

Sermon 2 – The Second Advent

Text: Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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. John 14:1-3

JESUS was soon to leave his disciples, and ascend to the Father. And in his words of instruction and consolation, he was preparing their minds for that event which would prove a great grief to them. His presence constituted their joy. His absence would be their sorrow. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Matt.9:15.

The real friends of our Lord will ever desire his tangible presence. A worldly church, whose affections are placed upon the things of this life, will enjoy his absence quite as well. Those who truly love their divine Lord will receive the word relative to his return with all gladness.

Our Lord was tenderly introducing to his disciples the subject of his ascent to Heaven. "Little children yet a little while I am with you." John 13:33. "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." Verse 36. This statement caused distress and consternation in the minds of the disciples, and led Peter to say to his Lord, "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Verse 37. Then follow the comforting words of the text, assuring the sorrowing disciples that their Lord would come again, and receive them to himself.

Jesus also assured them that the Father would give them "another comforter, " even the Spirit of truth, which should dwell with them, and be in them. Chap.14:16, 17. The words, "another comforter, " suppose two, at least. The one was the person of our divine Lord. The other is the Spirit of truth. Both were comforters of the church. Christ was such in a special sense while with his disciples. The other was to abide with the church, to administer the blessings and gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church, until her absent Lord should return in glory to take her to himself. Then the days of her mourning, and fasting, and griefs, will be over forever. With such a faith and hope, the waiting church of Jesus Christ may well sing:

"How bright the vision! Oh, how long
Shall this glad hour delay?
Fly swifter round, ye wheels of time,
And bring the welcome day."

And while the church waits in joyous expectation of speedy deliverance, her Lord "saith, Surely I come quickly, " to which the church responds, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev.22:20, 21.

The certainty of the second advent of Christ, and the manner and object of his coming, are points of thrilling interest to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

He will appear the second time. Paul speaks directly upon this point, "So 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." Heb.9:28. Again he says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13.

Another apostle testifies to this point thus: "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." 1 John 3:2.

The second advent of Christ will be personal and visible. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Rev.1:7. Jesus, as he was addressing his disciples upon the subject of his second advent, pointed forward to the generation who should witness the signs of that event in the sun, moon, and stars, and said: "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matt.24:30. See Mark 13:26; 14:62; John 14:3.

And at the ascension of Christ, two angels declared to the anxious witnesses: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven." Acts 1:2.

The apostle testifies to the personal and visible appearing of Christ in language not to be misunderstood. He says: "For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 1 Thess.4:16. See also Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:2.

When the Lord shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire, sinners then living will be destroyed, and the earth will be desolated. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, 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." 2 Thess.1:7-9; 2:7, 8 See also Matt.13:26-30, 37-43; 3:12; Luke 17:26-30; Isa.13:9; 6:8-11; 24:1-3; 34:1- 15; 28:21, 22; Jer.4:20, 27; 25:32-38; Zeph.1:2, 3, 7-18; 3:6-8.

When Christ appears the second time, the righteous dead will be raised, and the living righteous will be changed to immortality. "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all

sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Cor.15:51-53.

Again the apostle testifies to this point: "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 Thess.4:16-17.

The church will then be no more separated from her adorable Redeemer; but, with all the endowments of immortality, will "ever be with the Lord." The apostle states that they will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Will they return to the earth immediately? Or will the Lord lead them up to the eternal city of the saved?

Jesus had plainly told his disciples that he would leave them. "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterward." John 13:36. Jesus was soon to go up to the Father. The disciples could not follow their Lord then; but afterward, at the time of his second advent and the resurrection of the just, they should follow him up to Heaven, as he should return to his Father.

The disciples were pained to learn that their Lord would leave them. And he would comfort their troubled hearts by saying to them, "In my Father's house are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you." "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

It is true that the earth made new, Rev.21:5, when the holy city shall come down from Heaven upon it, verse 2, will be the final inheritance of the righteous. But Peter, with faith and hope inspired anew by the resurrection of Christ, points to Heaven as the place where the inheritance is reserved, and says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Pet.1:3-5. In this case the apostle refers only to the holy city, the metropolis of the inheritance complete. The redeemed will remain in the city above, and reign with their Lord in judgment, Rev.20:4, during the seventh millennium.

The doctrine of the second appearing of Christ has been held by the church ever since her Lord ascended to the Father to prepare mansions for her reception. It is the event that consummates her hopes, terminates the period of her toils and sorrows, and introduces her

eternal repose. What sublime scenes will then open before the waiting children of God! The blazing heavens will reveal the Son of God in his glory, surrounded by all the holy angels. The trumpet will sound, and the just will come forth from the grave, immortal. And all - Redeemer and redeemed, attended by the heavenly host - will move upward to the mansions prepared for them in the Father's house.

To those who really love their absent Lord, the theme of his soon return to bestow immortality upon the dead and living righteous, is fraught with unspeakable blessedness. This event, with all its grand results, has always been the hope of the church. Paul could look over eighteen long centuries, and speak of it thus: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13. And Peter exhorts: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." 2 Pet.3:12.

And Paul again, after speaking of the descent of the Lord from Heaven, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and their ascent with the living righteous to meet the Lord in the air, says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess.4:18.

The second coming of Christ is a subject of great importance to the church. We conclude thus from the amount of testimony relative to it, in connection with the resurrection of the just, and the judgment, found both in the Old and New Testaments. Popular orthodoxy may cast it aside as not essential to the Christian faith, yet it may be traced through the sacred Scriptures, as made prominent by prophets, Jesus, and apostles. The Bible dwells upon essentials. It does not deal in non-essentials. When the Lord in his word gave his people a rule of faith and practice, he was careful to leave the non-essentials all out. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, " says Paul; "and let all the people say, Amen!"

The doctrine of the second appearing of Christ, made so very prominent in the Scriptures, is lost sight of by those who receive theories not found in the Scriptures. Thus the fulfillment of all the threatenings of God's word, relative to the swift-approaching day of wrath, and the revelation of the Son of God in flaming fire, to destroy the inhabitants of the earth, as they were once destroyed by water, are put far into the distant future, if not completely lost sight of, by the unscriptural doctrine of the world's conversion and the temporal millennium.

The second personal appearing of Jesus Christ is most absurdly applied to several different things. Some teach that death is the second coming of Christ. This is not only a violation of plain Scripture declarations, but of the laws of language. There can be but a single second advent of Christ, while this misty sentiment has as many appearings of Jesus as there are deaths.

The early disciples did not receive the idea that death was the second coming of Christ. Peter, seeing the beloved John, "saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not

unto him, he shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" John 21:21-23.

So far were the disciples from holding that death was the second coming of Christ, that when they understood their Lord to intimate that John might remain until his return, they at once concluded that he would not die; and from them went this saying abroad. No; instead of receiving the idea that the second advent of Christ, in any sense whatever, took place at death, they regarded it as an event that would forever put an end to the power of death over the righteous.

And what foggy theology is this that makes death the second appearing of Christ! He is coming as the Lifegiver, and the believer's best friend. Death is the life-taker, and man's last enemy. 1 Cor.15:26. Christ is coming to give life to the just, and to destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. Heb.2:14.

Mark this: The devil has the power of death, and, in the providence of God, is permitted to send the barbed arrow even to the heart of the just, lay him low in death, and lock him in the tomb.

But the Lifegiver, having passed under the dominion of death, and having been gloriously raised from the embrace of the grave, triumphantly says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of the grave [hades] and of death." Rev.1:18. The devil holds the power of death. Christ holds the keys of death and the grave, and at his second appearing he will unlock the tombs of the just, break the power of death, their last enemy, and lead them forth to immortal and eternal scenes of glory. Astonishing, that modern theologians should assert that death is the second coming of Christ!

Again, conversion is said to be the second coming of Christ. Then there are as many second comings of Christ as there are conversions. There can be but one second appearing of Jesus Christ. And, again, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit are said to be the second advent of Christ. Hence, men talk of the spiritual coming of Christ, and his spiritual reign for one thousand years. But here, also, they are involved in the difficulty of a plurality of second comings of Christ; for in this case they would have Christ appear at each gracious manifestation of the Holy Spirit. There can be but a single second advent of Christ.

But more than this, those who talk of a spiritual coming and reign of Christ have things badly confused. May the Lord help them to see the difference between the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and the personal presence of Christ at his second appearing, while we appeal to the Scriptures. "I will pray the Father, " says Jesus, "and he shall give you another Comforter." John 14:16 This language implies more than one comforter. When Christ was with his people, he was their comforter.

In his absence, the Father was to send another comforter, even the Spirit of truth. During the absence of the Son, the Holy Spirit was to be his representative, and the comforter of his dear, sorrowing people. The facts in the case are distinctly stated in the following impressive words: "But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. 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. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:5-8.

And yet again, the Shakers see the second appearing of Christ in the person of Ann Lee. And the Mormons see the fulfillment of the prophecies relative to the coming and kingdom of Christ in the gathering of "the latter-day saints, " at Salt Lake. And the Spiritualists generally agree in saying, Lo, here is the second advent of Christ in the manifestations of Spiritualism.

In the prophetic discourse of Matt.24 and 25, covering the entire Christian age, our Lord, after speaking of the tribulation of the church under Papal persecutions, says of our time: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Matt.24:23, 24.

The word then in this passage points to a specific period of time when "Lo, here is Christ, and lo, he is there, " would be heard. Our Lord here describes the spiritual deceptions of the present age. False christs arose not far from the first advent to deceive the Jews in regard to that event (Matt.24:5); likewise false christs and false prophets have arisen at this day to deceive the people on the subject of the second advent.

The "Time of the End, " a work of no small ability and importance, properly calls the doctrine of the temporal millennium a modern novelty. From this popular error of a temporal millennium and spiritual reign of Christ, have grown the mystical applications of the plainest declarations of Scripture relative to the second appearing of the Lifegiver, to death, to conversion, to the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, to Shakerism, to Mormonism, and to Spiritualism.

How forcible are the words of our Lord when applied to the subject before us: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not." Matt.24:23. No one need fail to see who the men are who are crying, "Lo, here is Christ, and lo, he is there!" The Lord continues, in verses 25 and 26: "Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not."

Our Lord is here dwelling upon what he has just before told them. His subject is still the teachings of those who cry, "Lo, here is Christ!" "Lo, he is there!" If the Mormons say,

"Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth." Or, if you hear proclaimed from the popular pulpits of our time, "Behold, he is in the secret chambers, " Christ's second coming is spiritual, at death, or at conversion, "believe it not."

And why not receive such mystical teachings? The reason is given in the next verse: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

We are very happy that our Lord has not only pointed out false christs and false prophets, and has warned us against their mystical teachings, but he has in contrast set before us the manner of his second coming in the plainest terms.

The vivid lightning flashing out of the distant east, and shining even to the west, lights up the whole heavens. What, then, when the Lord comes in flaming glory, and all the holy angels with him? The presence of only one holy angel at the new sepulcher where Christ lay in death, caused the Roman guard to shake and become as dead men. The light and glory of one angel completely overpowered those strong sentinels.

The Son of Man is coming in his own kingly glory, and in the glory of his Father, attended by all the holy angels. Then the whole heavens will blaze with glory, and the whole earth will tremble before him.