

DOCTRINE

THE COMING OF THE LORD

LESSON #17

Acts 1:11 – “Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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.”

The return of the Lord is that promise to the Church that is the great consummation of all she has labored for and looked forward to for all these nearly two thousand years. The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead is the firstfruits of the resurrection and proof that the Church will also be raised. This hope affects our daily lives unto holiness and singleness of heart. The whole creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God which will occur at His coming. The Old Testament also agrees with this promise. Job 19:25 – “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, 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.”

The Scripture also says – Matt. 16:27 – “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.”

I Thess. 4:13-18. What comfort and hope these Scriptures give to us. This coming is a definite event, not a process. At a given point in time, known only to God, Jesus will come and catch away (rapture) the overcomers and they will be forever with the Lord.

OUR ATTITUDE IN VIEW OF JESUS' SECOND COMING – Matt. 24:42. We are to watch because we do not know when the Lord will come. Because of the evil of our day, we are exhorted also to a holy manner of life. II Peter 3:11-14. Also, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” (I John 3:3)

The coming of the Lord is one of those subjects of Scripture that seems to be much disputed. Some believe Jesus is coming for the Church before the 7-year tribulation period. However, much of what we read and hear today asserts that Jesus will come for the Church at the end of the tribulation period, therefore saying that the Church will have to go through the 7-year tribulation.

It is our purpose here to say that neither of these approaches expresses the facts as the Scriptures indicate. Yet both of them do possess some facts that are Scriptural. We believe the Scriptures teach that the Lord is coming before the 7-year tribulation period to catch away the overcomers of the Church, with the balance of the Church being taken to heaven sometime later – during the first half of the tribulation. We also believe that Jesus is coming at the end of the tribulation to establish His kingdom on the earth.

Now let's look at some Scriptures that indicate Jesus will come and establish His kingdom on the earth and will rule there a thousand years. Zech. 14:1-8 shows the character of His rule and its effect on the region. Note vs. 4 – His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Vs. 9 through the end of chap. 14 show the character of His rule continued. Note vs. 9 – “And the LORD shall be King over all the earth...”

In Isa. 2:2 we read – “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.” This is in answer to the promise that the throne of David would be forever. In that day, Israel will be the leading nation and Jerusalem will be its capital, from where Jesus will rule.

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Joel 3:17 – “So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy...” Note also vs. 21 – “...for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.” One of our Lord’s first acts after the battle of Armageddon will be to judge the nations, according to Matt. 25:31-32. They will be judged according to their support of Israel.

In summary, it appears our Lord will come to put an end to the battle of Armageddon by the destruction of the opposing armies, then judge the nations and establish His kingdom. This kingdom will fill the whole earth. Its blessings will be great and marvelous beyond the wildest dreams of man.

Now let’s look at the manner of character of this coming at the end of the tribulation. In Rev. 1:7, we read that “...every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him...” What a statement this is, and what realization by men when they recognize the One Who died for them. Note: this coming is very visible and audible to both the Jewish nation and the Gentiles. See also Matt. 24:27-31 – “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.” These verses indicate clearly that this coming is at the end of the tribulation and is very visible.

Further note Rev. 19:11-16. This expression is showing the vastness, the power, the visibility of His coming to establish His kingdom on the earth.

In Rev. 13:3-7, we read that the anti-Christ will rule forty-two months. This time limit is established in numerous other references also. Therefore the people living on the earth at that time, knowing when the anti-Christ came into full power, and knowing that it will be Jesus Christ Who will do battle with and bring an end to the anti-Christ, will be able to predict precisely when Jesus will come to set up His kingdom. However, all who are familiar with Scriptures know that “...of that day and hour knoweth no man...” (Matt. 24:36) of Jesus’ coming for the Church. This then begins to establish that there must be another coming spoken of in the Scriptures.

Let’s look at a few Scriptures that talk about this “other” coming. I Thess. 4:13-18. Vs. 15 uses the word “prevent,” which means “go before.” Vs. 16 says the dead in Christ shall “rise” first. Vs. 17 tells us that those who 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.” The phrase “caught up” means “to snatch away, to carry off, suddenly and by force.” Does this sound as if we were going to be here on the earth waiting for Jesus to come to set up a kingdom? Obviously not. On the contrary, the Church is a heavenly people and will be caught away to meet our Lord in the air. Now it is true that not all the Church will be taken at this same time. Some will go through the first part of the tribulation. We will discuss more on this at a later date.

In Acts 1:6-11 the disciples were looking for the coming kingdom. They were not aware of the approximately 2,000 years of the intervening Church Age, although Jesus alluded to it many times. Vs. 9 uses the phrase “taken up” of Jesus. This means “to raise up, to exalt self, to lift up.” Vs. 11 teaches us that “...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.” What is this manner?

- (1) Quietly – very little noise, no lightning, no wailing, no putting down of an enemy.
- (2) Low visibility – only a few chosen men saw this occasion. So will it be when Jesus comes for His overcomers. Only a few will be aware of it.

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(3) With a cloud – this is the way He will come as stated in I Thess. 4.

Matt. 24:32-42 – Vs. 27-31 of this chapter are talking of the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom. Vs. 32-42 are giving information about the coming of the Lord before the 7-year tribulation period begins. Vs. 36 says, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man...” Remember we established earlier how the precise time of His coming to set up His kingdom can be known. Vs. 38 expresses a condition that certainly cannot be going on during the tribulation. During that time, there will be so much trouble, heartache, devastation, national upheaval, etc., that people will not be wanting to make merry, or be marrying, or in general having fun. This indicates the coming of the Lord for His overcomers will be secretive. Vs. 40 and 41 show that one will be taken and one left. This again is not a description of the establishing of a kingdom, but a catching away to another place, i.e. heaven.

I Thess. 5:1-9 – The key words in this reference are “watch” and don’t be asleep. Asleep indicates some will be caught unawares by His coming. This would not be possible at His coming to establish His kingdom, because at that time “...every eye shall see Him...” (Rev. 1:7). Vs. 9 says we are not appointed to wrath. Those who are expecting to go through the tribulation are going to see wrath. See Rev. 3:10 – the Philadelphia church has the promise of being kept from the hour of temptation.

John 14:1-6 – Vs. 2 says, “...I go to prepare a place for you.” We know that Jesus went to heaven, so apparently the place of preparation is in heaven. Vs. 3 teaches us that we will be received unto Him. Jesus told Thomas in vs. 4 that he knew the way, then proceeded to say that He, Jesus, was the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

RECAP – What has traditionally been called the Second Coming of Christ is before the 7-year period of tribulation. What has been called the coming of the Lord to establish His kingdom is at the end of the tribulation. One is quiet, having to do with only a few overcomers who are watching for His coming. The other is highly visible and audible. One is secretive, no man knowing the day or hour. The other is well known and will be seen by all the world. For the one, He doesn’t come to the earth, but catches His people away to be with Him. The other, He not only comes to the earth, but remains for a thousand years.

EXHORTATION – Let us look for Jesus to come at any moment, being ready, and watching. Any teaching that puts Jesus’ coming off, even for seven years, is deceitful, causing us to have our minds on preparing for the tribulation, or many other things rather than simply to “...love His appearing.” (II Tim 4:8). Therefore watch, for you know not when your Master comes. Let us not sleep as do others. Some people are watching and willing suffer with Him, therefore, and will reign with Him. II Tim 2:12.

1. Give some Scriptures, both Old Testament and New Testament, expressing the hope of the coming of the Lord.
2. For what is the whole creation waiting?
3. When will the Christian be rewarded?
4. What is our attitude to be in view of His coming?
5. What will a realization of the coming of the Lord cause us to become? I John 3:2-3.
6. Why do you think the time of the coming of the Lord is often disputed?

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7. What, in your view, is the confusion about the coming of the Lord?
8. How only will we be able to find answers for this confusion?
9. What does Zech. 14 help to establish?
10. Why is this important?
11. What is expressed by "...the mountain of the LORD'S house..." in Isa. 2:2?
12. Who will be the leading nation during the Kingdom Age?
13. What will be the characteristic of this Kingdom? Joel 3:17
14. Who will end and win the battle of Armageddon?
15. According to what will the nations be judged?
16. What is the character of Jesus' coming as found in Rev. 1:7?
17. Show the character of Jesus' coming from Matt. 24:27-31.
18. From these two references, which coming is expressed, and when is it?
19. Tell what is happening in Rev. 19:11-16.
20. What important conclusion can be arrived at from the information in Rev. 13:3-7?
21. Which coming is seen in I Thess. 4:13-18?
22. What is the character of this coming?
23. When is this coming?
24. Of what were the disciples unaware in Acts 1:6-11?
25. What statement is so important in this reference?
26. What character of coming is expressed here?
27. In Matt. 24:27-42, we see two comings. Which one is seen in vs. 27-31?
28. Which is seen in vs. 32-42?
29. What condition is seen in vs. 38? Which coming does it precede?
30. Give some points of differences between these two comings.
31. In I Thess. 5:1-9, what is indicated by the word "sleep?"
32. What promise is in Rev. 3:10?
33. In your own words, express the differences you see in the two comings of Christ.
34. What is wrong with any teaching that puts off the coming of the Lord?