



The Second Coming Of Christ

By George Müller of Bristol, March 1881

In the days of the apostles the disciples were comforted and encouraged by the prospect of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. An angel had said to them as they watched the Lord depart from the earth, "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 v 11). This, and not death, was the hope of the Church; and thus it ought to have remained up to His actual return. His coming should have continued to be the hope of the Church; but this alas! for centuries has not been the case.

In confessions of faith the truth that the Lord Jesus will come again may still have had a place; but practically to by far the greater number of His disciples it has been a *mere doctrinal statement* that has not been enjoyed, and which has had no influence upon their lives. The Lord, however, desired it should be otherwise. He intended that His Church should look for Him; that she should watch and wait for His return. Again and again, during His personal ministry, the Lord Jesus foretold this great event; and after His ascension the apostles referred continually to it.

Very many passages of Scripture might be quoted in proof of this assertion, but I will only mention the following; "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" (Matt 25 v 31). "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 will *come again* and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14 v 2-3). "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He *appear the second time*, without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9 v 27-28).

"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 (afterward) we which 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" (1 Thess. 4 v 16-17). These quotations suffice to prove that the second coming of the Lord Jesus means that He will return *in person*, and has no reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, nor to His manifesting Himself in an especial manner to the believer in the way of comfort, instruction, or help of any kind; nor has it reference to our death, when we, as believers, are taken to be with Him.

If, however, anyone should say, "Why lay such stress upon this; is not our going to Him when we die the same thing?" The reply is, "There is a vast difference between these two events."

(a) As *individuals* we shall at that time be brought only to a state of *partial* happiness; we shall have no glorified bodies *then*, but must await the hour when "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ... the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Nor when we fall asleep do we reign with Christ and sit with Him upon His throne; because He will not then be manifestly reigning. Blessed therefore though it is for the child of God, when he departs, "to be absent from the body and present with the Lord," it will be unspeakably *more* blessed still to enter upon that *fullness* of glory which us only at our Lord's return.

(b) Satan will not be bound until Jesus comes again; and for this reason, by the permission of God, he still has power here, both in the world and in the Church, though individuals are out of his reach who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

(c) *The whole Church* will at once be introduced to full eternal happiness and glory at our blessed Lord's return. Not only as *individuals* will our cup of joy be full to overflowing, but we shall rejoice throughout eternity with *the whole company of the redeemed*. What has been said therefore is, I trust, sufficient to show that the second coming of Christ will be His *personal* return, and that there is a vast difference between the death of individual believers and the coming advent of our Lord in glory.

I now proceed to consider briefly *some* of the events which will take place *then*.

1. The first resurrection, when the changed and risen saints together will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be forever with Him (1 Thess. 4 v 16-17). At this time those *only* will be raised who, as believers in the Messiah under the old covenant dispensation, or as disciples of the Lord Jesus under that of the new covenant, shall have fallen asleep in Him.

The commonly received opinion is, that at our Lord's return there will be a *general* resurrection, both of believers and of unbelievers, while the Holy Spirit teaches in the Holy Scriptures that they who are *Christ's* and they *only*, will have part in the first resurrection. In 1 Cor. 15 v 22-23, we read thus; "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming." Notice the words, "they that are *Christ's*." Not *all* who had previously died, but those only who through faith in Jesus are united to Him, and shall have fallen asleep as believers. The same truth is taught in 1 Thess. 4 v 16-17, where we read; "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 (afterwards) we which 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." Notice that only of *the dead in Christ* it is said they will rise at that time.

In Rev. 20 v 4-6, we read thus; "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witnesses of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast (the Anti-Christ), neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." In the beginning of this passage, when it is stated, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them," we have to understand that believers in Christ who are *with Him*, are here referred to; the armies in heaven mentioned in chapter 19 v 14.

Further, "The souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held," spoken of in chapter 6 v 9, are next seen. Regarding the whole of the passage, it is obvious that believers *only* are referred to, and not the ungodly, who had died previously. These ungodly ones indeed will be raised up also, but at the end of the millennium, a thousand years later, in order that having obtained *their* bodies (*not glorified ones*), they may be capable of enduring more abundant punishment (see Rev. 20 v 11-15).

Oh! how should the *solemnity* and *certainty* of these events come home to everyone of us, and with what *earnestness* should each person who reads these lines seek upon Scriptural grounds to settle for himself that he is really *Christ's*; because by nature we are lost, ruined, and undone, and deserve nothing but punishment; but we have, at the same time, to accept God's *only* remedy, namely, salvation through faith in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *alone* spiritual life, pardon, and justification can be obtained (see Eph 2 v 1-9; Gal 3 v 26; Acts 10 v 43; Rom 5 v 1; John 3 v 16, and Rom 8 v 16-17).

2. The conversion and restoration of Israel nationally (who will have returned to their own land in *unbelief*); for in Scripture the glory and resurrection of the Church of the first born ones is always connected with the time when Israel again "shall know the Lord." (Psalm 102 v 16). See Jeremiah, chapters 30 & 31; Isaiah chapters 11 & 12; Read also carefully Isaiah, chapters 24, 25, 26, 27.

3. Another event which will take place at the return of the Lord Jesus is that Satan will be bound. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Rev 20 v 1-3). During the present dispensation, *before* the return of our Lord, Satan will not be bound; therefore sin and open wickedness will continue to the end of it; and instead of becoming better, things, according to Scripture, will *become worse and worse*. It is impossible to shut one's eyes to the fearful wickedness now around

us everywhere; for murders of the most cruel character, and numerous other atrocious crimes, are, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, continually being committed. How certainly does all this prove that Satan is not yet bound, that he is *even now* the god of this world, and has power *still*; and because he *knows* that his time will be comparatively short, he manifests his hatred against God and against His people to the very utmost. But this state of things will not always last; for, when Jesus comes again, Satan will *lose* his power in the earth, and will be shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years.

4. In connection with the return of the Lord Jesus is another event, namely, the separation between the wheat and the tares, who represent Christendom, or the professing church of Christ. Read carefully Matt 13 v 24-30; also verses 37-43. In this parable, together with our Lord's own explanation of it, we see what is to be expected during this present dispensation. Civilization, mental cultivation, and advancement in knowledge of every kind may continue to the utmost; but man, fallen man, remains *a ruined creature*, except he be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the acceptance of the Gospel. Intellectually he may be improved and polished to the very highest degree, but he is a *sinner*, and, in his natural condition, remains lost, ruined, and undone. He may even possess natural religion and a form of godliness; but if he is not born again he is still at enmity with God, and as assuredly as he does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ "the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3 v 36).

Sin is not, as some suppose, a *comparatively little thing*. It is a deadly spiritual disease, as the Word of God declares it to be; and no progress in education, no mental culture, can eradicate it from the heart, nor change depraved human nature. For notwithstanding every effort at improvement, the heart *remains* "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Until the return of the Lord Jesus, therefore, the present state of things will *continue*, and, as we shall see presently from the Word of God, will become worse and worse.

This, then, plainly shows the notion entertained by many godly, excellent persons, that the world will be *converted during the present dispensation* by the preaching of the Gospel, and that the millennium will thus finally be introduced, to be not according to the Holy Scriptures.

The Gospel, indeed, was to be preached "for a *witness* unto all nations," but it was not to be the means of the *conversion* of the world (Matt 24 v 14). Moreover, from Acts 15 v 14 we learn the character of the present dispensation, which is, that God *takes out* from among the Gentiles a people for His name, but does not *convert* all nations. This is confirmed by the parable of the wheat and the tares; for if the whole world were to be converted before the return of the Lord Jesus, there would be no truth in the explanation given of it by our Lord Himself. *He* tells us that the tares (the children of the wicked one) were to grow together with the wheat (the children of the Kingdom) until the end of the age, namely, up to the time of His own return. This, therefore, the word of the Lord Jesus, is in direct opposition to the common notion that the world will be converted previous to His coming again.

And in addition to this we find passage after passage in the New Testament in which we are expressly told, either by Christ or by the apostles, that at the close of the present dispensation *wickedness will abound* both among professed believers and in the world at large, in proof of which I will refer to one single passage of Scripture only. In 2 Tim 3 v 1-5 we read, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a *form of godliness*, but denying the power thereof." Here we have particularly to keep before us that this is not a description of Pagans or Mahometans, but of the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus; for to such a state will Christendom, or the professing Church of Christ, be reduced at the end of the present dispensation.

Notice especially that of these persons it is said, they have a *form* of godliness. They wish to be considered Christians, they are not avowed infidels and atheists, but professed *believers*. Are we, then, to expect that things around us will gradually improve, or rather, that as we approach the end of the age the darker they will become? True it is that one day, "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea", but this will never be until Jesus Himself comes. In the meantime lawlessness will increase, and the

socialism, the communism, the nihilism, etc., of which we now hear so much, will at last be headed up in the personal Antichrist, the man of sin. This leads me to mention another of the events that will take place at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely;

5. The destruction of the Antichrist. In 2 Thess 2 v 1-8 we read: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by (or concerning) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by (or concerning) our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon (or hastily) shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that (or, as though we had said) the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (or, the apostasy) first, and that (or the) man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity (or lawlessness) doth all ready work; only he who now letteth (or restraineth) will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked (or lawless one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit (or breath) of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.”

From this portion of the inspired Word of God (2 Thess 2 v 3) we learn that the Lord Jesus will not come until after the manifestation of “the apostasy.” Has the apostasy here spoken of taken place, and has the lawless one (or, the Antichrist) been revealed? The reply from Scripture is, the apostasy has *not* yet taken place, and the lawless one has *not* yet been revealed. This passage has not found its fulfilment either in popery or the popes. Fearful as the delusions of popery are, and awful as is the picture of what the popes have been, the apostasy here referred to will be far *more dreadful still*; for it will be no less than an entire renunciation of all that is divine, and the setting up as God of the lawless one himself. “For he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing *himself* that he is God.”

He will be a king, a mighty monarch, whose might is obtained through the energy given to him by Satan, for “the dragon gave him his power, and his seat and great authority” (Rev 13 v 2). This king, the Antichrist, will be at the head of the *ten kingdoms* of the Roman earth (that is, the ten kingdoms into which the countries which formerly constituted the Roman Empire will be finally divided), and the ten kings will agree to give to him their power.

During the period of his especial glory, which will be only forty-two months, he will blaspheme God, His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. It will also be given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and power will be given unto him over all kindreds and tongues and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13 v 5-8).

This, then, and not the world’s conversion, is the state of things towards which we are rapidly hastening. Do we all really *believe* what the Scriptures declare concerning the things that are coming upon the earth, that the time is speeding on when “no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark or the name of the beast (the Antichrist) or the number of his name” (Rev 13 v 17): when whoever will not submit to *this* and worship him, must be prepared to lose his life? The *end*, however, of this lawless one is plainly foretold in Scripture: for the Lord Jesus will consume him with the spirit (or, breath) of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2 v 8).

We have now in the next place to consider that it is the will of the Lord that we, His disciples, should wait for His return.

A great many passages might be quoted from the New Testament in proof of this; but, for the sake of brevity, I will refer only to a few. In Titus 2 v 11-13 we read, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.” Observe how it is laid upon the saints to *look* for the blissful hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 24 v 36-41 our Lord Himself enjoins it upon us to wait for His return, and to *watch*. In Matthew 25 v 13 the Lord said to His disciples, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh". Again in Mark 13 v 35-37 Jesus said "Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all, *watch*. Again in Rev 16 v 15 the Lord says, "Behold, I come as a thief! Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Now, are we as believers, all *watching*? Are we earnestly *longing* for the return of that blessed One? Do our hearts truly yearn after Him, and long for His glorious appearing? Are we also doing our part to hasten on His coming? And is it habitually our *prayer* that the Lord will be pleased to hasten the fulfilment of the events yet to be fulfilled before that day comes?

And now the last part of our subject remains to be considered, namely, the *practical* effect this truth should have upon our hearts. If it be really received and entered into, the child of God will say, "What can I do for my blessed Saviour before He comes again? How can I most glorify Him? His will concerning me is that I should occupy 'until He come.' How then can I best use for Him the talents with which I am entrusted, my physical strength, my mental powers? How can my sight, my tongue, *all* my faculties of mind and body be best devoted to His praise? How should my time, my money, all that I am and have be used for Him? How can my whole spirit, soul, and body be best consecrated to His service?"

These are deeply important practical questions which all believers in the Lord Jesus should ask themselves, seeing that we are not our own, but are bought with a price, even with His precious blood. Instead of indulging in inactivity and listlessness on account of the evil state of things around us, we should pray and work, and work and pray, as if it were in *our* power to stem the torrent of abounding iniquity; for who can say *how much good* one single child of God who is thoroughly in earnest may accomplish; and how greatly he may glorify God by walking in entire separation from all that is hateful to Him? We have especially also to guard against the temptation of slackening our efforts for the conversion of sinners, because the world will not be converted before Jesus comes. Rather should we say, "The time of His coming may be soon; what therefore can I do to warn sinners, and to win souls for Him?"

When it pleased God in July 1829, to reveal to my heart the truth of the personal return of the Lord Jesus, and to show me that I had made a great mistake in looking for the conversion of the world, the effect it produced upon me was this: From my *inmost soul* I was stirred up to feel compassion for the perishing sinners, and for the slumbering world around me lying in the Wicked One, and considered, "Ought I not to do what I can to win souls for the Lord Jesus, and to arouse a slumbering church?". I determined consequently to go from place to place, in order to preach the Gospel and arouse the Church to look and *wait* for the second coming of the Lord from heaven.

I soon began this work, but in a short time saw it plainly to be the Lord's will that I should stay for a while at Teignmouth, Devonshire, in a pastoral position, and labour in Bristol in the same way; but though I have now been a Pastor for more than *fifty-one years*, my heart has always been true to these two points: and by means of 'The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad', which the Lord has permitted me to found, I have for forty-seven years been aiming at the conversion of sinners, and have sought to awaken the Church of Christ at large to look for His appearing as her great hope.

Besides this, during the last six years, from March 1875, to March 1881, I have almost constantly been travelling about (having visited eleven different countries and preached about 1800 times), in order to preach the Gospel, to stir up Christians, and also to instruct them about the character of this present dispensation, with the end thereof.

In conclusion I would direct attention to 2 Peter 3 v 11-14; - "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming (or hastening the coming) of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens

and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

As assuredly as the practical character of the Lord's second coming is really apprehended in the power of it, the *most blessed* effects upon the life and deportment of Christians will follow. By means of it we are taught what awaits the world lying in the Wicked One, and what will be the end of all this world's glory, pride, and pomp. The future destiny of the children of God is also unfolded to us, even that we shall be perfectly conformed to the image of our risen Lord, both in soul and body, when we shall see Him as He is.

Then shall we enter upon the possession of our inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and shall be seated with Jesus on His throne (Rev 3 v 21), to judge the world in union with Him, and to spend a happy eternity together with our Lord in glory. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev 22 v 12).

*Midst the darkness, storm, and sorrow,
One bright gleam I see:
Well I know the blessed morrow
Christ will come for me.
'Midst the light and peace and glory
Of the father's home,
Christ for me is watching, waiting –
Waiting till I come.*

*Oh, the blessed joy of meeting,
All the desert past!
Oh, the wondrous words of greeting
He shall speak at last!
He and I together entering
Those bright courts above:
He and I together sharing
All the Father's love.*

*He who in His hour of sorrow
Bore the curse alone:
I who through the lonely desert
Trod where He had gone:
He and I in that bright glory,
one deep joy shall share:
Mine, to be for ever with Him:
His, that I am there.*



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