



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Can you please tell us something about the Second Coming of Christ? We do not seem to get much teaching on this subject in our Church."

That Jesus is coming again cannot be doubted by anyone who studies God's word. When Paul wrote to the Church at Thessalonica he said, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1 Thess. 3:12,13). John also makes a call to continuance in the Christian walk when he says, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). This grand and glorious time has been looked for by the saints throughout the ages, and we today also long for that day, and if the Lord should tairy, so will the saints in future days. When Jesus ascended from Mount Olivet those who were there looked stedfastly up to heaven as they saw Him go. The two in white apparel confirmed the longing hopes of those disciples who watched their Master go, "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" (Acts 1:10,11).

The Day of the Lord

This phrase was in general use in the Old Testament and is used by Amos pertaining to the judgment on the nation of Israel, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord: to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him; or went into a house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it". (Amos

5:18-20). Even in those early days the realisation of 'the day of the Lord' indicated doom for those who had not conformed to the will of God, and this ought to be a salutary lesson for those today who despise God and heed not His counsels.

Isaiah also confirms the terrible nature of 'the day of the Lord' against those who are lofty and puffed up and do not humble themselves before God (read Isaiah 2:10-22). He also illustrates quite clearly the insignificance of man when contrasted with the Almighty God. Similarly, Ezekiel castigates the prophets of Israel for their defection and lack of attention to God's will (Ezek. 13:5ff).

In the N.T. 'the day of the Lord' is the second coming of Christ. There are equivalent references which are inter-changeable and mean the same thing, e.g., 'the day of God' (2 Peter 3:12); 'the day of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:6); 'the day of the Lord Jesus' (1 Cor. 5:5); 'the day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:8); it may also be referred to quite simply as 'that day' (2 Thess. 1:10); 'the last day' (John 6:39ff); or 'the great day' (Jude 6). Whatever expression is used it seems that the N.T. writers viewed the event as being of great importance, and we can understand that it would be the corner-stone of their great expectations.

Related Events

There are events recorded in the Bible which are inevitably related to the second coming of Jesus. Matthew records that the disciples asked Jesus to declare unto them the parable of the tares and the field. Jesus explained that the field was the world, the good seed were the children of the Kingdom, and the tares were the ones who had been sowed by Satan; the harvest was the end of the world. Jesus then said, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. 13:41). So we can say that accompanying Jesus will be "holy angels", indeed, Matt. 25:31 makes this clear, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory". It would appear that the "holy ones" are the saints as mentioned in 1 Thess. 3:13, "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints". This coming of Jesus with His saints will not be, as pre-millennialists teach, with "raptured Christians" who will reign with Him on earth, indeed, the so-called "rapture passage" (1 Thess. 4:14-17) does not speak of *two* comings of Jesus, nor that the Lord will come to *the earth*. Paul simply says, "So shall we *ever* be with the Lord."

All the dead will be raised. An examination of 1 Thess. 4:16 and 1 Cor. 15 will indicate that perhaps Christians only are mentioned, "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." (1 Thess. 4:16). John in his gospel seems to indicate that *all* who are in the graves shall come forth, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and, they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28,29). Furthermore, according to John, Jesus has a specific promise to those who obey Him, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40. See also vv 44,54).

There will be a judgment. (Read Matt. 25:31-46). These words of Jesus indicate that mind-stopping event when all nations will be gathered before the throne of His glory. It is then that the final, cataclysmic separation will take place. Oh, what an awful day that will be for those on the left-hand side! To be led

away from the Lord and to *ever be with Satan*. We say to ourselves, "Well, surely, no sane person would willingly choose that", but the tragedy is, of course, that many millions of people are. Jesus seems to indicate that this will occur on the last day, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). These words of the Lord illustrate how serious it is for those who speak and teach His words to others. We *must* 'get it right.'

The world will be destroyed. It is Peter who tells us about this in his second letter. (Read 2 Peter 3:1-13). In verse 10 Peter tells us that the destruction will take place on the "day of the Lord", or "the last day"; "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The Christian is consoled by the assertion that there will be "new heavens" and "a new earth" wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Further Considerations

The coming of the Lord will be sudden. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36ff. See also Matt. 25:1-12; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 2 Pet. 3:1-10). There is certainly no attempt made to hide the second coming of the Lord so far as the Bible is concerned, but what *is* stressed is the *unexpected* nature of His return. The Christian knows that his Lord *will* return; he doesn't know when that will be so he must always be watchful. The message of the two in white raiment on Mount Olivet was that the disciple should not be constantly looking up to heaven, but that he should be busy doing his Master's work and so preparing himself for "that day".

There can also be little doubt that the first Christians expected the return of the Lord *in their lifetime*. Paul told the saints at Corinth that they should be enriched in Christ, "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1:7). Paul also exhorted the saints at Philippi, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5). He also said to Titus, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). The imminence of the Lord's return does not necessarily mean that it must take place *immediately*; the word also means 'threatening to occur'; 'impending'; so we can say that the Lord's return is *always* threatening to take place, but the important point is that its final occurrence is *certain*. The appreciation of this idea tells us that the Lord can come at *any* time, and I have found nothing in the Bible which would serve to indicate what the *precise* time would be.

What can we then say to those who claim to fix the date of the Lord's return from Biblical prophecy? Well, I believe that we have to say that the concept of "the thief in the night" does away with *all* date-fixing. What the sinner needs to do immediately is to make his peace with God through obedience to Christ Jesus, His Son. What the Christian needs to do is to carry on with his Master's work while He yet tarries. The Lord is coming again; that is certain. If we remain faithful we shall be with Him at 'that day'; that is certain. If people choose to ignore Him while they live here on earth, they will be banished from His presence on 'that day'; that is certain. We know, each one of us what we have to do. Let us arise quickly and do it.

(All questions please, to, Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, Wigan, Lancs)