

COLLECTION

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN!

A SYMPOSIUM

CENTRAL PHILIPPINE UNIVERSITY
Iloilo City, Philippines

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN!
(A Symposium)

September 30, 1992

4:00 - 5:30 P.M.

University Church, Central Philippine University

PROGRAM

I. Singspiration

II. Opening Prayer Rev. Moreto Lagulao

III. Remarks

Dr. Agustin Pulido

Pastor Ernest Howard Dagohoy

IV. Introduction of Speakers

V. Presentations

Speaker 1 Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Fabula
"The Biblical Basis of the Second
Coming of Jesus Christ"

Speaker 2 Rev. Dr. Domingo Diel, Jr.
"Resurrection and Rapture"

Speaker 3 Rev. Dr. Johnny Gumban
"Tribulation and Judgment"

VI. Special Musical Number Miss Jeannie Cañizares

VII. Open Forum

VIII. Recapitulation and Challenge

IX. Closing Prayer and Benediction..... Rev. Harold Peñacerrada

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

Dr. Nathaniel M. Fabula

The biblical teaching on the Second Coming of Christ is not being emphasized in many churches today. It may be that many Christians do not entertain the idea that the Lord is coming in our generation because of historical reasons. Past expectations of His coming since the early church failed and caused frustrations to many. Moreover, people in this age have become so pleasure-oriented and materialistic that thoughts of the Kingdom of God are often neglected. We do not watch eagerly for the Lord's return and are prone to think of the "meeting in the air" as a far-off event. We don't like either the thought of having our plans suddenly interrupted by the Lord's return. Such attitudes, however, would not change the absolute certainty of God's accomplishing His divine will and plan for man and the world. Human history has its beginning and its end. It is not a haphazard conglomeration of chance events which are going nowhere. The whole creation moves towards its consummation. His coming again is sure; "for what the Bible PREDICTS and Christ PROMISES, God will PERFORM."

In the New Testament the Second Coming refers to the future, visible return from heaven of Jesus Christ, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the Kingdom of God. The term was used in early church writings (e.g., Justin *Apologetics* 1,52) to distinguish it from the first coming which took place in the incarnation, birth, and earthly career of Christ. Just before Jesus went to the cross and died for the sins of men, He said to His disciples, "I will come again." When the risen Christ ascended to heaven, the first message sent back to earth was the promise, "The same Jesus... will come back..." (Acts 1:9-11).

The message of the return of Jesus Christ is so important that it is mentioned over three hundred times in the New Testament. It is variously mentioned as the coming of the Son of Man (Mt. 24:37,39); the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 3:13; 5:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1; James 5:7; 2 Pet. 3:4); the coming of Christ (2 Pet. 1:16); and the day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2). The Second Coming is called "the blessed hope" (Tit. 2:13) of the believers as well as the only hope for this chaotic world with all its problems. Man's efforts to bring about a

golden age of universal peace and prosperity are doomed to failure. That day will come only when the Prince of Peace comes to rule and reign in perfect righteousness.

Why is Jesus Christ Coming Again?

Just as God had His purpose in sending His Son nearly two thousand years ago, His coming again is part of God's plan for His creation. From the Scriptures we see the reasons why He will return. Firstly, He is coming to take His church to be with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:16,17; cf. John 14:1-6). Secondly, He is coming to judge the nations (Mt. 25:31-46). Thirdly, He is coming to bring righteous government (Heb. 1:8).

How Is He Coming?

Descriptions of the manner of His coming are found in many places in the New Testament. As the disciples watched Jesus ascending into heaven, they were told by "two men dressed in white," a common description of angels, that the same Jesus who has been taken into heaven will come back in the same way they have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). The reference point for the NT doctrine of the Son of Man coming "with the clouds of heaven" is Daniel 7th 13 (cf. Mt. 26:64). If Jesus Christ is returning in the same manner he went to heaven, how can we Filipinos see him when he comes in Jerusalem? If it is possible with men to see events in other countries through television via satellite, how much more with God. There are things that are impossible with man, but with God all things are possible (Mt. 19:26). Jesus himself said, "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens" (Mk. 13:26,27; cf. Mt. 24:30,31; 25:31). St. Paul mentions that the Lord's coming will be accompanied "with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God" (1 Thess. 4:16).

When Is He Coming?

This is the crucial question about the Second Coming. There have always been some people who try to fix the day of the Lord's coming. The most recent are the predictions of a certain prophet by the name Bang-ik Ha (Taberah World Mission Phil.) that Jesus is coming again in October 1992 and a Korean named Young Kyun Kim (Mission For the Coming Days) who predicts that it will happen on October 28, 1992 at 11 o'clock in the evening. Do people like them have a biblical basis for setting a date for Christ's coming? From the time of the disciples people have already been wanting to know the exact timetable of the end of the age. What did Jesus tell them and what do the apostles teach on this matter?

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The disciples asked their Teacher Jesus to tell them the time and sign of his coming and the end of the age (Mt. 24:3). He gave them some signs (Mt. 24:4ff.) but as to the date he categorically answered them saying, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mt. 24:36; cf. Mk. 13:32). After Jesus rose from the grave, they again wanted a kingdom timetable. Jesus emphatically said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:6,7). It is clear that the hour of that event is known to God alone. Therefore, speculation regarding the time of the Second Coming is both foolish and useless. Moreover, it is blasphemous, for he who so speculates is seeking to take from God secrets which belong to Him alone. Man's duty is not to speculate but to prepare himself.

St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians did not speculate but reminded the brethren about the shattering suddenness of the event on those who are immersed in material things (1 Thess. 5:1-9). The Lord will come like a thief in the night (v. 2; cf. Mt. 24:43). As in the days of Noah when the people were lost in their eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage and were caught unaware by the flood and thereby perished (Mt. 24:38,39). It is forbidden to wish to know the time. But we are to watch for the signs mentioned in the Scriptures, such as, the preaching of the Gospel throughout the whole world (Mt. 24:14); the coming of anti-christs (1 John 2:18); and the fulfillment of God's purpose for the Gentiles (Lk. 21:24). These and other signs have been given but not for the purpose of making detailed sequential predictions. We are commanded to be ready, "because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Mt. 25:44). After teaching the parable of the Ten Virgins, Jesus made this instruction, "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" (Mt. 25:13). "The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Mk. 13:40). The watch of the believers for the return of Christ is not that with terror-stricken fear and shivering apprehension; it is the watch with eager expectation for the coming glory and joy.

RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE

Dr. Domingo J. Diel, Jr.

By the nature of the subject being discussed in this symposium, divided in three related topics, repetitions at some points cannot be avoided. In fact, the next two topics — mine and Dr. Gumban's "Judgment and Tribulation" — are related to, if not essentially components of, the topic "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ" presented by Dr. N.M. Fabula. One cannot fully discuss the doctrine of the Second Coming without discussing at the same time the themes of resurrection and judgment. The two other words which also appear in today's topics - rapture and tribulation - because of the connotations they carry, seem to get more attention and importance among us these days than the main subjects of the Second Coming, Resurrection and Judgment.

In fact, the word *rapture* does not even appear in the Bible - at least not in the ones I have consulted with the use of a good Concordance. I can understand, if our people would become frightened at the mention of the *Great Tribulation*, since the way it is described in the New Testament is really frightening! But the word *rapture* should actually evoke in us a feeling of expectant joy, bliss or ecstasy, for that is what it means.

But why this symposium about all these? Personally, I can think of at least two reasons: a) To reject the attempts of some Korean preachers, who are in the country advertising themselves as having the knowledge of the divine mystery (secret), which only God Himself knows. To claim to have read the signs of times correctly, then speculate and claim to know about the exact date of the rapture, that is on October 28, 1992 before midnight, is to usurp the divine prerogative, hence, blasphemous! There were in the past also similar so-called modern prophets who dated exactly the Coming Again of the Lord Jesus Christ. They came from the ranks of the Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Apostolic Church, and during the fifties, from some Pentecostal groups. They were all proved wrong—the Lord Jesus Christ did not come as they predicted He would come. Modern Church history has now the records of these modern false prophets. These so-called Korean prophets could be the next ones.

I wish I could discuss with you lengthily, why such phenomenon comes in waves and at certain periods of history. But perhaps, it will suffice, if I say that at times when the world is in great turmoil, misery and catastrophe, then such

predictions come. My second reason then is: b) To remind us Christians to be awake and remain faithful in the faith and in the Word of God. Indeed, the world is in great turmoil: terrible famine in several African countries, the total breakdown of socialism in Eastern Europe, the economic recession in the American continent and Western Europe, together with untold natural catastrophies in many parts of the world including the Philippines. All these are conducive to predictions about the cataclysmic end of the world and the Coming Again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me now turn to the task proper assigned to me: to discuss the topic "Resurrection and Rapture." Christianity stands or falls on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. He is not only the central figure of it, He is the foundation as well as the cornerstone. The Christian Faith, on the other hand, also stands or falls on the crucified-risen Lord Jesus Christ. If He did not rise from the dead, our faith in Him would be in vain. But because He is risen, we shall also be risen, or as the Gospel chorus says: Because He lives, we shall also live and can face tomorrow.

This foundation of faith in the risen Lord is anchored in the stories of the Four Gospels - all Four Gospels report about the resurrection of Jesus Christ - and in the Epistles of St. Paul.

A. The doctrinal concept of the resurrection of the dead in the last days is, in turn, founded on this faith in the risen Lord. This has been illustrated in the story of Lazarus, which happened in the life-time of Jesus Christ himself (John 11). Moreover, St. Paul in a number of his Epistles attested to this faith of the early Christians in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord, and the resurrection of the dead. Four references from his Letters would suffice to illustrate the latter:

- a) II Cor. 5:4 - "... we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life."
- b) I Cor. 6:14 - "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power."
- c) Rom. 8:10-11 - "But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you."
- d) Phil. 3:20-21 - "But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to

himself." And finally, I Cor. 15:51-55:

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?

From all these passages two observations can be drawn. First, the resurrection of the dead awaits at the coming again of the Risen-Crucified Lord, who comes in glory as King and Judge, and second: in the resurrection of the dead, human mortality characterized by decay and destruction is changed to immortality. On this, hangs the Christian faith and on this, makes the Christian life meaningful and worth living.

B. Now to a more sensational, highly dramatized topic of *rapture*. The word itself does not appear in the Bible, but it evokes both curiosity and fear among many of us. I cannot yet fully figure out why it creates much attention and anxiety to many Christians.

The word means, "the act of transporting a person from one sphere of existence to another," (Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1987 Edition, London). With this definition, we have at least two New Testament references, which seem to correspond to it. One in Matthew 24:40-42 and the other in I Thess. 4:16-18. Before one gets into them more closely, we should be reminded of one Old Testament incident which could also be classified as *rapture*, that of Elijah's experience. Without tasting death, he was carried up to heaven by a whirlwind (another version: by a chariot of fire) as recorded in II Kings 2.

In the two references mentioned, one in I Thess. 4:16-18 is fairly well complete. Matt. 24:40-42 does not say about the whereabouts of those who suddenly disappear from the earth. It does not even say where those who disappeared go. This could be, perhaps, the reason for fear among many.

Since the so-called *rapture* is a part (a small part) of the doctrine of the Last Things - all to be understood against or in the context of the Coming Again of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, we should not deal with it out of proportion of the rest of the doctrine, which certainly also includes judgment, resurrection, life forever with the Lord and death forever without Him.

What then, do I make out of the so-called *rapture* in the whole context of the Coming Again of the Lord and the End of the world? Let me offer two observations: First, this event means both separation and reunion. This will be

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the final moment of separation: the saved from the unsaved, the justified sinners from the unjustified sinners. At the same time, this is also the moment of final reunion of the Christian believers with their Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-18). The second observation is: this moment of separation will be something that is quick. There would be no waving of handkerchief, so to say; neither would there be time to shed tears! That is the reason evidently for the Apostle's exhortation: watch, be ready and pray.

About the sensational dating of the Lord's Coming Again or the rapture on October 28 at 11 o'clock p.m., I maintain, it is wrong and is misleading Christians—a human attempt to be like God. As in the Garden of Eden, man and woman in their human curiosity (more seriously: disobedience), cannot accept their limits as human beings. To know or attempt to know as God knows, is to claim to be God, and this to me is not only sacrilegious, it gets into the realm of blasphemy.

Faith and hope confirm that we belong to Christ and that we are in Him. This should strengthen us these days. When the great reformer Martin Luther was asked, what would he do if Jesus Christ would come tomorrow, replied: "I will plant an apple tree today." Real and living Christian faith in the Living Lord gives Christians confidence to welcome with joy the Coming Again of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, be it in the morning, noon, afternoon or night, any day now or in the future. Let us continue to do our usual task, but being watchful and remaining faithful in His Word and in the Christian faith until He comes again!

“COME, LORD JESUS”

J. V. Gumban

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

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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.

THE SPEAKERS

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