesus the gospel prophet Isaiah prophesied of our Lord's second coming to save His people and to destroy the wicked: "He will swallow up, death in victory." We know that this prophecy must refer to the Second Coming of Christ because that is when the resurrection takes place. See 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. "And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." This we know takes place in the City of God after the Second Coming of Christ. (Revelation 21:4.) "And the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah 25:8, 9.

Jesus believed and taught that He was coming back again. As a basis for this, He pointed to the

many inspired prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures which were commonly known and believed by the people of His day and which were taught in all the synagogues of the land. He Himself declared, "The scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35. Yes, Jesus declared with divine authority that He was coming back to this earth, that the world had not seen the last of Him. And He could appeal to the prophecies of the Old Testament, the Scriptures of His day, to prove it. He believed it. Why should not we believe it? We have His word for it.

One important testimony of our Lord must not be overlooked: When He stood before the high court of His own nation and was put under oath by the high priest, who said, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus replied, "Thou has said [or, in other words, Yes, it is true): nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power. and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matthew 26:63, 64. This was sworn testimony before the highest authority of God's chosen people on earth. Jesus stood before that court and declared He would come again, that He would be seen by those very men who had unjustly accused Him; that they would see Him sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven. Those are the words of Christ from the official record, words spoken under sacred oath for time and for eternity. Why should not we believe that He is coming? Why should not we be looking for Him?

Someone has pictured the traveler who fell among thieves. just able to sit in the doorway of the inn as he recovers from his wounds, he earnestly looks up the road and waits for the return of his deliverer, the good Samaritan. We seem to hear him say: "My benefactor promised to come again, and I know he will keep his word. I just want to be waiting and watching for him. I want to be the first to see him when he comes back, for he has been so kind to me." That should be the attitude of every Christian believer who has been delivered from the power of evil by the Lord Jesus Christ. We should be daily waiting and watching for the coming of our Savior, who has been so good to us. We should be watching the road of events, listening for the coming of His feet, and "our gathering together unto him."

Jesus did not say that an angel would come for us, or that the Holy Spirit would come for us, or that the church would come for us. He said, 'I will come again, and receive you unto myself.'" John 14:3. That is what Jesus said about His second coming.

A well-known minister was called away from home one week end to preach in a distant city. Arriving at his destination by train, he stood with his luggage at the curb in front of the station, waiting for someone to come for him. Soon a motorcar drove up and the driver asked, "Are you Mr. Brown?"

"Yes," answered the minister, I am. I was expecting someone to meet me here." His luggage was placed in the car, which was immediately driven away. He stood wondering what to do next, when another, more handsome, car drove up to the curb. "Mr. Brown, I think," said the gentleman who was driving.

"Yes," said the visitor, I am Pastor Brown, but someone else has just asked me that question and gone off with my luggage."

"Oh, that was a servant of mine. I sent him for your luggage, but I have come for you myself."

And so the Lord Himself will come for His people; not the highest angel, not the most burning seraphim, the most glorious cherubim. They would not suffice for this occasion. The angels will come with Him, but He Himself comes for His people, as Paul says: "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.'" 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. That is the way Christ says it will be, and so it will be. We will be with the Lord, for the Lord Himself so declares it. We must yield ourselves to His Spirit here and now so that we may be ready for our Lord's appearance.

Dr. Andrew Bonar tells the story of a plain man from one of the Scottish country kirks who learned the precious doctrine of the second coming of our Lord. At one time he spent a week in Edinburgh playing the part of a "sermon taster," going to a number of churches to see what they taught. When he returned to his village, the people asked him how he liked the Edinburgh preachers. He said, 'Well, they all fly on one wing. They preach the first coming of Christ, but they don't say a word about His Second Coming.'" There are a great many preachers of whom this might be said today.

There is nothing that arouses the fervor of evangelism, a missionary passion, and a yearning for personal holiness as does the realization that Jesus is coming soon, coming in person, coming Himself. The thought comes to us that we must be ready, that others must be ready, and that we must do our part to

announce the glorious truth to the world.

While a minister in the city of Ottawa, Canada, I heard a lecture by Lord Shackleton. He spoke of his first great adventure, his expedition to the Antarctic. On one occasion he had to turn back and leave some of his men on Elephant Island, amid snow and ice. They were in desperate need of food and other supplies. He realized that the only hope was for him to go and get help for them. By heroic efforts he reached the island of South Georgia, made a perilous trip over snowy mountains, and finally came to the settlement, where he obtained another ship and the needed supplies. Then he started back for the men. He tried again and again to reach Elephant Island, but failed every time. Fog, storm, and ice blocked the way. Suddenly one day there appeared an opening through the ice leading to the island. Quickly he ran his ship through this channel, got his men on board, and came back out just before the ice closed together again. The whole thing was done in half an hour.

When the excitement was over, Lord Shackleton asked one of the men who had stayed on the island, "How did it happen that you were all packed and ready for my coming? You were standing on the shore ready to leave on a moment's notice." The man replied, "Sir, you said that you would come back for us, so we never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was partly free of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and packed our things, saying, 'Maybe Shackleton will come today.' We were always ready for your coming."

It is for all believers today to remember that the Lord is coming. We ought to be ready to go with Him at any time, any day, any hour. What a wonderful encouragement this is to Christian living, Christian giving, Christian doing! Surely this is a blessed hope, for it changes the whole outlook of the world.

"Sweet promise, I will come again;
Go preach this gospel to all men;
'Come quickly, Lord,' my soul does say,
'And bring that happy day.
-R E. Belden.

Jesus said, I will come again." His words will never be forgotten. He was here once, and the world will not forget Him. No, we have not seen the last of Jesus' He will appear again, and "every eye shall see him." Revelation 1:7. He came the first time as a lowly Babe in the manger, but He will come the second time in glory and power as the King of an empire with no frontiers.

We have all heard, as school children, the story of Peter the Great-how he left the throne of Russia and in lowly disguise apprenticed himself as a shipwright in the towns of Zaaridam and Amsterdam. Among the common laborers he wrought, dressed in working clothes, living in a hut, preparing his own food, and making his own bed. Yet all the time he never ceased to be the emperor of Russia. His royal splendor was but laid aside for a time.

In like manner Jesus laid aside the glory of heaven and came to earth in the likeness of men. Divinity was clothed with humanity. But someday He will come all glorious, the Lord victorious, before whom all evil shall forever flee away.

When we die, we are soon forgotten. But, as Lacordaire says, "There is One who lived nearly two thousand years ago, yet His tomb is still wet with tears. In every land there are those who cry out to Him and love Him still." That's the incomparable glory of Jesus: always to be remembered and always loved and longed for. And He says, "I will come again."

'He Himself, and not another,' He for whom our hearts have yearned Through long years of twilight waiting, To His ransomed ones returned; For this word, O Lord, we bless Thee, Bless our Master's changeless name Yesterday, today, for ever, Jesus Christ is still the same."
-R R. Havergal.

There are at least two questions that most people would like to ask: How is Christ coming? and Why is He coming? And possibly there is a third, When is He coming? Now as to the how of His coming: It is clear from Jesus' own words that His second coming will be visible to all the world. There is nothing secret about it, nothing private about it, nothing mystical about it. Our Savior described His second advent to His disciples, saying, "As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:27. He declared that men shall "see the Son of man coming in the clouds." (Mark 13:26.) To millions it will be as unexpected as the coming of a thief in the night. To them it will be an overwhelming surprise. But, according to Christ's own words, He will come then with

great power and glory.

Let us never forget this important fact: The same Jesus who was here is the Jesus who will come again. The same Savior who walked by blue Galilee will come in glory. The same Master who preached the Sermon on the Mount, who spoke His wonderful parables, healed the sick, and raised the dead the same Jesus will come in majesty with all the holy angels.

The Scripture says that when the disciples of old watched Him ascend into heaven, "a cloud received him out of their sight." We read about it in the beautiful first chapter of Acts, verses nine to eleven: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went UP, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven."

Those are wonderful words, "This same Jesus," the Jesus they had seen crucified, the Jesus they had seen buried in Joseph's new tomb, the Jesus they had seen by the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection, the Jesus who had talked with them and loved them-this same Jesus would come back in glory indescribable.

The prophet Habakkuk described Christ's glorious appearance: "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had rays coming forth from his hand; and there was the hiding of his power." Habakkuk 3:3, A.R.V.

Yes, it is the same Jesus. There is no doubt about that. The mark of the cruel nails is the shining badge of His power to save and the proof that this is the same Jesus, the Jesus of the cross. As the old song says, I shall know Him by the print of the nails of His hands." When the redeemed see Him who was crucified for them coming in glory, they will cry out: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9.

Notice the statement of the angels who spoke to the disciples on the Mount of Olives that day when they last saw the Savior. They said plainly that this same Jesus would come again in like manner as He had gone into heaven. His coming will not be a secret, spiritual coming. When He comes again, He will come in person; He will come literally; He will come physically; He will come bodily; He will come in the open sight of all the world. He will come accompanied with a demonstration of glory and power never before witnessed on earth.

When we speak of Christ's second coming, we do not speak of His spiritual presence with us, which has never left us from the beginning. He said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5. We are speaking about His coming in person, bodily, gloriously. God poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but that was not the second coming of Christ. Jesus has been with His church for nineteen centuries to comfort, to bless, and to lead; for He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). This is not His oft-predicted return. He has sent many messages to us through His Holy Scriptures and through His servants, but not one of these has been the second coming of Christ.

The same Jesus who was crucified and who arose from the dead, who said to His disciples in the upper room, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have" (Luke 24:39)-this same Jesus, in the clear sight of those same disciples, ascended to heaven. As He went up and was lost to their view, the promise was made, "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner." His departure was personal and literal, and He will come in the same way. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 1 Thessalonians 4:16. It is not a spirit that shall descend from heaven, not an angel, not an influence, not a dispensation of Providence, but "the Lord Himself."

His coming glory will be threefold, for "He shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26. This great glory will envelop the whole world. Here is the plain statement of the holy apostle: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire." 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8. He will be seen by all the world.

When He came before, He came as a babe in Bethlehem's manger; when He comes again, He comes as King of kings. Before, He was despised and rejected; now His lightnings will lighten the world, and all the earth shall see and tremble. Before, He was a sacrifice on Calvary; this time He comes as judge on the great white throne. Before, His enemies crowned Him with thorns; now He comes with many crowns. His first advent was like the slow dawning of a summer morning. Not so His second coming. His

return to this earth will be the greatest demonstration of power and glory in the history of mankind. "Every eye shall see him." Revelation 1:7. Never forget that text-"Every eye shall see him."

This is the open, literal, visible, bodily, actual, return of Christ. The Holy Scriptures are clear and explicit on the manner of His coming, the how of His coming. We read the words of Hebrews 9:28: "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." Notice, "He shall appear" - there is nothing secret or hidden about that.

In Titus 2:13 the apostle declares that we are always to be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." There is nothing here of a secret snatching away of God's people without the knowledge of the world. We give here a number of texts that speak of His appearing:

Colossians 3:4: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory."

1 Peter 5:4: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear."

1 John 2:28: "When he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

1 John 3:2: "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Matthew 24:30: "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

When will Jesus return? This question is dealt with more fully in another chapter. Perhaps it will suffice here to say that to the majority His coming will be sudden and unexpected; even those who are looking for Him will be surprised. "In such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes." Matthew 24:44. The exact day and hour of His coming has not been revealed. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Verse 36.

Now we ask the question, Why is He coming? Jesus makes it clear that He comes to "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:31.) The Apostle Paul speaks of His advent as the "blessed hope" in Titus 2:11-13: "For the grace of God that brings 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 Savior Jesus Christ."

Paul fell in martyrdom with his eyes fixed on that wonderful day, as we read in 2 Timothy 4:6-8: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

It is when the King comes that the resurrection of the just and the translation of the living children of God will take place. Then will be the harvest of the earth, when the wheat will be gathered into the heavenly garner. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," declared the apostle, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

And again, in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, he declares: "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [or precede] them which are asleep for dead). 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." And they are wonderful words, too! Then there will be a relinking of the family chain. We shall meet again those friends whom we have loved long since and lost awhile. For the people of God it will be the end of sickness, the end of disease, the end of poverty, the end of old age, the end of death, and the beginning of eternal youth.

Christ is not only coming sometime-that is only part of the truth-He is coming soon. The signs of the times indicate that we are living in the latter days. He is coming quickly; He is even at the door. (Matthew 24:33.) Yes, His feet are on the threshold, His hand is on the latch. Soon, how soon we know not, He will come. Some men and women are trying to put off that eventful day, trying to think that Christ will never come-or at least will not come in their lifetime-but listen: In such an hour as you think not the Son of

man comes." Matthew 24:44.

To some it will be a wonderful day, a beautiful day, a glorious day. just think of the word carried down the hall of some great hospital: No more operations; it is all over! Christ is coming! No more pain, no more groans, no more suffering. Christ is here! Christ has come! Close up the funeral chapel; fill up that unused grave. No more death for believers. Christ is here!

On the other hand, it will be a day of sorrow for those who have rejected the Savior. For His enemies it will be a day of destruction. Multitudes will not be ready for His coming and will be filled with terror and fear. A dramatic description of this day is found in Revelation 6:14-17: "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

We must remember this: No sin can endure before the consuming glory of our coming King, for "our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:29. Either sin must be consumed out of our hearts here, or we shall be consumed in His presence. Those who by faith approach the throne of grace here and receive Christ's righteousness to cover all their sins will be happy in that day. They will recognize the Savior as their King and will receive Him with joy. But to meet Him unsaved or unprepared will be the saddest thing that could ever happen to a human being. Read thoughtfully 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, speaking of that day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on 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."

At His second advent Jesus resurrects the righteous dead and translates the righteous living. The living wicked die. As a boy, I grew up on my grandfather's farm. I often heard my grandmother singing to herself. One of her favorite songs was about that great day when the King shall return. I can remember the words distinctly; they ring in my soul now:

"There's a great day coming, a great day coming,
There's a great day coming by and by,
When the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left,
Are you ready for that day to come?"

Those words made a deep impression on my youthful heart. And then she sang:

"There's a bright day coming, a bright day coming,
There's a bright day coming by and by,
But its brightness shall only come to them that love the Lord,
Are you ready for that day to come?"

I wanted to be ready; I still want to be ready. It made me think seriously. And then I heard the last stanza:

"There's a sad day coming, a sad day coming,
There's a sad day coming by and by,
When the sinner shall hear his doom, 'Depart, I know you not,'
Are you ready for that day to come?"
William L. Thompson.

Are you ready for that day to come? We can be ready -all of us. Christ Jesus will be our Savior if we will have Him. Are you ready, friend, for the King to come?

A lover of children visited a certain school and talked to the youngsters. He said, I am coming back again sometime, and I am going to give a prize to the one who has the cleanest desk."

"But when are you coming back?" was the question.
"That I cannot tell," was the answer.

A little girl who was noted for her disorderly habits announced to the other children that she intended to win the prize.

"You?" the schoolmates jeered. "You will never get it; your desk is always out of order."

"But I mean to clean it the first of every week."

"Yes, but suppose he should come at the end of the week?"

"Then I'll clean it every morning," she responded. "But suppose he comes in the afternoon."

She thought awhile. Then she said, "I know what I'll do: I'll just keep it clean."

Thus it must be with those who love their Lord's appearing. They must be ready all the time; they must keep their lives clean through His grace. They know not when He shall come at evening, at midnight, in the morning, or at noon. They must remember that the Savior's words were not "Get ready," but "Be you ready."