
CHAPTER 11

THE IMMINENT SECOND COMING

The Second Coming of Christ is certain (Zech. 14:5b; Matt. 24:30-31; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 2 Pet. 3:10-11; Jude 14); even an imminent event (Rev. 22: 7, 12; 20). The event of His Second Coming would be in two phases separated by only a brief period but not less than seven (7) years. The first phase is referred to as His coming to meet the saints in the air - the Rapture of the Church, while the second aspect is His visible return to the earth - the Appearing. According to Dan. 9:27, the Rapture and the Appearing are to be separated by the seven years Tribulation and maybe some intervening days or months for the revealing of the Anti-Christ; and this time interval seems to be very, very insignificant to observation if not viewed through proper prophetic eyes. The New Testament, though, did not argue out schools of thoughts, but simply did hold a teaching that depicted a pre-Tribulation Rapture and a pre-millennial visible return of Christ. Hence there is the possibility of missing the real scriptural truth about the imminence of His coming.

GREEK WORD MEANINGS

The Second Coming is described in the Bible by different Greek words each bringing home the meaning of what is being conveyed to the reader on the subject.

1. *Optanomai* (appearing) - Heb. 9:28.
2. *Erchomai* (coming) - John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 2Thess. 1:10; Rev. 1:7.
3. *Epiphaneia* (appearing, show brightness) - 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 8; Tit. 2:13
4. *Apokalupsis* (unveiling, revelation, appearing, coming) - 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; Rev. 1:1
5. *Parousia* (presence translated coming) - 1 Cor. 15:23; 1Thess. 2:19;

3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2Thess. 2: 1, 8; James 5:7, 8; 1 John 2:28.

6. *Phaneroo* (appear, be made apparent, manifest oneself) - Col. 3:4; 1John 2:28.

We observe that parousia is applicable to both phases of His Coming, the Rapture (1Thess. 4:15; 2 Thess. 2: 1) and the Appearing (2 Thess. 2: 1, 8). Thus, the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus can be generally referred to as the parousia, where those involved in each phase will see the Lord's literal presence with them. So at the Rapture, the Lord Jesus will be seen by the saints in Christ and at His returning, all eyes shall see Him!

THE MANNER OF HIS COMING

The Second Coming of Christ generally referred to as the parousia:

1. Is a certain event (Acts 1:11). So, the long delay should not be construed as making it uncertain. Some parables like the talents do not bring out the certainty, but Jesus said He will come back (John 14:1-3), and I believe He will surely come.
2. Will be visible, personal, and bodily or corporeal like as He went up (Matt. 24:27; Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 1:7).
3. Is an imminent event, for He is coming soon (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).
4. Will be sudden, unexpected like a thief, surprise just like the coming destruction of the day of the Lord (Matt. 24:42-44; 1Cor. 15: 51-57; 1Thess. 5:2; 2Pet. 3:10-14; Rev. 16:15).
5. Will be on the clouds of heaven, glorious with power and with angels and finally with the saints at His Appearing (Zech. 14:4, 5; Matt. 24:30-31; Mark 8:38; 2Thess. 2:7; Jude14).

THE REASONS FOR HIS COMING (John 14:1-3; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2Tim. 4: 1; Rev. 11:15)

There are several reasons why Jesus is returning to the planet earth. In His incarnation, He came to live here as the God-man. He died and was buried for our sins. He arose and ascended into Heaven, but before that He promised to come back. Some of the main reasons for His

coming are below stated.

1. *Our Final Redemption*

The Rapture will complete our redemption (1Cor. 15:50-58; Eph. 1:7, 13-14; 1Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 9:28), while the Appearing will result in the final redemption of all other saints (Rev. 20:1-6). This will be *“the gathering of His people”* (2Thess. 2:1) and will involve two things, 1) *the translation of the living saints in Christ* and 2) *the resurrection of the just in its order* (Is. 53:11; Dan. 12:2, 3; 1Cor. 15: 22, 23). It will ultimately result in the liberation of the earth from bondage when Christ and glorified saints come back to live on it (Rom. 8:21).

Paul writes on this saying, *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” ... “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.”* (Eph. 1:7, 13-14). In the book of Hebrews we further read, *“so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”* (Heb. 9:28)

The Saints in Christ will be raptured when He returns to take His own home. This will involve the resurrection of the dead in Christ and a translation of living saints so that all will receive glorified bodies like His own at His coming (John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:20, 21; Col. 3:4; 2Thess. 1:10; Jude 24; 1Jn. 3: 3). We must understand that only our spirits are perfected in dead presently (Heb. 12:23), but our total redemption is still future when He returns (1Thess.5:23). Furthermore, when the saints return with Christ to the earth, at the Appearing, creation shall even be liberated from bondage.

Paul states, *“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and*

labors with birth pangs together until now." Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:19-23).

Jesus promised His disciples that He would certainly return to take us to Himself. This is the Christian hope and we must wait expectantly for it. In the mean time, when the believer dies, his salvation is sealed as his spirit is perfected to be in the presence of the Lord. However, his body will see redemption only at His second coming, when we see Him face to face. Of course, this will also be shared by living believers who are translated. We shall share in His glorified body (1John3:1-3).

2. *Judgment and destruction of Satan and sin*

The eschatological "day of the Lord" prophesied in the Old Testament will begin with God's redemptive judgments and end with Millennial Kingdom blessings (Daniel 2:44-45; 4:5-6; Zeph. 1:14-18; 3:8-20; Malachi 3:1-4). Therefore, He will return as Judge to avenge God's enemies, execute judgment for their sin. He has been appointed the Judge of both the living and the dead (Acts 10:42).

His eternal judgments, beginning with the saints after the rapture, will also see Him judging sin on earth and pronouncing judgment at the battle of Armageddon in the plain of Megiddo (Joel 3:2, 12; Rev. 11:18; 16: 13-16; 19:11-21). Thousands will be slain by the word from His mouth. The Anti-Christ and the false Prophet will be cast into Hell fire, while Satan is bound for 1000 years in the bottomless pit.

He will thus also enforce the victory of Calvary as He destroys the works or sinful acts (*italics mine*) of Satan (1John 3:8).

God's enemies will be forced to confess Jesus and be subjected to His authority (Phil. 2:11). Many people think that God does not judge quickly enough. Well, I think differently. You see apart from the long suffering of God, the wrath of God is never to be presumed (2Pet. 3:9, 10). The just God will punish every sin; for sin has its wages! The scriptures speak about sudden destruction when the day of the Lord comes.

"Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction

from the Almighty." (Is. 13:6).

"Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty." (Joel 1:15).

"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." (1Thess. 5:2-3).

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed." (2Thess. 1:3-10).

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2 Thess. 2: 7-10).

After all these God will continue judgment on sin. There will be the righteous rule of Christ on earth. But to give way to the city wherein dwells righteousness (2Pet 3:10-13), Satan will finally be cast into Hell fire with the wicked dead after the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 19:20, 21; 20: 4-6, 11-15).

3. To Judge the Living and the Dead

Judgment is reserved for all men. And a day is fixed for judgment. Jesus must return to judge all men for their allegiance to Him and also for everyone's work. In His eternal judgments, sinners will be condemned and cast into Hell fire but the faithful believer will be

rewarded, according to his works in Heaven. The Chapters on Judgment will amplify these; meanwhile the following Scriptures will do some good.

"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead." (Acts 10:42).

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31).

"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12).

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." (2 Tim. 4:1).

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment," (Heb. 9:27).

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." (Rev. 22:12).

It is important for us believers to undergo the chastening of the Lord while alive; and to learn to judge ourselves in the light of Scripture. On the other hand we must warn the unbelieving in whatever means possible not to fall into the hands of the Lord. If God judged His Son on the cross on our behalf, then Jesus will not spare in judgment. Always remember that Heaven and Hell are both real.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment." (1Cor. 11:31-34).

"For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?" (Heb. 12:6-7)

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if

it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences." (2Cor. 5:10-11).

4. To Rule on Earth

The Bible is full of prophecies on the advents of Jesus, the Christ. The Old Testament scriptures clearly presented the two portraits of the Messiah; the Suffering Messiah (Is. 53:1-12) and the Reigning Messiah (Is. 9:6, 7; Zech. 14; Rom. 1:2, 3). As the reigning Messiah, He must return to restore all things to Israel and reign as the son of David (Luke 1:32, 33; Acts 3: 20, 21).

Therefore, He will return not only as Judge to subject God's enemies to Himself, execute judgment for sin, but also to rule and reign forever as King of kings and Lord of lords on earth (Rev. 19:11-21). This will fulfill all the Messianic prophecies in the millennial reign (20: 1-6). Thereafter, Jesus will hand over the kingdom to the Father (1Cor. 15:24-28).

THE TIME OF HIS COMING

The time of His coming is unknown to any man or angel (Matt. 24:36). Yet certain signs will show the times (Matt. 24:1ff; 2 Tim. 3:1-5) Many such signs are indicated in Scripture and are listed under the chapter dealing with 'Signs of His Coming'.

If this is the case then how do we resolve the imminence of His Coming with looking for signs? To many, this has been the greatest headache in handling eschatology. But scripture speaks for itself. At the time of Daniel we are told that the meanings of some of the words were sealed until the later days (Dan. 12:9).

Now after Pentecost, all the apostles agreed with the Lord on teaching our being ready at any time (Matt. 24:36-39; 42-44; 1Cor. 1:7; 1Pet. 4:7-10). In this matter, however, they stressed the need for patience in waiting. They never gave speculative dates. They, however, were

guided by warnings given by the Lord on the destruction of Jerusalem and the magnificent Temple. They also asserting that they were in the last days, were prepared to be faithful even to the point of death to their Master notwithstanding the signs of the times.

The truth is the last days' signs (Matt. 24:4-8; 1Tim. 4:1-7; 2Tim. 3:1-5) will only continue in greater frequency and intensity; for they have become part of us, in the Church age. They are the beginning of labor pains. Just how long labor will take is never stated; but with labor, birth will come. For the early Church, their preoccupation was consistent hard work in kingdom living and business (Acts 2:42; 20:35; Rom. 16:6)! The import of the matter lies in the fact that apart from seeing intensity and frequency of signs, most of the clearly stated sequential signs of His Coming (e. g. Matt. 24:9ff; 1Thess. 5:3; 2Thess. 2:3) have reference rather to the Tribulation which starts after the Rapture.

It is, therefore, not advisable to develop an unhealthy signs seeking habit. When we look for signs we do not get them.

We either will fall into the trap of scoffing (2Pet.. 3:3-5) or be given some other signs (Matt. 12:38 - 40; 16:1-4). You see, signs just show up themselves and we discern them. That's all!

WARNING TO THE CHURCH

It is needful to note that here the Jews rejected Him and could not accept Jesus as their Messiah at the first Advent (John 1:11). It is obvious for they could not see the Messiah in the two phases of Suffering and Reigning, because:

1. *Of their short sightedness:* The suffering side of the Messiah's ministry was taken spiritually or glossed over while only the reigning side was their literal side. They could not foresee that His death is what would make the gospel authentic (Rom. 1:2-4). So then they reasoned concerning Jesus, if the Messiah had really been born to them, He was to liberate Israel from Roman rule. Even the disciples until after Pentecost expected to see the kingdom in the physical (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6, 7).
2. *Of their indifference to real spiritual need at the time:* The spiritual leaders excused their need for repentance. They claimed that only observance of the law was needful, and being blind they also

blinded the masses to real need of entry into the kingdom of God (John 3:1-7; Acts 10:10-16; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:26; 3:11).

3. *Of their lack of investigation:* Only a few Jews dared to find out the reality of the son of man, a mix of Ben Joseph and Ben David in the Son of the living God. They had all the prophetic writings and the Psalms (Luke 24:44-47), but they were not investigative enough. It is said that the book of Daniel did not mean much to the Jewish Rabbis, yet there in laid their time line (Dan. 9:23-27). So Jesus had to call them hypocrites and blind guides and finally weep over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:23-39). Of- course after Pentecost, some good number of them turned to the Lord. But that was divinely to start the dispensation of grace, the Church; something entirely different than Israel even though it showed progressive divine revelation.

As a warning then, the Church could but should not fall into that same trap in discussing the imminence of His Coming. The Rapture and the Appearing are two separate phases of His literal Second Coming. We need to discern this truth; and teach it and live it. For this we say that the rapture will always be an imminent event until it takes place.

Never miss the fact that no one knows the interval between the Rapture and the actual start of the Tribulation. It is a transition for the formation of the Apostate Church, revelation of Anti-Christ, the start of ministry of the two witnesses, and other non-sequential events.

What is your position on His Second Coming?

The question now is, if the early Church held on to the teaching of an imminent Second Coming, why not the 21st century Church? The answer lies in the openness in our approach to biblical study. Why scholastic criticism of the Bible sometimes has helped Christendom, the simplicity with which the Spirit of God breathed could be left or even lost thereby. Thus many schools of thought have surfaced over the years.

From the time of the Reformation, witnessing the history of modern day Pentecostalism, to the Charismatic streams, and to the Third Wave Church Growth thought, the world is now reading a mixed flow of Christian thought from these sources. Remember, Christianity is

founded on revelation and power from Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13-19; 1John 2:20, 27)! God intended that we search and know the scriptures. It is the only way to receive truth and not another word (Matt. 22:29; John 8:32-36; 2Thess. 2:2). When Jesus spoke of the generation to witness the signs, I believe He meant both the Jewish race and also a specific generation. He spoke in the present and future tenses.

Matt. 24:21-22 and 33-35 read, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" ... "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-- at the doors! "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

The generation of His day surely witnessed the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., and there will also be the Tribulation generation to witness His return (Matt. 24:21; 34). To this end we must openly embrace and live the balanced teaching of an imminent return, which in no way contradicts long waiting. Every generation has its imminence. However, there will be a generation that will enjoy the last lap. Only God knows that generation, but I believe it could be ours!