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O come quickly Lord Jesus!

"Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Revelation 22:20.

These words contain a PROMISE and a PLEA. Here are the last words of Christ to His people at the close of the holy canon of Scripture and the earnest prayer of John, the writer of the final book of the Bible, expressing what has been and is still the earnest longing of the people of God.

It has ever been the longing of believers, in every age, that the Lord Jesus return to this earth in power and great glory. Jude indicates this by quoting from the words of one who preached to the very first generation of mankind.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him," Jude 14-15.

These words of Enoch would undoubtedly have been repeated many times in various forms by the prophet. Furthermore, we need not doubt that they were preached in the presence of Adam, the first man. Adam's life span overlapped that of Enoch's by some two hundred and forty three years. It is inconceivable that Adam would not have sat under the ministry of the foremost prophet of that day, a man who walked with God and pleased Him so wonderfully that "he was not; for God took him," Genesis 5:24.

But while it has been the universal longing of true believers that Christ return to reign and rule over this earth, bringing with Him all the desires and delights of the Christian heart, there was a realisation that such a glorious return would take place only in God's appointed time. I believe that this is evident in Holy Scripture.

Enoch, in that first recorded message on the second advent, refers to 'these', that is, the final generation of participants in the ongoing apostasy which began with Cain. Enoch mentions Cain and indicates that those engaged in rebellion against Christ in the first century of this age and who sought to destroy the truth of the Gospel by infiltrating the professing Church and sowing the seeds of deceit and corruption (Jude 4), were those upon whom a 'woe' is pronounced "for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core (Korah)" verse 11.

Creepers

That apostasy must run the course that God has ordained for it before the Saviour returns. The 'creepers', mentioned in Jude 4, were "men . . . who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." Nothing happens outside the decretive will of God. The Shorter Catechism states the matter so: "The decrees of God are His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." Answer to question 7.

Paul the apostle stated the matter thus: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ," Ephesians 1:11-12.

In the early church there were those who spread error regarding the return of Christ and in his second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul refutes their lies.

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that 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 first, and that 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



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he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" 2:1-5.

Deception regarding the return of Christ is something the Saviour warned His disciples about most plainly. "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you," Matthew 24:4. These are the first words uttered by the Saviour in response to the questions of the disciples regarding His return. "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (Greek, aion, 'age')," verse 3.

In more recent times there emerged a deception that spread far and wide amongst Christians. It was that of the 'Secret Rapture' of the Church which some say will take place some seven years or three and half years (there is a division amongst the proponents of this false notion) before the visible return of Christ.

This false doctrine had its origins in the teachings of J N Darby, a teacher amongst the early 'Plymouth Brethren' movement. It was stoutly and irrefutably opposed by a fellow Brethren teacher, Benjamin Wills Newtown. Darby's view prevailed and B W Newton was put out of the ranks of the Brethren. Darby's notion received much support as a result of the promotion of his views in the notes in Scofield's Bible. The notes became as authoritative as the Word of God in the minds of many and consulted when the meaning of a passage was sought.

Error

But the core of Darby's view that Christ could 'return at any moment' was shown to be an error long before J N Darby walked amongst men!

We have already quoted the relevant words of Paul. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that 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, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"

Man of sin

There was something very noteworthy to take place before the return of Christ. It was the revealing of the "man of sin . . . , the son of perdition," the Antichrist! Christ will come AFTER the revelation of this personification of lawlessness and that to destroy him. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," verse 8.

There can be no disputing of the sequence of events as stated here by Paul. FIRST Antichrist will be revealed. THEN Christ shall come and that to DESTROY him and thus bring this age to an end and instigate His glorious reign on the earth. Revelation 19:11- 20:6 records the whole sequence most clearly. Please note that chapters 19 and 20 are joined by the word 'and'! Thus God clearly shows us that the events of one chapter are followed by and linked to the events of the other.

Cry

In former ages, when distress overtook believers, they naturally, as a child calls for its mother and father when in danger, cried onto the Lord and gave expression to a longing for Him to come to them. The words of John which form our text, have been uttered millions of times and more, prior to him writing them down.

However, because the Church of God from earliest times was aware that the time of the Lord's return was established and that there were foreordained events which MUST take place before that wondrous event, their longing was translated into a prayer for revival.



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Revival

Revival is the nearest thing to the victorious return of Christ that we as Christians can experience until that glorious event actually takes place!

Revival is the Second Advent of Christ in EMBRYO! All that Christ at His second advent will bring with Him and initiate amongst the nations, can be seen in rudimentary form in times of revival.

Please consider:

1. In times of revival, Christ comes amongst His people in a most marked and evident fashion! As it was for Jacob at Bethel, so it is for Christians in a day of revival visitation. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not," Genesis 28:16.

2. In times of revival, the power and glory of Christ are manifested before the eyes of men. So in a much more wonderful way, the glory of Christ will be seen by this world one day. "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," Matthew 24:30.

3. In times of revival, the word of Christ is proclaimed with power. Do all who love the Lord not seek such preaching? Well, when Christ returns, His word will be uttered with power unseen before amongst men. "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure," Psalm 2:5. "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked," Isaiah 11:4. "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God," Revelation 19:15.

4. In times of revival, believers take on the likeness to Christ to a much greater degree than is normal. Holiness amongst God's people is undoubtedly the fruit of revival. Well, it is a foreshadowing of that which will happen to us when the Lord returns. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness," Psalm 17:15. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

5. In times of revival, there is a spirit of resurrection at work. Revival sees believers who had lain down in the graves of carelessness and deadness, awakened to life and power. Is it not the case that careless believers are revived and they "renew their strength; . . . mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint," Isaiah 40:31. How much more wonderful is that resurrection which the Church will one day experience? "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," I Thessalonians 4:16.

6. In times of revival, there is a submitting to the Law of God even by ungodly men. In times of revival there is a great acknowledging of the authority and rightness of God's Word. History has shown that governments have incorporated God's truth into the nation's laws in times of revival. In today's apostasy we see parliament disannulling such laws! How different when Christ returns! "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted," Isaiah 60:12. "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever," Revelation 11:15.

7. In times of revival, light and truth and peace are wonderfully increased. Public records here in Northern Ireland, show that following the days of revival blessing under the preaching of W. P Nicholson in the 1920s, when serious rioting and murder were rife in Belfast, such activities largely died out and there was ushered in a period of calm when, by the early 1930s, public disorder and murder were rare indeed. In



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a much more wonderful way this world will know peace and tranquillity as never since the days of innocence before the fall of Adam. "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isaiah 2:4. "The wolf also 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 little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea," Isaiah 11:6-9.

Thus we have sought to show that revival has within it the very elements which will be seen in their fulness in the Day of the Lord. It is that fact which has caused God's people in trouble to pray for revival throughout the ages past!

But it must be stressed that there is coming a day when God's people, recognising the signs of the times and understanding the day of the Lord is about to dawn, will not pray for revival as did former generations but rather call for that which all former revivals foreshadowed and pictured. They will know that the time has come, and like Simeon of old, who was informed by the Holy Ghost that Christ's first advent was about to take place, the saints in a not too distant day will cry to God for Christ to return.

In heaven such prayers will be uttered. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Revelation 6:9-10.

In like fashion on earth, there will be a realisation of the fulfilling of prophecy and the drawing near of the time of Christ's return and prayer will reflect that.

The Psalms are filled with prophetic foreshadowings of such prayers. They refer chiefly to the praying of that Jewish remnant who by God's grace will be delivered from darkness and unbelief and brought to know their Messiah in the last days of this age. As the raging of antichristian forces centres upon the land of Israel and the Jewish people, that remnant will pray for their Messiah to intervene and deliver them as He has on many former times, all of which were but types and pictures of the great intervention that they are now longing and praying for.

I would like to consider just a few illustrations of this future praying for the Lord to come and deliver His people. The Psalms 95 and 96 and 97 refer prophetically to that time.

Testimony

In Psalm 95:6-7 we have words which express what will be the new-found faith of a Jewish remnant.

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

In the Psalm 96, we have that witness during the final days of this age. It is because of such a witness that Antichrist will rage against them for he is at that time, presenting himself as 'god' who alone should be worshipped, 2 Thessalonians 2:4. How infuriating it will be as he proudly thus exalts himself to the ten kingdoms which will make up the reformed Roman Empire, the fourth empire, which is 'great and terrible', set forth in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13.

This testimony of the Jewish remnant will continue on into the Millennial age when it will be the privilege of redeemed Israel to be God's chief witness before the nations.

The prophet Zechariah speaks of this. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass,



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that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you," Zechariah 8:23.

As the words of the prophets of the Old Testament have been the means of leading many to Christ (I myself was led to the Lord through words written long ago by Moses, Genesis 6:23) even so the Jew in the Millennial age will be God's instrument of turning many, many Gentile souls to faith in the Saviour.

Heed these words:

"O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth," Psalm 96:1-13.

The psalm ends with a triumphant shout of anticipated victory. "Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

Psalm 97 takes up where the previous psalm ends.

"The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods." verses 1-7.

The next 6 verses reveal Israel's rejoicing in that day of deliverance.

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth," verses 8-13.

Harvest

This harvest of souls by Israel's witness is that spoken of in Isaiah 2:1-5.

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation,



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neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”

This is the ultimate revival when the Lord Jesus returns in answer to the prayers of that final generation of believers.

Hope

Today, many believe that revival is the hope of the Church! That is nearly true. The hope of the Church is the return of Christ in power and great glory, the optimum revival of which all previous revivals were an image.

All previous revivals were limited in their duration, influence and accomplishments. But at the return of Christ there will be instituted, to a very glorious measure, the gracious influences and blessings of the out-poured Spirit of God. “Nations shall flow” to the house of God to hear His Law. “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea,” Habakkuk 2:14.

That is the revival we should be seeking in the closing days of this wicked age for I believe the final establishment of apostasy is taking place amongst the nations. It is very near to that moment that issued in the last judgment of the world in the days of Noah. Genesis 6:5-6. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

That grieving of the heart of God brought down the universal flood from which only Noah and his family escaped.

The world is likewise greatly given over to sin and the destruction which follows such draws very near. I do not believe we are going to see another staying of judgment as has been seen so very often before. No, we are seeing the days spoken of by Christ.

“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed,” Luke 17:26-30.

Can these words be dismissed or ignored at a time when the perversions of Sodom are endorsed and sanitised by ‘Church’ and State? I think not!

The evidences of God’s anger with the nations is there for those with eyes to see. “And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth,” Revelation 11:16-18.

Is there not great anger toward the Lord amongst men! We see more and more, every expression of evangelical truth denounced and repressed. In my lifetime, I have seen the truth of God, once acknowledged and revered by even the most ungodly, despised and openly despised by those in power and authority.

The Prime Minister was recently released from hospital having been recovered from an illness brought on by the coronavirus. There was never one word of acknowledgement of God’s mercy toward him in rescuing him from the very edge of eternity!

Mention of God is ‘politically incorrect or unacceptable’ today. The Queen in her recent address to the nation, contrary to her habit in all her other addresses, never mentioned the Lord. Rather she employed a euphe-



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mistic reference to 'all faiths and none'! I found that most sad indeed coming from one for whom I have had a great regard and affection.

No, these are the days of man's anger against the Lord. That will undoubtedly soon give way to the 'great day of His wrath', Revelation 6:17.

May we be enabled to pray in accordance with the will of Lord and not ask for that which He does not purpose to give. There comes a day when there is no more respite nor mercy, only judgment.

"Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble," Jeremiah 11:14.

Dear Christian, there is every indication that time is drawing very near.

Rev Ivan Foster. (Rtd)

17th April 2020.