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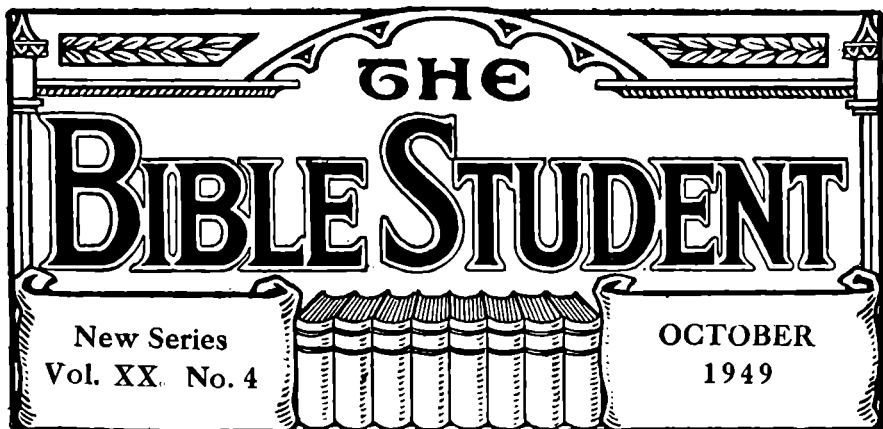
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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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*Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD*

# THE SECOND ADVENT

BY W. GRAHAM SCROGGIE, D.D.

## I. The Fact of Christ's Coming

That all revealed truth is important, one need not stop to prove; but perhaps it would be well to remind ourselves occasionally that revealed truth is not all of *equal* importance. Truth may be regarded as an imposing and beautiful structure, firmly founded, finely erected, and perfectly finished, and although nothing could be taken from it without marring its completeness, we must distinguish, nevertheless, between its stones for *beauty* and its stones for *basis*, and we shall appreciate its beauty the more we realize the strength of the foundations.

Of these base-blocks of revealed truth may be named the Eternity and Supremacy of God; the Deity of the Lord Jesus; the Depravity of Man by Nature; the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ and its perpetual efficacy; Justification by faith on the ground of Sovereign Grace; the Identification of Christ and His People; and the Second Coming of our Lord.

Some, indeed, have regarded this last as a subject highly debatable, or, at best, as belonging to the things of minor importance. We share neither of these views, but regard the truth about our Lord's Return as essential to, and necessitated by all those great truths which have reference to man's redemption. Christ's First Coming was necessary in order to the Incarnation, for which the Old Testament dispensation was a *preparation*; and his Second Coming is rendered necessary in order to the fulfilment of many prophecies concerning both that and this dispensation. The hope of Israel of old was in a coming Messiah; and the hope of the Church to-day is in a coming Saviour.

The two Advents of our Lord are the dividing facts of three dispensations, the Mosaic, the Christian and the Messianic, the Christian dispensation being enclosed between the first and second Advents. This fact finds singularly full expression in four verses in the Epistle to the Romans, as follows:—

### I. CHRIST'S FIRST ADVENT.

#### 1. HIS INCARNATION (1:3).

"God's Son, made of the seed of David according to the flesh".

#### 2. HIS CRUCIFIXION (8:34).

"Christ Who died".

3. HIS RESURRECTION (7:34)  
"Yea, rather, Who is risen again".
4. HIS ASCENSION (8:34).  
"Who is even at the right hand of God".

## II. THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

5. HIS INTERCESSION (8:34).  
"Who also maketh intercession for us".

## III. CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT.

6. HIS MANIFESTATION (13:11, 12).  
"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed;  
the day is at hand".

From this comprehensive statement it will be seen that the two Advents are the foci around which all revelation revolves; surely, then, it must be one of the subjects of prime importance in order to a right understanding of the Word of God. Our object in this brief study is to outline what we believe to be the teaching of Scripture on this important subject, and to do so, as far as possible, in freedom from controversy.

We cannot but deplore the spirit in which, too often, this most blessed theme has been discussed, a spirit wholly alien to the truth under consideration, and which can only serve to blind one to its real significance and value. All intelligent students of the Word agree, surely, upon the *fact* that Christ is to come again. The teaching that He is "*always* coming", that every fresh unveiling of Himself to the soul is a "*new*" coming, can by no process of tortuous exegesis be regarded as the meaning of scores of passages which declare that He is personally and visibly coming again. It is to be feared that many who do not like the thought of Christ's return, are only too willing to believe that these passages are not to be interpreted literally, but spiritually. But even among those who accept the fact as literal, the subject is too often approached in a cold and critical spirit instead of in love and obedience. Let us ask of Him of Whom we speak, a right spirit for a right understanding of the truth. "Whoever reads these writings, wherein he is equally convinced, let him go on with me; wherein he equally hesitates, let him investigate with me; wherein he finds himself in error, let him return to me; wherein he finds me in error, let him call me back to him; so let us go on together in the way of charity, pressing on towards Him of whom it is said 'Seek ye His face evermore'." These wise words of Augustine should help us in our present endeavour.

The fact of Christ's second Advent is given great prominence in Holy Scripture. A variety of words are used to set forth this truth in one or other of its many aspects. It is surprising also, in view of the prevalent neglect of this subject to find how often it is referred to in the New Testament. It has been said that there are not less than *three hundred and twenty* direct statements concerning it, or, on an average, one in every twenty-five verses. The present writer can answer for at least two hundred of these.

We observe first of all, that,

## I. CHRIST'S COMING IS DECLARED.

On this point the testimony is ample, and should be conclusive. It will suffice to select and classify a few of these passages.

### (i) *The testimony of Christ Himself.*

"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 come again* and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3).

There is some ground for regarding this passage as referring to a coming that is progressive, the tense being present, and not future. This coming was begun at our Lord's resurrection, is carried on from the Day of Pentecost throughout the spiritual life of His people, will be further advanced when each by death is fetched away to be with Him, and will be fully completed by His return in glory when we shall be for ever with Him in the perfected resurrection state (John 14:18, 23; Acts 2:1-4; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 4:17.) What is quite clear is that the passage includes the *future* personal coming of Christ, and any exposition of it which excludes that is faulty.

### (ii) *The testimony of Angels.*

"And while they (the disciples) looked steadfastly towards heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken from you into heaven *shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*'" (Acts 1:10, 11).

If words mean anything at all, this passage is an angelic declaration that the Lord who had just ascended bodily and visibly from the earth to heaven, was, in due time, to *descend*

*bodily and visibly from heaven to earth.* For those who assume the integrity of the narrative, there is no room whatever left for doubt. Lest it be suggested that another person is referred to, it says, "this same Jesus:" Lest it be denied that he really left the earth, it says, "Who is taken from you into heaven:" Lest it be imagined that the coming predicted was to be progressive, it says, He shall come as He went; and He went suddenly: Lest it be concluded that His return would be spiritual and invisible, it says, "Shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen Him go." How did he go? Bodily and visibly. Then that is how He will come. No declaration could be more emphatic or explicit. Let us think of these angels, in obedience to the Divine command, leaving heaven on such an occasion to comfort those sorrowing disciples. Their comfort was no mockery, but an unveiling of that great Event which shall mark the end of the Age.

(iii) *The testimony of the Holy Spirit.*

"For this we say unto you *by the Word of the Lord*, that we who are alive and remain unto the *coming of the Lord*, shall not prevent (go before) them who are asleep. 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 who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds *to meet in the Lord in the air*, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

This declaration is scarcely less explicit than the former ones. The distinctive feature of it is, that it tells of a coming to *the air*, whereas the former passage tells of a coming to *the earth*. You will bear in mind that this is the *first* of the Epistles of St. Paul, and that, therefore, in the passage before us we have the first detailed statement in the New Testament of this subject. The Apostle declares it to be "the word of the Lord"; that is, he received a direct and special revelation from the Lord on this subject to meet the need which had arisen in the Thessalonian Church. This most important passage we shall have occasion to refer to again later on.

(iv) *The Testimony of the Church.*

By this we mean that all the Apostles taught, and the early Church believed, that Christ was to come again. We might cite as examples,

## (a) The teaching of JAMES.\*

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts *for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:7, 8).

## (b) The teaching of JUDE.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, '*Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment upon all . . .*'" (Jude 14).

Those who believe that the writers of the New Testament were inspired of God will not have any difficulty in accepting this last statement because of the historical and critical questions involved. Whether this is a quotation from the apocryphal "book of Enoch," or whether that book quotes from this epistle, or whether both quote from some ancient tradition, in no wise affects the fact that "Enoch the seventh from Adam" predicted the coming of the Lord, and that *that* prediction is here endorsed.

## (c) The teaching of PAUL.

This Apostle, when writing his first Epistle to Thessalonica, bore witness to the whole-heartedness with which his converts there had embraced the Gospel. He says:—

"Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and *to wait for His Son from Heaven*, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come" (1:9, 10).

It is well worth observing the ground that is covered in this passage. (1) Looking *back*, they remember that "they turned to God"; (2) *looking out*, they apprehend life as for them an opportunity "to serve God"; and (3) *looking on*, they await and expect God's Son, their Saviour, to come again. The Church of God, these many centuries, has lost immeasurably in joy and power through failing to believe that her goal was not death but Christ's Return, and that hers should be an attitude of daily expectation of that event. There are some who tell us that the Apostle Paul changed his ideas on this subject towards the end

\* James (vs. 7-8) was written *before* the passage in I. Thessalonians, but it gives no details.

of his life, and that he was mistaken in the beginning in thinking that Christ was coming soon. Such a suggestion is not borne out by the writings of that Apostle, who, in his last Epistle but one, said:—

“The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present age, *looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” (Titus 2:11-13).

And in his very last Epistle he said:—

“There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not only to me, but also to *all them that have loved his appearing.*” (2 Tim. 4:8).

There is no need to show that the “appearing” referred to is future, and not past. No, the Apostle was not mistaken, and if we follow him we shall not be mistaken in believing that our Lord is coming again, and may come at any moment. We see then, that the uniform expectation and testimony of the early Church was to the personal return of the Lord Jesus; and there can be no reasonable doubt that much of their inspiration to achieve and to endure in those first years was derived from this conviction. The fact that, very early, this truth dropped out of the teaching and thinking of God’s people, in no way invalidates the truth; and there are at the present time most encouraging signs that this long-lost treasure is being recovered.

This fourfold testimony makes nothing further necessary in the way of proof that Christ is coming again, and yet it is worth observing that in twenty-four of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament witness is borne to this truth, and in one of the remaining three (2 John) there is a reference to “rewards” which hints at the Coming. The two books in which there is no reference are Philemon and 3 John.

[In January B.S.—“The Doctrine of Christ’s Coming.”]