

Major Bible Themes

BY

LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER

1871-1952

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ISBN: 0-310-22390-3

CHAPTER XII

GOD THE SON: HIS COMING WITH HIS SAINTS

Since the theme of this chapter is so commonly confused with that of the preceding one, it is important that the two be studied together in order that the contrasts which appear at almost every point may be discerned. The title of this, as of the previous chapter, is based on one aspect of truth within the whole doctrine which this chapter is supposed to cover. The doctrine to be considered contemplates all that enters into the world-transforming event of the Second Coming of Christ, while the fact that the saints will return to this earth with Him when He comes is, comparatively, a limited portion of the whole revelation.

I. CERTAIN VITAL FACTS ARE TO BE NOTED IN CONNECTION WITH THIS DOCTRINE:

1. The Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ, will return to this earth (Zech. 14:4), personally (Rev. 19:11-16; Matt. 25:31), and on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7). It should not be difficult to believe the testimony of these Scriptures, since God has promised it and

since He who went on the clouds of heaven has already spent forty days on the earth in His glorified, resurrection body.

2. The general theme concerning the return of Christ has the unique distinction of being the first prophecy uttered by man (Jude 1:14, 15) and the last message from the ascended Christ as well as being the last word of the Bible (Rev. 22:20, 21).

3. Likewise, the theme of the Second Coming of Christ is unique because of the fact that it occupies a larger part of the text of the Scriptures than any other doctrine, and it is the outstanding theme of prophecy in both the Old and New Testaments. In fact all other prophecy largely contributes to the one great end of the complete setting forth of this crowning event -- the Second Coming of Christ.

II. THE COMING OF CHRIST PRODUCES FAR-REACHING EFFECTS:

1. The nation Israel, God's chosen earthly people, to whom at least five-sixths of the Bible is addressed and with whom the great covenants are made (Rom. 9:4, 5) -- which covenants secure to that nation a land, a nation, a throne, a King, and a kingdom -- are now scattered throughout all the nations of the earth (Deut. 4:26-28; 28:63-68; Jer. 16:13), and are to remain scattered until they are gathered into their own land (Deut. 30:3-6; Isa. 11:11, 12; 14:1-3; 60:1-22; Jer. 23:6-8; 32:37-44; 33:7-9; Ezk. 37:21-25; Micah 4:6-8) under the reign of Messiah at His return. Though every covenant with His earthly people was in full force when Christ came the first time, and had been for hundreds of years, not a semblance of their fulfillment was experienced at that time; but the Scriptures declare that all these covenants will be fulfilled when He comes the second time. These covenants are of endless duration and are as secure as the faithfulness of God who has sworn with an oath concerning them. The nation will possess their land at the coming of their King, and He will sit on David's throne (Luke 1:31-33). The Deliverer coming out of Zion shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26, 27. See, also, Ezk. 37:1-14). The return of Christ to the earth and its blessing to the nation Israel is the great burden of Old Testament prophecy.

2. The redeemed ones of this age -- the Church which is His body -- are seen coming with Christ when He comes again (Rev. 19:7-16; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 1:14). The Church is the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7; 21:9) and as such will have right and title with Him as consort in His reign (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6; 22:5). Until the Church is taken to meet the Lord, she is His espoused awaiting her wedding day; her marriage will be in Heaven, and she will return with Him after the wedding (Luke 12:36).

3. The nations of the earth will be brought into judgment when Christ comes and when He sits on the "throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31-46. Note, also, the "Smiting Stone" of Dan. 2:31-45). Three classes are in view at the judgment of the nations -- the sheep, the goats, and "my brethren." Though the sheep and the brethren are both under divine favor, it must be observed that they are not the same. The sheep are to enter the kingdom on the ground of their treatment of the brethren. So also, the goats are to be rejected on the same basis. The Church is not in view. This judgment occurs after the Church has been received into Heaven, and after the "Great Tribulation" (Matt. 24:21) when Israel -- "my brethren" -- will have experienced her supreme suffering at the hands of the nations (Deut. 4:29, 30; Psa. 2:5; Jer. 30:4-7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:9-28; 2 Thess. 2:8-12; Rev. 3:10; 7:13, 14; 11:1 to 19:6). This judgment will determine the

nations which are to enter the kingdom of Messiah on the earth. Again, this judgment should be distinguished from that of "The Great White Throne" which follows a thousand years later, and after the kingdom rule of Christ in the earth.

4. All creation will be restored to its Edenic glory when Christ returns (Rom. 8:19-23).

5. Satan will be bound and confined to the abyss for a thousand years when Christ returns (Rev. 20:1-3).

III. TWO EVENTS DISTINGUISHED

The two events -- Christ's coming for His saints and his coming with His saints may be distinguished thus (for brevity, the first event will be indicated by a, and the second event by b):

(a) "Our gathering together unto him"; (b) "The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:1).

(a) He comes as the "Morning Star" (Rev. 2:28; 22:16; 2 Pet. 1:19); (b) as "The Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. 4:2).

(a) The "Day of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16); (b) "The Day of the Lord" (2 Pet. 3:10).

(a) A signless event; (b) its approach to be observed (1 Thess. 5:4; Heb. 10:25).

(a) A timeless event -- at any moment; (b) fulfillment of prophecy to precede it (2 Thess. 2:2, 3; note, "Day of Christ" should be "Day of the Lord" in verse 2).

(a) No reference to evil; (b) evil ended, Satan judged, the Man of Sin destroyed.

(a) Israel unchanged; (b) all her covenants fulfilled.

(a) The Church removed from the earth; (b) returning with Christ.

(a) The Gentile nations unchanged; (b) judged.

(a) Creation unchanged; (b) delivered from the bondage of corruption.

(a) A "mystery" not before revealed; (b) seen throughout the Old and New Testaments.

(a) Hope centered in Christ -- "the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5); (b) "the kingdom is at hand" (Matt. 24:14).

(a) Christ appears as Bridegroom, Lord, and Head to the Church; (b) He appears as King, Messiah, and Immanuel to Israel.

(a) His coming unseen by the world; (b) coming in power and great glory.

(a) Christians are judged as to rewards; (b) nations judged as to the kingdom.

Important Scripture: (a) John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20, 21; 2 Corinthians 5:10. (b) Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Psalm 72. Note all the prophets; Matthew 25:1-44; Acts 1:11; 15:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Peter 2:1 to 3:18; Revelation 19:11 to 20:6.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the manner in which, according to prophecy, Christ will return to this earth.
2. What length of time has He already been here in His glorified human body?
3. What is the first prophecy uttered by man?
4. What is the last prophecy from the lips of Christ and the last word of the Bible?
5. What theme of prophecy occupies more of the text of the Scriptures than any other?
6. a. With what nation are the great covenants of the Scriptures made?
 - b. What do these covenants secure?
 - c. When are these covenants to be fulfilled?
7. What is the greatest burden of Old Testament prophecy?
8. a. What position does the Church occupy in the second coming of Christ?
 - b. What service is she appointed to render after His return?
9. a. What judgment awaits the nations at the coming of Christ?
 - b. What is the contrast between this judgment and that of the Great White Throne?
10. What Scripture announces the deliverance of creation at the second coming of Christ?
11. What changes are in store for Satan at the second coming of Christ?
12. Indicate fourteen contrasts between the coming of Christ for, and the coming of Christ with, His saints.
13. Do you recognize anything in common between these two events?
14. Is the coming of Christ for His saints mentioned in the Old Testament?