

THE WORLD CRISIS AND THE COMING CHRIST@

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2 Tim. 3:1; Lk. 21:25-28

Centuries have come and gone since a choir of angels sang above the hills of Bethlehem. Nearly two millennia have passed since the shepherds listened to the happy oratorio, **Peace on earth, good will toward men.** The world has gone through many transformations. The pages of history are filled with the stories of the rise and fall of empires. The tragic tales of mankind's repeated failure to find some path to world peace other than that which God laid out in Christ, would fill a good-sized library.

And in this year of our Lord 1948, perhaps more so than in any other time in history, the bewitched and bothered people of the world are crying out for relief from the maddening maze into which sin has led us.

Once again we have discovered that the most inspired of man-made schemes are unable to withstand the cruel blows of circumstance. All that humanity has been able to build by way of dream castles for the future, has disintegrated into the dust of the earth.

As a result, bewildered by an ugly chain of events which has left us reeling from the impact of two world-shattering wars -- a devastating depression on the one hand and a spiraling inflation on the other, the peace for which those wars, and numerous so-called **police actions,** were waged slipping from our grasp like sand through clenched fists -- as a result of all this, we moderns are crying out in bewilderment as we walk the dark roads of disappointment and disillusionment,

Why?

Why must we meet with failure at every hand? Why must defeat rear its ugly head with every turn? Why is it not possible for people to live together in serenity, in brotherhood and peace? Why? And one persistent answer comes speeding from the heart of the eternal Word of the

eternal God. Why? Because ¶the wages of sin is death.¶ Death to the person who persists in disregarding the precepts of righteousness. Death to the nation who adopts as its philosophy, ¶We can get along without God.¶ Whether it be an individual soul or society as a whole -- a person or a nation -- the consequences are the same, ¶the wages of sin is death.¶

Do you need any proof of that? Then listen to the voice of history which solemnly calls the roll of nation after nation, empire after empire, potentate after potentate, who, though once great, is now dead and forgotten.

Nations, which in generations past strode across the face of the earth -- beating on their puny chests and bragging, ¶We can get along without God.¶ -- have lived just long enough to learn they could not get along without God. They could not improve upon His will and His way. And any, or all who tried, have proved the truth of God's stern warning, ¶the wages of sin is death.¶

Tonight we are burdened with concern for our country. America is not free from the dark spirit of the passing years. Never in the history of our nation have we seen crime and sin on a scale like this. At times it seems as if Americans have lost even ¶the form of Godliness¶ as evil has gone on a wild, uncontrollable rampage.

The philosophies of ¶everybody's doing it¶ and ¶let yourself go¶ are dominating the life of Americans from coast to coast. As a result, the world's blackout is almost complete, and we somehow sense that the ¶perilous times¶ described in our text are almost here.

But we who love the Lord, and who read in the inspired pages of this blessed Book the prophetic description of the last days, find our hearts beating with anticipation as we work and watch and wait for Christ's appearing. The only lasting solution to the problems of the world lies in his coming. The only real answer to the question billions of hearts are asking, will be found when the finger of God pulls back the curtain of the blue, and Jesus Christ comes sweeping down the stairway of the stars.

Our hope is not in a change of political systems. Our hope is not to be found in a transformation of national economies. Our hope is not rooted in any of the mad schemes people, in their folly, may devise. Our hope is in heaven, and in the fulfillment of the prophetic promise found in Acts 1:11, ¶This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner as you have seen him go . . . ¶

The certainty of his coming is more than a dream. More than speculation. More than mere wishful thinking. The certainty of his coming is based upon the solid ground of God's written and living word. For both the Lord Jesus himself (God's living Word), and the Bible (God's written word), assert and affirm the promise of Christ's second coming. Look first of all at --

The Clear Claim of the Living Word of God -- Jesus.

The reason I can say with absolute confidence Jesus is coming again is because Jesus said so himself! Over and over, in various and sundry ways, Jesus -- the living Word of God -- said, ¶I will come again.¶

Matthew

In the gospel of Matthew, two entire chapters, 24 and 25, commonly called Christ's Olivet discourse, are devoted to this subject. Jesus delivered this message just prior to his death. In it he gives this personal description of his second coming.

Mt. 24:29-31 --¶Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and 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. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.¶

In that same book -- the gospel of St. Matthew -- we have these other words of Jesus,

¶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@ (Mt. 16:27).

Mark

The gospel of Mark picks up the theme, repeating much of the Olivet discourse, providing further details of Christ=s description of that which will come to pass immediately before his coming.

Mark concludes with these words of our Lord --

¶But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, watch@ (Mk. 13:32-37).

Luke

In the gospel of Luke we find additional words from the lips of Jesus regarding his regal return. I read them earlier, as part of my text, but hear them again!

¶And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men=s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. @ (Lk. 21:25-28).

John

And then, there are those beloved and familiar words of Jesus recorded in the gospel of John.

¶Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many (rooms); 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 will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (Jn 14:1-3).

Again and again, our Lord claimed in calm, clear, unequivocal language that he was coming again. Can we reject what Jesus, himself, so strongly stated? No!

The Clear Claim of the Written Word of God -- The Bible

But the certainty of his coming does not rest solely upon the claims of Jesus, the living Word of God. It is supported by the clear teaching of the Bible, the written word of God. The New Testament asserts in no uncertain terms that Jesus is actually, visibly, and personally coming to earth again.

Acts

Acts 1:11

¶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. @

Phil 3:20-21

¶For 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 may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. @

Col. 3:4

¶When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. @

I Thess. 3:13

¶At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. @

Titus 2:13

¶Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.¶

Heb. 9:28b

¶And unto them that look for him shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation.¶

James 5:8

¶The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.¶

I Peter 5:4

¶When the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.¶

Jude 14b.

¶Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.¶

Rev. 1:7

¶Behold, he cometh with clouds: and every eye shall see him.¶

Our sure knowledge of things to come is based upon the infallible, written word of God, the Bible. The certainty of his coming, the guarantee or ground upon which our confidence rests, is in the combined teachings of God's living and written word. Jesus is coming again. Jesus clearly said it. The Bible plainly teaches it. And we unhesitatingly believe it!

The Implications of His Coming for the Saved and Unsaved.

What are the implications of all this?

For the creation.

For the creation itself, the second coming of Christ means that at long last the blissful harmony

which existed among all things at the beginning, will be restored. In speaking of that blessed hope the prophet Isaiah wrote, **¶A**nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore@ (Isa. 2:4).

¶Athe wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a littlechild shall lead them@ (Isa. 11:6).

¶Athe inhabitant shall not say, **¶I** am sick,= the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity@ (Isa. 33:24).

The prophet Habakkuk wrote, **¶A**the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.@ (Hab. 2:14).

And the apostle Paul, in a moment of high inspiration wrote, **¶A**for the (creation itself waits with eager longing) . . . because (the creation) itself will be delivered from (its) bondage to corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God@ (Rom. 8:19, 21).

Indeed, for the creation, the second coming of Jesus means harmony will, at last, be restored to the natural order.

Rev. 5:13

¶And I heard every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying, **¶B**lessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.=@

From the start to finish a common thread runs through scripture, what was meant to be in the beginning, will be in the end! God=s original intention shall be realized! **¶A**the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. @

Yes, the whole of creation awaits the second coming of Jesus, for it will mean the blissful harmony which existed in the garden and was disrupted by sin, will be restored.

For The Christian.

And what about the Christian? The child of God. The sinner saved by grace. What does the second coming of Jesus hold for us? In a sentence, it will mean the fulfillment of our fondest hopes and most cherished dreams.

The power of gravity will be broken. The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then, the living saints will go forth to meet him. When the graves have released their prey. When every child of God from every corner of the earth has been found, with not one of them left behind, then the body and soul, those old companions, will be reunited.

But, oh, what a difference there will be then, from existence as we know it now. For then, on the glad day of our Lord's returning, our sanctified minds, emotions and wills, made pure by the blood of the lamb, will be given indestructible bodies in which to dwell.

Sin, and death which is the wage of sin, will be known no more. Calvary will be crowned with a coronet of glory, and from our hearts will burst forth a jubilant hymn of praise to our wonderful redeemer. Praise God beloved, Jesus is coming again, and he's coming to receive his saints.

The Non-Christian.

But he is also coming to reject the lost. And I cannot conclude this sermon on our blessed hope, without asking each one of you, ¶Are you ready?@ That's the most urgent question of the age. For if you're not ready for Jesus to come, if you're not ready to die, then you're not ready to live. And if you're not ready to live, then you're just not ready.

Jesus wants you to be ready. That's why he came the first time. That's why he went to the cross. That's why he suffered the agonies of hell. That's why he allowed the Roman soldiers to buffet

and bruise his body. That's why he took your sin upon himself at Calvary. That's why God, the loving Father, loosed his wrath upon his beloved Son. That's why Jesus went through the tortures of the damned. Because he loves you, and wants to spend eternity with you, and he wants you to be ready when he comes.

A little girl had lost her mother. One day she said, ¶Daddy, where's Mommy?@ It was a question she asked often. A question which sent an arrow of anguish into her father's heart. It reminded him of his loneliness, and the little girl's loss. He turned to hide a tear that meandered down his cheek, and then, after wiping it away, he turned back and said, ¶Honey, a good man came and took Mummy away.¶

The little darling asked another question, not realizing in her childish innocence she was stabbing her daddy's heart with the dagger of death. ¶Daddy, is the good man going to bring Mummy back again?@ ¶No, darling, the good man is not going to bring Mommy back.¶ And then his face brightened, and he added, ¶But I heard a preacher say once that if we are ready when the good man comes, he'll take us where Mummy is. I wonder what he meant.¶

The next day he went out into the yard and found his little girl had gathered up all her play things and put them in a box. The tiny little doll house was swept and clean. The pieces of furniture were all in order. The child was sitting quietly in a rocking chair, holding her favorite dolly.

The father got down on his knees so he could look directly into his little girl's eyes. ¶Honey, why have you done all this?@ he asked. The little girl put her doll down, got out of her chair, climbed into her daddy's arms and said, ¶I don't know when the good man is coming, Daddy, but when he comes I'm going to be ready.¶

Beloved, listen to me! I don't know when Jesus is coming either! But I do know that when he comes I'm going to be ready. I urge you to also be ready, for no one knows the hour when Jesus will come again. But be sure of this, Jesus is coming. He may be coming soon. The question is,

are you ready to meet him? For while he shall come to receive his own, he shall also come to reject the lost.

If you're not ready, if you're not sure heaven will be your home, if you're not a Christian, there could be no better time than tonight to prepare for his coming. The way is simple.

First you must repent, for Jesus said, **¶**Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.**@**

Second, you must receive Jesus as your Savior, for the Bible says, **¶**As many as received him, to them gave God the power to be called his (children).**@**

So third, you can rejoice. Not only repent. Not only receive. But also rejoice. Rejoice together with all who know and love him, that Jesus is coming to receive his own.

My friend, the gate of mercy is still ajar. Right now, will you repent of your sin? Will you receive Jesus as your Savior? So you can rejoice? So you can go out of this service, singing with the saints of eternity,

¶Living He loved me.

Dying He saved me.

Buried He carried my sins far away.

Rising He justified,

Freely forever.

One day He's coming,

Oh, glorious day!**@**