

God Speaks To Modern Man

foundation of the world.” Matthew 25:34. Concerning those who do not know Him, though they may make great profession, He says, “Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:23.

The choice is mine. The decision no other may make for me. “What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ?”

“O Jesus, my Redeemer,
Thou art my joy and song, My Savior and my solace
When griefs around me throng.

“O Jesus, my Redeemer,
My song shall be of Thee; No other friend so constant,
No friend so dear to me.”

23. The Coming Man of Destiny

OPEN your Bible to the book of Genesis, and there in the third chapter and the fifteenth verse you will read a prophecy of God. It tells about the Seed of the woman, the coming Christ, who was one day to bruise the head of Satan the serpent.

Beginning at that point in Genesis, you may trace, like the scarlet thread in every inch of English navy rope, the golden line of promises and predictions of Christ’s first coming—His birth, His birthplace and the little town in which He grew up, His message and its rejection by church leaders, His call to lowly men, His ministry of blessing to all classes, His betrayal, His humility and suffering and trial, His crucifixion and burial and resurrection, and His magnificent reception in heaven.

The prophetic voice is like a melody, mingling the strains of promise, tragedy, and hope: “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.” Numbers 24:17. “Until Shiloh come.” Genesis 49:10. “A man of sorrows.” Isaiah 53:1 “The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6. But the refrain is ever the same: “He is coming! He is coming!” This was His first coming, His first advent.

WHAT OF HIS SECOND COMING?

Did the Old Testament prophets see beyond the first coming and the cross to the Second Coming and the crown? Here is a sweeping answer from the New Testament: “He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:20, 21. Here we are assured that all the prophets of old understood that there was to be a glorious coming of the Messiah and a restoration of righteousness, and of God’s original plan for man.

The coming Man of destiny is Jesus Christ. He comes, not as an unknown babe in a stable, but as King of kings. The kingdoms of this world are to become His kingdom.

“The Second Coming of Christ is mentioned 1,518 times in the Bible, and over 300 times in the New Testament. This goes to prove God’s emphasis on this important doctrine.”—The Free Methodist.

If this statement be correct, there are some one thousand two hundred references in the Old Testament to the glorious day of the Second Coming of Christ and the restitution of all things. Dwight L. Moody estimated that the Second Coming of Christ is referred to two thousand five hundred times in the Bible. On this basis there would probably be some two thousand allusions in the Old Testament to this climax of the ages. This is not to say that God’s people in those times had the fullest understanding of the distinct difference between the first and Second Comings of Christ, nor the place of what may be called the third coming of Christ. God continued to give increasing light as time went by.

Jude, next to the last book of the New Testament, names one of the first Old Testament prophets who preached the second advent of Christ: “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.” Jude 1:14, 15. Here is a

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man but the seventh generation from Adam, who long before the Flood painted a word picture of Christ's coming, which fairly matches that of John the revelator.

Consider the patriarch Abraham also. Said Christ, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad." John 8:56. Christ's day includes His Second Coming and reign of glory. Is there any doubt that Abraham understood? Hear the testimony of Paul: "He [Abraham] looked for a city which bath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews 11:10.

This dweller in tents, a wanderer in strange lands, died in faith, as did his faithful descendants, who "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, . . . embraced them." Verse 13. What a picture of saying faith! With eyes of faith they saw the fulfillment of promises afar off, and with the arms of faith they embraced the hope of God's future day of glory.

Then there was Job. A man of means, character, honor, and influence, he found himself suddenly thrust into financial ruin, social unpopularity, sickness nigh unto death, and the deepest distress of soul. In this dark hour, when it might aptly be said that he had both feet in the grave, his faith exclaimed, 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." Job 19:25, 26. What a striking presentation of the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection!

The psalmist David writes as in vision, "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.

Zechariah describes His final coming: "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley. And half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." Zechariah 14:4.

The message of the Old Testament rings forth, "He is coming!" Coming in humility and suffering, then coming in power and glory. But always, without a wavering note, He is coming!

THE NEW TESTAMENT MESSAGE

The first great added note of the New Testament is, He has come! "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11. He has come as a babe born of a virgin, as a man clothed in the garb of a carpenter, as the Messiah baptized of John in Jordan, anointed with the Holy Ghost, and certified of God. He has come as the overcomer, tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He has come as the master teacher, the divine healer, the great comforter. He has died on Calvary for the sins of men. He has risen from the tomb with the keys of hell and death snatched from the sealed and stony sepulcher, and ascended into heaven as the Son of man to be our merciful mediator. All this He has done. Yes. He has come. That was the first advent.

The second triumphant strain of the New Testament is, "He is coming again!" From the milder tones proceeding from some of the parables of Jesus the music rises to a magnificent crescendo and grand finale in the book of Revelation. The curtain rings down on a sin-cursed world and rolls up to reveal the indescribable glories of eternity. "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20.

In rapid review we bring to mind the actual New Testament words. First, let us give an ear to the sayings of Jesus. Under questioning by His disciples He said:

"Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24:30.

On trial before the high priest a few hours before Calvary, Jesus was put under oath to answer the question as to whether He was the Son of God. Standing there before the throne of the arrogant Caiaphas, bound as a criminal and flanked by guards, "Jesus said unto him.... Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matthew 26:64. These words served to affirm in open testimony before a religious court what He had privately said to His disciples a few hours before: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." John 14:2, 3.

Since Christ is the central and authoritative figure of Christianity, Christianity stands or falls upon the reliability or unreliability of His promise to come again.

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Then there came the testimony of angels after His ascension: "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

The apostle Paul, ready for execution by Nero's decree, exclaimed, "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." 2 Timothy 4:8.

It is said that in the era of that early pagan persecution Christian believers passing one another at night on the streets of Rome exchanged the greeting, "Maranatha," meaning "The Lord is coming." They did not understand how far in the future that coming was really to be, but they did experience the heavenly thrill of its hope in their hearts.

The careful, conservative apostle James, presenting a picture of certain conditions to come in the last days, said, "Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." James 5:8.

The positive and more dramatic Peter gave point to his faith by saying, "The day of the Lord will come. . . . What holy and pious men ought you to be in your behavior, you who expect and hasten the advent of the Day of God." 2 Peter 3:10-12, Moffatt.

John, the beloved saint and prisoner of Patmos, out of tribulation wrote the Revelation of Jesus Christ concerning that final day when the destiny of all men shall have been settled. The good are good. The bad are bad. The saved are saved. The lost are lost. Then are heard rolling through the universe the words of the returning King: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

March 11, 1942, was a dark day for the freedom-loving peoples of the world. General Douglas Mac Arthur was ordered by his superior command to leave the Philippines. The overwhelming forces of the enemy were sweeping in. In that black and bitter night this man of faith and deeds reached within his soul and brought forth something that he struck against the rough hard wall of unfriendly fate. There sprang forth a light that illuminated and electrified the world, when he said, "I shall return." Two and a half years later, on October 20, 1944, he broadcast to the people of the Philippines, "I have returned."

THE COMING MAN OF DESTINY

In the dark shadows of the cross Jesus said simply, "I will come again."

Someday, amid the contrasting scenes of celestial glory and earthly chaos, He will proclaim, "I have returned."

A deep and abiding faith in the Second Coming of Christ has a tremendous purifying and uplifting power. The devil knows that. Two methods he uses to destroy the influence of this great doctrine. Sometimes he tries to minimize the importance of it by liberal thinking. Thus the "Blessed hope" is practically destroyed. Second, he uses fanaticism to bring it into disrepute. But the towering leaders of the church have clung to this hope with tenacious faith.

WHAT CHRISTIANS HAVE SAID

Martin Luther wrote, "I ardently hope that, amidst these internal dissensions on earth, Jesus Christ will hasten the day of His coming."

The intrepid John Knox wrote, "We know that He shall return, and that with expedition."

The fervent John Wesley, commenting on the closing verses of Revelation, said, "The Spirit of adoption in the heart of every believer says, 'Come and accomplish all the words of this prophecy.'"

John Milton sublimely wrote, "Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth; . . . take up that unlimited scepter. . . . For now the voice of Thy bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed."

Moody said, "The church has very little to say about it. Now I can see a reason for this; the devil does not want us to see this truth, for nothing would wake up the church so much."

During World War II the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea was subjected to one of the most drawn-out, terrifying, and nerve-racking bombings on record. Lt. Gen. Sir William Dobbie, former governor of Malta, made a speech in London in which he is reported to have said that during those days of terrific blasting he "had been unfailingly conscious of the Lord's impending return."

In these modern days more voices are raised in proclaiming the truth of Christ's Second Coming

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than at any previous period. Dr. Billy Graham is one noted preacher whose voice has been heard around the world sounding the Second Advent message.

THREE THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN HE COMES

In this preliminary discussion we touch briefly on but three things that are connected with His Second Coming.

First, the righteous dead will be resurrected. ‘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.’ 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Second, the righteous living will be taken up. ‘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.’ Verse 17.

Third, the bodies of all the righteous will be changed. This is made plain beyond controversy in these words: ‘Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.’ Philippians 3:20, 21.

Thus our bodies will be changed to resemble Jesus’ glorious body, His resurrected body, which was very real. He Himself said, ‘A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have.’ Luke 24:39. And again we read in 1 John 3:2, ‘When he shall appear, we shall be like him.’ Those who are alive and ready for His coming will be changed ‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, . . . and this mortal must put on immortality.’ 1 Corinthians 15:52-54. The righteous dead will also be changed. ‘So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.’ Verse 42. Our loved ones whose bodies were twisted and racked with pain, mutilated or wasted by disease, disfigured by accident and tragedy, will come forth with the bloom of eternal health.

The living followers of Christ, whether tormented by various physical ills or blessed with normal health, will feel a surging charge of new life in every fiber of their being. United with their loved ones from whom they have been separated by death or distance, and seeing their Redeemer face to face, the saved of all ages shall meet to part no more, when Christ comes back to earth again.

This is the glorious event foreshadowed in the lines of Tennyson:

“One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.”

THE BOOK AND THE MAN

The Bible is the word of God written by man. Christ is the Son of God born of woman. The Bible is thus divine and human. Jesus is also divine and human—the Son of God and the Son of man. The central figure of this divine and human Book and the divine and human Christ. His first coming was forecast by prophets and heralded by that prophet of prophets, John the Baptist. His Second Coming was prophesied by Christ Himself, and “by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:21.

The first coming of Christ is like the planting, seed-sowing time. The Second Coming is like the harvest. The first coming brought the cross. The Second Coming brings the crown. It is the glad harvest time, the happy wedding day, the magnificent coronation hour, an event of splendor the like of which the universe has never witnessed. Little wonder that Paul wrote, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Titus 2:13.

“That morning everlasting, that day free from tears
Is swiftly approaching as on roll the years;
The wheat, rudely scattered by sin’s cruel blast,
Then hasten to gather ever autumn be past.”

-F. E. BELDEN

“He will gather the wheat in His garner,
But the chaff will He scatter away;
Then how shall we stand in the judgment
Of the great resurrection day!”

HARRIET B. MC NEEVER

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The answer to that heart-searching question is ever the same. We may wear the crown of everlasting life then if we surrender in simple faith to the Christ of the cross now. This surrender includes the taking up of our cross and following Him daily in loving service and in advancing light.

To the rich young man Jesus said, "Go sell, and give, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me!" But the young man was sad at the saying. His answer was No. A religious leader said to Jesus, "I will follow You anywhere." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." When the man heard that he changed his mind. Another disciple said, I will follow Thee, but I must stay with my father until he dies. After that I will go." Said Jesus, "Let the dead bury their dead." He knew that the man was only making an excuse for not taking up his cross.

When Christ called Peter and Andrew from their fishing, "they straightway left their nets, and followed him." Matthew 4:20. When He called James and John from their fishing smack, "they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." Verse 22. Seeing Matthew sitting at the tax-collection booth, He said to him, "Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Matthew 9:9.

When Peter "said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have therefore?" Jesus replied that they would have everlasting life, and sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:27-29). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." 2 Timothy 2:12.

"I will follow Thee, my Savior,
Thou did shed Thy blood for me;
And though all men should forsake Thee,
By Thy grace I'll follow you."
J. LAWSON

24. Christ's Ten Signs of His Second Coming

"THIS is the thing that puzzles me," said one man: "Christ foretold His second advent and counseled His followers to be ready. His disciples preached of His return. Today thousands of voices unite in giving the message. Yet nearly two thousand years have passed, and He is not here. Might not two thousand more years go by and He not come? Even ten thousand years? What can we actually know about the matter, if anything?"

This is a fair question. For an answer we turn to the testimony of Christ, who declared, I will come again." John 14:1 What did He say regarding the signs of His return?

A few days before Calvary, Jesus made a dire pronouncement. To the Jews He said "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!" Matthew 23:38. Immediately following are these significant words: "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matthew 24:1-3.

Let us bear in mind the picture. Jesus here forecast the utter desolation of Jerusalem, deserted by God and destroyed by man. The stunned disciples could not conceive of such a thing except in connection with Christ's glorious kingdom and the end of the world, or age, as it really means.

In answer to His disciples' questions, the Lord drew aside the curtain and revealed to them the major events that would precede His final return to earth.

Jesus therefore proceeded to give to His disciples ten great signs. Some of these signs relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place forty years later in AD 70. Some of the signs refer to His Second Coming. Some are applicable to both-most of them, in fact. We shall here consider ten specific signs that were to be seen in the period of the last days, just before the Second Coming of our blessed Lord. Not one or two signs, but ten of them-signs given, not by Peter and Paul, or James and John, but by Jesus Himself, the Son of God.