

## “COME, LORD JESUS”

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Christians of all time and place have always shared in common their joyful faith and hope in the second coming of their Lord. This is the PAROUSIA (second coming) which will be the end of time and the fulfillment of everything that God has promised to all those who believed in Him. This event is described in the apocalyptic writings in the Scripture, such as Daniel, Matthew 24-25, 2 Thessalonians and Revelation. The apocalypse, which means revelation, deals with events which God will bring to pass, revealed through visions of believers inspired by the spirit of God in order to exhort Christians to remain true to their faith until the final consummation - “He who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt. 24:13-41).

The message about the Second Coming of Christ was very strongly emphasized in the early church especially through the period of the persecution from the 1st to the 3rd centuries. In the 19th century, this was popularized by J.N. Darby and by D. L. Moody. As a whole the Christian church has considered the Second Coming or Eschatology in general as a very important doctrine of the church but has given it different interpretations. We do not have the time to deal with different theological interpretations which are current today. For now what we can maintain is this: that we believe that Jesus Christ is coming again because he promised to. (John 14:3; Acts 1:13; Rev. 22:20) But when and how, only God knows. What is important for Christians to do is to be ready for his coming (Matt. 25:13).

As reflected in the Scripture, the Second Coming is not just one single event centering on the physical revelation of Jesus Christ. The *parousia* is made up of a series of events which include the tribulation, the rapture, the judgment, the millennium, the final battle of Armageddon, the final consummation. It is not easy to reduce these highly symbolic events in the apocalyptic writings into simple, literalistic events. Since to engage in schematic detailing of these events would be very speculative, I shall endeavor to deal only with what might be the meaning of these events, particularly the tribulation and judgment events.

## I. Tribulation

In Revelation 7:9-14, we read in the vision of John about the great multitude, which no person could number, of all nations and kindred - clothed with white robes as those who came out of the great tribulation. This great multitude have gone through the period of tribulation and remained faithful to their Lord. In Matt. 24, the disciples asked Jesus when the end would come. Jesus answered that as to when nobody knows - but he told them about the events which will signal his coming. On that day false prophets would come to lead people astray. There will be wars and rumors of wars because nations will rise against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms. There will be famines and earthquakes. There will be persecutions of the believers because they will be hated by nations and put to death for their faith. Among the followers of Jesus many will fall away and betray and hate one another (v. 10). It will be a time of great wickedness and suffering the like of which has never been seen or experienced before. During this tribulation many false Christs and false prophets will rise who will show great signs and wonders. But Jesus said, "Do not follow them." Then the sun and the moon will not give light any more and stars will fall from heaven.

We read the newspapers today and compare the events recorded there with Matt. 24 and we discover many striking similarities. We have all sorts of teachings today from representatives of cultic groups preaching their own gospel of the good life. We read about wars, famines, earthquakes, tidal waves, eruptions of volcanos, sex immorality, kidnappings, drug addiction, murders, massacres - you name it, we have it in our world today. Our family and church institutions are breaking up because of unfaithfulness to Christ. Does this mean that the end is coming? Will it come October 28, 1992 at 11:00 P.M.? I think we can say that the end is coming indeed but when exactly we do not know. In fact, we are living in the end time. This is why we say that the church is an eschatological community. We believe that the beginning of the end time came with the historical coming of Jesus Christ marked by his birth, his death and his resurrection. He ushered in the new age. His resurrection has become for us a foretaste of what will be. Technically, we can speak only of the Second Coming because there was the first coming. The Second Coming refers to the final consummation when the historical process which began with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ will come to its final fulfillment.

We cannot help but ask, if the Second Coming of Christ is still to be expected, where is he right now? Of course, he is in our midst today in his spiritual presence. This means, therefore, that when we speak about the Second Coming we are talking about his physical reappearance - "the same Christ whom you now see... the same will come again." (Acts 1:11).

## II. The Second Coming of Christ Will Mean Judgment

In Revelation 20:11-15 we read about the final judgment when the Book of Life will be opened and judgment will be made on the basis of what was written in the Book of Life. In Matt. 25:31-46 we read about the judgment as the separation of people between the sheep and the goats after they were judged according to their deeds. How should Christians expect the coming judgment? We believe that Christians should look forward to the day of judgment with joy and confidence. (Lk. 21:34-36; cf. 12:35-40; Rom. 14:10-13; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 4:4-7).

Judgment, which will happen in the coming of Christ, means revelation because in it the significance of all history will be made known. No longer will unjust acts appear as noble and just and their perpetrators get away with it. No longer will those who were despised and persecuted for righteousness sake be outcast or rejected as animals.

Judgment means also righting the wrong and rewarding those who were unjustly judged. Judgment in the biblical sense does not merely mean declaring or reading a sentence but making things right or aligning things with God's will. (Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, p. 135).

In a sense we must look forward to the day of judgment with a certain dread because it will also be a day when our deeds will be revealed or measured for what they are. Christ will bring to light all that are hidden including our secret sins. (1 Cor. 5:4). If our deeds are not pure they will be purified. (1 Cor. 3:11-15). (Note that this text was used from the medieval times up to now to support the doctrine of purgatory.) But on the whole our confidence is in Christ because no one and nothing can separate us from his love. (Rom. 8:39)

Conclusion: What then can we say about the Second Coming?

The following can be emphasized.

1. This is what we believe: He is coming again because He promised it. But exactly when we do not know. Ours is not to speculate on when but ours is to prepare for it because it will come. Therefore, we must be ready for it at all times.
2. It is important to be reminded that in our day this period of testing is with us. We must therefore strengthen our faith in Christ lest we grow cold in faith and fall away. We must continue to encourage each other.
3. As believers in Christ, we must be energetic in our task of participating in the

## **12/ Jesus Christ is Coming Again!**

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**work of God which is to proclaim the Good News for the healing of the nation and the reconciliation of all to God.**

**This is why we can live our present life with confidence and look to the future with hope. Because of our confidence we live our Christian life with great responsibility in our participation in the work of God today. In doing so we are making ready for His coming.**