***The Return of Jesus Christ

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We continue with the letter to Sardis which is recorded in Revelation 3:1-6. Here, in verse 4, we have read that Jesus says to this church, "You have a few names (that is, a few people) even in Sardis that have not defiled (besmirched) their garments (that which represents their character). And they shall walk with Me in white (a symbol of sanctification), for they are worthy." When Revelation 3:4 declares that some of these people in the church at Sardis were worthy to wear the white garments representing sanctification, setting them aside to eternal life with Jesus Christ, it was due to what God had done to make them worthy, and not to what they have done to make themselves worthy. So, when you read that verse, it is important for you to understand that the word "worthy" does not refer to what the people themselves have done, but it refers to what the Lord has done to enable them to walk with Him. So, when God, who is perfect, makes a sinner worthy to walk in white, the sanctification He gives them is permanent. Therefore, the sanctification that has set him apart to eternal life cannot be reversed. It is forever secure.

So, there is absolutely no ground for doubt about going to heaven if you have been made worthy by God's grace provision, which is based on God's own doing. If your hope of eternal life is not based on that kind of a grace gift (based on God's own doing), then you're going to have all kinds of doubts. You are never going to be certain of where you're going.

Let's put a few Scripture verses together here in a chained fashion. 2 Timothy 1:12 will make all this clear. Paul says, "For which cause I also suffer these things. Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed onto Him against that day." The apostle Paul had confidence not in what he was doing, but in the fact that his sin and his lost condition was handed over to Jesus Christ who was able to handle it right on to the very end.

In Acts 16:31, that we all know so well, Paul, on another occasion said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." That's what the apostle Paul said. Do you want to go to heaven? Believe. Believe what? Believe the gospel. What is the gospel? The gospel tells what God has done in paying for your sin guilt through the death of His Christ upon the cross.

In Romans 5:8-9, Paul says, "But God commended His love toward us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." You're not saved from wrath through your doing, but saved from divine wrath through Him, because His blood was shed in death in payment for your sins.

Then, of course, you have Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Here again is an open declaration that salvation is a grace gift from God apart from human doing. So, don't try to kid yourself that you can make it with God by something that you do. Don't try to kid yourself with God that you can make it with God by taking His great salvation and adding your works. The minute you add that, Romans 11:6 says you have undermined grace. It's no longer grace, and therefore, God will not save you. So, don't go to God and say, "Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, but I'm just not really sure about this water baptism. So, God, I'm going to be water baptized, just in case, to cover all my bets." The minute you go to God with water baptism as a basis of hopefully entering heaven, you are out.

1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us, "For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we are free, or slave," and so on. It declares that we are united to Jesus Christ by God the Holy Spirit. We are joined to him.

Then Romans 8:1, therefore can say, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Because you are in Christ Jesus through the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a result of your faith in Christ, there can be no condemnation. Don't compromise the words. Don't pretend that there can be or there cannot be. Don't pretend that there can be a little condemnation. There's nothing of that kind: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." I presume all of you here are well-enough versed in Scripture to know that you should have taken a pencil and crossed out the rest of verse 1. That is because the rest of that – "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" sounds like it's contradicting exactly what I'm saying. And it does.

Fortunately, it's not in the Greek Bible, so just run a pencil through it. An old scribe, copying this someplace along the line, caught the phrase from verse 4. In verse 4, the phrase belongs. When he wrote this, he was probably a scribe in the Roman Catholic system. He was a monk in a monastery, and he was copying that. He's copies the words: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." A cold sweat broke out on him, and his hair stands on end. He says, "That can't be true. We have to deserve salvation. We have to merit it – the marriage of Christ. We have to do something." So his eye catches verse 4, and he says, "Oh, that's the answer," and he sticks it up in verse 1, and it gets included in the text. Fortunately, we have enough correct copies that we know that somebody stuck it in and it didn't belong there in the first place. There is no condemnation if your salvation is by God's doing on a grace basis. So, lean back; take a deep breath; and, express a deep sigh of relief.

In the church of Sardis, here in Revelation 3, there were many believers who were out of fellowship with their Heavenly Father, and they were in various types of reversionism which we've already looked at. Their garments of sanctification were besmirched with evil. Consequently, their Christian service works were of the human good type, and they were worthless with God. They were the bleeding heart mentality such as we have so prominent in our society today. They were trying to do good for people, and all they ended up doing was great harm to people. Some were indifferently practicing sin in spite of knowing the doctrines of Scripture. Some in Sardis, no doubt, were entirely unsaved, so they were without any garments of white.

However, some of these believers in Sardis carefully maintained their temporal fellowship with the Father. They kept their garments of sanctification clean. Their garments were kept white and uncontaminated by confession of known evil to the Father, as per 1 John 1:9. Jesus Christ declares that these are destined to walk with Him in white at His return because they are worthy through His sanctification of them.

**Ultimate Sanctification**

These white garments here particularly refer to ultimate sanctification – that ultimate separation from the power and the practice and the control of sin – the very presence of sin itself. Ultimate sanctification, of course, can only come about when we are in the presence of Jesus Christ. It is something that takes place in eternity. Then we are sinlessly perfect. Until we put on these white garments of ultimate sanctification, we cannot be sinlessly perfect. This sinless perfection is going to be experienced by every believer here, but it will be experienced only at a certain distinct point in time. And that point in time is the return of Jesus Christ from heaven.

**The Return of Jesus Christ**

So, let's look for a moment at the principle of the Bible doctrine of the return of Jesus Christ. The return of the God-man Jesus Christ to this earth from heaven, physically and literally, is a truth which is taught in the Bible. I should warn you again that most churches do not believe that Jesus Christ is ever going to come out of heaven back down to this earth. That comes as a shock because you automatically think that if you're a Christian, and you talk about Jesus Christ, you know about the return of Christ. That is not the case with most people in most churches. They would laugh in your face at that. They would not tell you outright that Jesus Christ is not going to return, but they would talk about a return that is not the kind of return you are thinking about. They have a qualified different kind of return.

I want to mention a few of those so that when you run into these people, you're not going to be sucked in by the fact that they say, "Oh, yes, I believe in the return of Jesus Christ." You may not have enough smarts to clarify and to seek to define what they mean by the return of Jesus Christ. This is an important truth, and it is embedded right here in this verse of Romans 3:4. That ultimate walking in white (that ultimate perfection) is entirely dependent upon Jesus Christ breaking out of heaven through the clouds and putting His feet right there across from the city of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. It has to be, or you will never have what we're talking about.

**John 14:3 – The Rapture**

The Bible very clearly teaches the return of the God-man. John 14:3 was spoken in the upper room to the disciples. Jesus said, "And if I go (meaning, that if I leave this earth) and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." This is a very important verse, because this verse tells us that Jesus Christ is going to return to take us to where He is now. He is going to return to take us to where He is now in the event of the rapture. John 14:3 could never be fulfilled without the rapture. The rapture truth, spoken of in 1 Thessalonians, is essential to the fulfillment of this verse. That's why the people who do not believe in the rapture (the catching of believers to meet Jesus Christ in the air) are in such deep trouble, because they cannot explain this verse. If you read commentaries on those who try to explain this verse, who do not believe in a rapture event, it is absolutely ludicrous. You can't believe what men will do in twisting and contorting and distorting of the truth in an attempt to evade a problem that they just don't want to accept – the return of Christ in the air before He comes the second time to this earth itself with us to judge the world.

First of all, Jesus said, "I am going to come and take you back to where I am going," and that has to be the rapture. That's what this verse is about. He is going to physically come from heaven, but from other Scripture, we know that the way we are going to get there is for Him to escort us back there after He meets us in the air. When He comes to this earth, we are with Him. But we're here on earth. We're not in heaven. This verse could not be fulfilled by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So, John 14:3 very clearly says that the physical body of Jesus Christ, the God-man, will reappear from heaven.

Hebrews 9:28 also speaks of this as an anticipated event: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." You couldn't state it any more clearly. You couldn't declare any more that He is going to come again a second time, and we look for Him (physically) to return a second time. The second time he comes apart from the sin issue. That problem has already been settled. That is not an issue the next time around.

Then, in Acts 1:9-11, we have a very clear declaration, at the very moment when He left this earth, in telling us what we may anticipate about the return of Jesus Christ: "When He had spoken (that is, Jesus) these things while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. While they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men (that is, angels) stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.'" That is pretty clear. The way He went into heaven (the way you have seen Him depart) – physically and literally, is the way you will see him return. It will be just exactly that way.

Here are three passages of Scripture that are very clear about the return of Christ physically to this earth. That sets the pattern of what the Bible promises about this issue. This is the problem that the unbeliever is faced with. This is the problem that Satan is faced with, because this doctrine is a very big problem to him. This is what the confused Christian is faced with. The Bible really says that Jesus Christ (the man who died on that cross at Calvary) is going to come back alive to this earth.

This is necessary, in part, to fulfill the promise which was made to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 after they have fallen into sin. God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman (that is, between Satan and the woman), and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." At the first coming of Jesus Christ, the divine sentence which sealed the doom of Satan was passed upon him. That was the first stage of the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. In John 12:31, this first phase of the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 is declared. It required the physical arrival on this earth of Jesus Christ. John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Here, because of what Christ has done on the cross, Satan has been defeated; and, the first part of Genesis 3:15 has been fulfilled. He has come under a mortal blow from the God-man, and his doom is sealed.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is going to execute this sentence, and it will complete the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. This execution is in three phases upon Satan. They're all in the book of Revelation. Revelation 12:10-12 gives the first statement. Here we have the declaration of Satan being cast out of heaven to the earth. This is to be done in connection with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: "I heard a loud voice saying, 'In heaven now has come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down (that is, he's thrown out) who accused them before our God day and night." This is a future event. Satan has not yet been thrown out of heaven. The Book of Job makes that clear to us: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore, rejoice you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil has come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time."

When this is executed upon Satan, and when he is thrown out of heaven to the earth, it makes him mad. He is enraged, and he is enraged because he knows the Bible so well that he knows that his doom has been sealed. That has already taken place. The first part of Genesis 3:15 has been fulfilled. Now, when he is thrown out, he knows that the second part is now being set into motion to complete the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15.

Revelation 20:1-3 describe Satan being cast from the earth to the pit of the abyss. Here is what you have. You've got Satan roaming out in heaven, and you have the planet earth. Satan suddenly discovers that he is cast out of heaven onto the earth. The next stage is that God has a place which is called the pit of the abyss. The execution of Genesis 3:15 then takes the second phase, which throws Satan out of the earth into the pit of the abyss. It's an imprisonment place, and that's what we have in Revelation 20:1-3: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven having a key of the pit of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for 1,000 years."

So, now we know that the devil is going to be held in here for 1,000 years here in this particular imprisonment. If he is in here, then he is no longer on this earth. Now Satan moves. He is the power of the prince of the air. This is the area of Satan's operation. He moves around in this sphere. This is the area of his authority. This is the area from which he rules. He has access into the very throne room of God. There are occasions when he comes up, and he is required to come up to God to report. The Book of Job describes one incident such as that. Then he gets back out here where he's functioning. Now, he is going to be thrown out from heaven so that he is no longer permitted to enter into the presence of God in the throne room of God.

At this point in the future, he's now on this earth. Then all hell really breaks loose. This is when the tribulation period really begins to pick up speed, because the devil knows that the Scriptures about him are about to be fulfilled. He has just a short time to go, and he has to get with it. What can he do? Is he going to frustrate God? By this time, he's probably got the message. What he's going to do is to try to wreak vengeance upon humanity. He's going to do exactly what Hitler did when it was clear that the war was lost. There was no turning around. So, what did he do? Did he make peace? Did he save the nation? Did he preserve the people? No. Instead, he said, "I'm going to take it down in flames around me. And that's exactly what he did. The devil is going to try to take it all down in flames around him.

But God is going to intervene. He comes very close to doing that, incidentally. The Bible makes it very clear that if God did not intervene and stop the direction in which humanity was moving, that there wouldn't be a single living human being on the face of the earth. Mankind would destroy himself. So, God says that He shortens these days in order to bring things back under control. The reason man would almost destroy himself is because that's the last effort of the devil to frustrate the plan of God. If all the human beings on earth are destroyed, how in the world are you going to have a millennial kingdom on earth with Jesus Christ ruling, which requires human beings in non-glorified bodies?

Remember that some of us are in glorified bodies during the millennium, but the earth itself is functioning on people in non-glorified bodies. If Satan can rub them all out of existence, that's his last attempt to frustrate the plan of God. Trying to kill the baby Jesus within the first two years of His birth was another attempt to frustrate the plan of God. It always centers on something dealing with humanity, because that's the agency through which God works.

Well, the devil is cast from access into heaven to the earth, and Revelation 20:3 says, "And cast him into the bottomless pit of the pit of the abyss, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more till the 1,000 years should be fulfilled. After that, he must be loosed a little season." So, you come to a period where the devil for 1,000 years is off the earth. He's in an imprisonment. Now, you're faced with a world of humanity which has evil from just two sources. That is the old sin nature within the person, and very little from the world. The primary sources of evil are the world, the sin nature, and the devil. But the world is going to be brought under an enforced righteousness when Jesus Christ now has His throne upon this earth and He's ruling. So, there's not going to be too much evil from the world itself. It's just going to be that evil which is within mankind. It's going to be a fantastically different world. That's why the world is going to be just rubbed clean of all this garbage of human good which the institutions of our society shovel out upon humanity today, and which the political and educational and religious institutions are constantly shoveling out upon humanity as well. They offer only human good solutions. And we will learn a little later, when we come to the last letter, that God vomits those human good solutions out of His mouth, and God completely rejects them.

Here you have a world that's only struggling with this one factor: man's sinful nature. That thing, in its expression, is brought under maximum control. There is no more getting away with things. There are no more Abscams. There is no more mafia. There is no more any of that sort of thing. Nobody is getting away with anything. Does that make everyone happy? We find that the kids who are born during the millennium are going to discover that they have major restrictions upon them: there is absolutely no pornography; there is absolutely no indulgence; and, there is no permitting the sin nature to have its way. They reject Jesus Christ. They hate Him, but they can't take any open action against Him, so they seethe within themselves. Only at the end of 1,000 years, when the devil is permitted to come back out of this pit of the abyss to hit the earth once more, can he rally that group of humanity to himself with one last effort to destroy the plan of God.

When that has come to frustration, then the third event takes place. That is that Satan is cast off the earth into the lake of fire. That is the place where he spends his eternity. Revelation 20:10 gives us that third phase: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever." If you have any doubt of the fact that hell hurts, and that the place that we refer to as hell (the lake of fire) is a place of burning, you just better read that verse again. Revelation 20:10 leaves no doubt about it that it's a place of pain. It's a place of punishment. It's a place where you're paying for the consequences of rejecting the provision of Jesus Christ.

So, the return of Jesus Christ physically to this earth was necessary. His first coming was necessary to fulfill the first part of Genesis 3:15. His Second Coming is necessary to complete the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, of complete subjection of Satan to the will and the power and the control of God. Part of Satan's effort to keep people out of heaven is to keep this part of the truth about the glorious gospel away from people. So 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "In whom the god of this age (that is, the devil) has blinded the minds of them who don't believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." That is because part of that light of the glorious gospel is the return of Jesus Christ.

The way that Satan keeps this thing in the dark is by coming up with a series of false explanations of what the Bible means by the return of Jesus Christ. So, I want to introduce you to what some people mean when they say, "Yes, I believe that Christ is going to return," and you have to analyze and discover what they are actually saying.

**A Spiritual Return**

Some people say that the return of Jesus Christ is not physical, but it is a spiritual return. So, one claim is made that when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, that is when Jesus Christ returned to this earth, in the person of God the Holy Spirit. In John 14:3, as we've already seen, Jesus Christ declares that He is going to come again: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, you may be also." The people who believe in the spiritual return say, "Now, you will notice that this chapter continues on in verse 16-17 with these words: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it doesn't see Him, and neither knows Him. But you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you."

First, Jesus, in verse 3 of this chapter, says that He's going to return. Then in verses 16-17, He says that He's going to send God the Holy Spirit to them as another Comforter. Then they note that in verse 18 that Jesus says, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." So they connect these three passages together and they say, "You see, Jesus did say that He's going to come again, but He said that He is going to send the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter; that is, to be our helper. And then He said that He would never leave us comfortless (helpless). He would always be there to help us. He fulfilled that by coming back in the person of the Holy Spirit.

So, the conclusion is drawn that the return of Jesus Christ is a spiritual one, and not a literal physical one. However, there is a difference when you are dealing with deity in the form of a God-man, between the spiritual presence of Christ in the power of His omnipresence, which is part of His deity, and in His physical presence, which is part of His humanity. There is a difference between spiritual presence in omnipresence and physical presence in His humanity.

God the Father has also come to this earth spiritually in the person of the Holy Spirit, because what one person of the Trinity does, the other persons of the Trinity also do. They are unity, and they act as a unity, even though they have specific offices to perform. So, we could also say that God the Father came spiritually in the person of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said very clearly that it was the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ who was in heaven who sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. That is, Jesus did not come with the Holy Spirit, but rather He sent the Holy Spirit.

Notice Acts 2:32-33: "Thus, God raised up Jesus, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God (exalted), the resurrected Jesus (in Heaven), and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit." Jesus made the promise to the disciples of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the basis of fact that the Father had told him that He was going to do that. The Father was going to do that. "He has set forth this which you now see and hear," which is the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter is speaking to the crowd here on Pentecost.

So, Peter says here that it is the Jesus who is in heaven, to whom the Father promised to send the Holy Spirit, and which information Jesus passed on to the disciples, who has sent the Holy Spirit from heaven. So, there is a clear distinction here, as Peter describes what happened here on the day of Pentecost between the presence of the Holy Spirit here on earth and the presence of the God-man Jesus in heaven. The two are not equated.

A few days after Pentecost, as a matter of fact, Peter declared that the Father would send Jesus Christ, and that had to be a future event. In Acts 3:20, speaking a few days after Pentecost, Peter said, "And He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you." There, you have it. Pentecost has taken place. The Holy Spirit has arrived, just as Jesus said He would, and just as the Father promised to Christ that this would take place. Then Peter still says that Jesus Christ is still coming in the future: "And He (the Father) shall send Christ who before was preached unto you."

So, obviously, if the Father is still going to send Jesus Christ, He has not fulfilled that return. Peter distinguished the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost from the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. The latter is still a future event. This is a false interpretation of the concept of the return of Christ. It is one of Satan's devices to confuse people and to try to discredit the doctrine of the return of Christ.

**Coming in Judgment**

Another false assumption about the return of Jesus Christ is that He is merely coming in judgment. This is the concept of Jesus Christ returning to this earth in judgment. This is based on the fact that Jesus Christ warned the disciples of the destruction of the temple. When He warned them of the destruction of the temple, this led to a question on their part. They wanted to know when this event would take place and what would be the sign of His return. Matthew 24:3: "And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately saying, 'Tell us, when shall these things be (the destruction of the temple)? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" In response to this question, the Lord Jesus Christ said that the generation which was living at the time that these things begin to take place would see all of these things which He has predicted being fulfilled.

Matthew 24:34: "Verily, I say unto you. This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." What generation? Well, you have to go back into context. He's referring the word "this" to the people who are living at the time that verse 29 begins. Verse 29 begins describing the events of the tribulation era – these tremendous events preceding the return of Christ to the earth. All of these things are going to come upon the earth. Today, we indeed see all of these things beginning to shape up: the attitude of the nations relative to the Jewish people; the conduct of nations toward nations; the situation of peace between nations; and, the events in nature: the earthquakes; and, the upheavals of nature of one kind or another. All of these things are described here in the context. Then He summarized it in the fact that He uses an agricultural illustration in saying that when you see leaves coming forth from the branch on the tree, you know that spring must be at hand. And He said, "When these things begin to take place, you know that My Second Coming is near. The people who are living when these things begin to take place are going to be alive to see them right through the end.

That is what is so impressive to us today – that we are the generation which is today alive, seeing these things take place. And the anchor point of all of this seems to be when Israel became a nation in 1948. It is a nation that again became the focal point of the world's antagonisms. From then on, these things began to fall into line. And 40 years is a generation. Whoever is alive when these things start taking place is going to see them through to the end. That's what Jesus was referring to here in reference to the coming in judgment.

Then in Matthew 16:28, Jesus declared something else which is the basis of this idea that He is coming in judgment. Jesus said, "Verily, I say unto you, there are some standing here (at that point in time) who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom;" that is, coming in His kingdom, glory, and power. Well, you know that that was fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter, James and John actually saw the glory of Jesus Christ come through, and they saw Him as He is going to be seen when He returns. That's what Jesus was saying in verse 28. It was unfortunate when they divided the Bible into chapters that they did not realize that verse 28 belongs in chapter 17. If you'll just slip verse 28 right there ahead of verse 1 of chapter 17, then it'll all make sense. They should not have separated that, because chapter 17, beginning at verse 1, immediately goes to the fulfillment of verse 28 in 16.

This was fulfilled, as I say, by that event on the Mount of Transfiguration. You can read this in Matthews 17:1-7, and then compare 2 Peter 1:16-18 where Peter declares that they had seen His glory. And they saw it where? Peter makes it very clear. They saw it on the Mount: "We saw him the way He's going to be when he comes in His kingdom."

So, here you have these events that are the basis of this idea that the return of Christ is a matter of His coming in judgment. He is coming to judge this world. That judgment is including the destruction of the temple. Well, that has been done. The temple was destroyed. And He is coming in great glory, and He is going to come in the power of His glory. That was fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration.

So, the coming of Jesus Christ has already been fulfilled. The temple has been destroyed. He did come in judgment. He has come in His glory. That was fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration. Mrs. Danish and I saw that Mount this summer. That has been fulfilled. His return has already arrived (not His physical return). However, the book of the Revelation was written 25 years after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. And notice what Revelation 22:7 has to say 25 years after the judgment of God upon Jerusalem, and after they saw the Lord in His glory: "Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Verse 12: "And behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

I love those 2 verses of Revelation 22:11-12. Here is Jesus Christ signing off the last book of the Bible (the final words). And that's going to be the end. There's something about final words that when people are about to die and they have one last thing to say, they make something important. They say something that is at the heart of what is critical. Verse 11 tells you, in effect, to live a godly life, and that requires the intake of doctrine into the soul. Righteousness and godliness require the intake of the Word of God into your soul, or you cannot be a holy person. To be holy means to be compatible with the integrity of God. To be compatible with the integrity and the holiness of God requires doctrine in the soul to make you that.

Then verse 12 says that He is coming to reward those who function on that kind of God living, because that kind of godly living produces divine good production. I think that is fantastic. These are His final words, and what does he tell us? "My children, get with doctrine into your soul; feed upon the Word of God; be fans of the Word of God; do not let a day go but what you are in the Word of God; and, don't let a day go by that you don't have your nose in the Bible, or that you don't have your ear into a tape that carries the Word of God explained on it. The result of that is going to be that when I come back, I'm going to have such rewards to give to you like you wouldn't believe. But I'm going to give it to you according to your works – what you do determines what you get. I come quickly. My reward is with Me to give to everyone according as his work shall be."

And notice Revelation 22:20 of this chapter. He also testifies these things: "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus." This is the last prayer of the Bible. Notice that verses 7, 12, and 20 of Revelation 22 were written 25 years after the temple was destroyed; God has exercised that judgment; and, Jesus Christ is still coming. So, obviously, His coming in judgment upon the temple and His revelation of Himself in His millennial glory did not fulfill what the Bible talks about in terms of the return of Jesus Christ.

The actual future return will be in power and in great glory. This is taught in Luke 21:27: "Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." That is how we will see it. He cannot come in power and great glory (and you can't see Him coming like that) unless He comes physically. The judgment upon evil, in connection with the temple and its destruction, could not fulfill that kind of a coming. Compare that with verse 20: "And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that its desolation is near." Verse 24: "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations. Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled."

Here is the prediction again of judgment upon the people of God of Jerusalem. When the antichrist sets up that abomination of his own image in that reconstructed temple of the Jews (which in all likelihood will be this great synagogue that they're building now in Jerusalem), and the antichrist turns against them, then they're going to find themselves again under the destruction of the sword. They're going to be taken captive, and they're going to be trodden down. This was, of course, fulfilled already in type in 70 A.D. And until the gentiles no longer control Jerusalem, they will be trodden down under his heel. The termination of the times of the gentiles will mark the approach of the return of Jesus Christ, indeed, in his Second Coming. And the Jews seem to have sealed that termination of the times of the gentiles. They not only have the city of Jerusalem, but they have now declared it as an irrevocable part of the land of Palestine, of the land of Israel, and now their national capital. That is a significant move in terms of Scripture. So, the actual return is going to be in such power and such glory that there'll be no doubt in anybody's mind as to what is happening.

There are a few more of these false interpretations of the return of Christ. That return is so important to us because it's going to give us our ultimate sanctification, and along with that, it's going to give us something else. I can see that we're not going to hit that in this session. I had hoped we were going to get to it. We'll have to do that in the future. But those of you who wake up every morning wondering whether you're going to make it that day to heaven or to hell (because you're not sure whether you're going to be able to hang in there) are going to find that Revelation 3:5 is one of the all-time great verses of the Bible to give you peace in your soul relative to your future and your destiny. But first, we have to establish a few more of these false concepts of the return of Jesus Christ and what that means. We'll look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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