***The Coming of Jesus Christ

RV37-01***

We are studying the church at Sardis in Revelation 3:1-6. Those among the congregation at Sardis who were maintaining their temporal fellowship are described as being clothed in white garments. We have indicated that this is symbolic of the concept of sanctification; that is, the concept of being set apart to a certain destiny in the plan of God. There is for every believer the promise from Jesus Christ of ultimate sanctification as well, which is represented by future white garments.

So, we have been reading here in Revelation 3:4, "You have a few names, even in Sardis, that have not defiled their garments. They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy." Here the white garments representing sanctification unto salvation, having been made worthy by an act of the grace of God. Then the first part of verse 5 says, "He that overcomes." We have seen that that refers to those who are born-again believers. "The same (that is, the overcoming ones) shall be clothed in white raiment." Here is a future sanctification which is an ultimate sanctification – an ultimate fulfillment of our salvation. This is the time of sinless perfection. It is to be fulfilled (and can only be fulfilled – the only time we can become senselessly perfect), the Bible makes it very clear, when we see Jesus. Therefore, that means that that ultimate sanctification (putting on this ultimate garment of white) awaits His return.

**The Return of Jesus Christ**

So, we've been looking at the subject of the return of Jesus Christ for the believers. This is to be fulfilled in the return in the air which we call the rapture. This is a promise which is to be realized by all overcomers; that is, by those who are born-again people. This doctrine of the return of Jesus Christ to this earth is a doctrine which has been perverted by Satan and has been resisted by mankind. We have looked at a series of those perversions.

**The First Coming**

As the first literal and personal coming of Jesus Christ was inevitable, so also is the inevitability of His Second Coming. That first coming was indeed no surprise because the Bible was very clear that it was going to happen. This is just as the Second Coming cannot be a surprise because the Bible has been very clear on the fact that that is going to come to pass. But centuries went by, and still there was no Messiah Savior. Then suddenly, at the right point in time, that first Christmas took place. It almost seemed like it never was going to come, despite having so declared that God was going to send a Messiah Savior, and it began way back there in Genesis 3:15. There was the first declaration that it was going to happen. It was repeated in a variety of ways. Finally, suddenly, one evening there was born in the city of Bethlehem the God-man Jesus Christ.

**The Second Coming**

So it did come to pass, and everybody could look back and say, "Well, it looked like it was never going to happen. Look at all these centuries. But it did happen. Finally, it's here. That's what's going to happen at the Second Coming of Christ. You must be careful not to fall into the category of those that Peter speaks about who very cynically say, "Everything has gone on the same since our fathers were here on this earth. There's nothing different. Where is the promise of His coming? Years and centuries have gone by and nothing has happened." But the truth of the matter is that the Second Coming will be just as sudden as the first. One of these days, all of us are going to wake up to the day in which we're going to be removed from this earth just as suddenly as the shepherds woke up to the day (on the day that they woke up) when they discovered that the Savior had finally arrived. It's going to be an abrupt event.

The return of Jesus Christ will mean, of course, the judgment of God's holiness upon those who lack these white garments of salvation. Those who lack the garments of sanctification (setting apart into eternal life) are going to face the judgment of God. That's what happens when you meet your God. That's why Amos announced to Israel of old those dramatic and frightening words, "Prepare to meet your God." Sometimes you drive along the highway and somebody has put up a highway sign and you see these words emblazoned, "Prepare to meet thy God." It isn't just a motto (a phrase) that someone invented. That is Holy Scripture. Those are the words of God the Holy Spirit. It is emblazoned for people to be aware of the fact that, as Amos of old indicated, when you do meet your God, that is a time of judgment. So, it is a very serious matter.

In connection with that fact of meeting a god of holiness without the white garment of salvation, I'd like for you to turn for a moment to the gospel of Luke 16:19. We are reading an incident which is recorded here in Scripture which is an historical event. This is not a parable. The Lord Jesus Christ is not giving a parable here. A parable is an illustration. It's a made-up story. This incident here in Luke actually really happened. The evidence for that is that a parable, because it's a make-believe illustration, never uses names. It never gives names to the people who were involved in the parable. It just describes them in terms of occupation or something they're doing. When an historical event is given, then you're given names; times; dates; places; and, so on. So, you must understand that what we have here that we are reading is something that actually happened in a point in time in history. This is not just a made-up illustration.

Jesus says, "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day." This means he was rich. He was on the top of the pile. He had everything in the world. He had all the money he needed, and he lived high on the ... land. Verse 20 says, "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus who was laid at his gate full of sores." Here was a fellow at the other end of the social scale, right down at the bottom, who had zero. He had nothing, and wasn't in good physical condition either. "And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores." The dogs took more pity upon Lazarus than did the rich man. "And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's Bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, he lifted up his eyes, being in Torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

The Old Testament term for the saved the part of Hades was "Abraham's Bosom." The Greek term was "paradise." Both of these refer to that section of Hades which was for the born-again believers. The section of Hades which was for unbelievers was called Torments. That's where the rich man, who was an unbeliever, found himself. The word is used advisedly because it describes exactly what was happening to him in this place. It was a place of extreme pain, agony, and personal suffering. There was a lot of screaming; there was a lot of moaning; and, there was a lot of groaning. The Bible tells us that people who are in this place, in the intensity of their pain, grind their teeth. They gnash their teeth together in an attempt to try to soften the pain and the suffering that they're undergoing.

So, things have changed very dramatically. The rich man is suffering now and the poor man, Lazarus, is in complete happiness and bliss. They have changed 180 degrees. "And he, the rich man, cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I'm tormented in this flame.'" Since this is an historical event, it tells us what hell is really like. Hades, you remember, is the temporary abode of the dead since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The section called "Abraham's Bosom" (or "paradise") has been transferred into heaven. Only people who are unsaved now go to Hades, and they're in the compartment of Torments. Hades also has a third compartment, which is the place in which the angels are kept at – the area where the angels are incarcerated who were involved in the co-habitation with women in Genesis 6 that created the hybrid race. That was one of Satan's attempts to destroy the purity of the human race in order to try to prevent the possibility of a Savior coming. Tartarus is the name of that place where these angels are kept in particular restriction imprisonment and enslavement in a place of darkness. But now, only the people who are unsaved go into the place called Torments.

It is a place of suffering. The flames are there, and you feel it, and it hurts, and there's no end to it. At least if you fall into a flame, if you're caught in a house that's on fire, the time comes when it doesn't hurt anymore because you get burned up, and it's at an end. But this does not happen in the place of Torments. So, all he asks for is just a drop of water on his tongue – that little bit of relief. "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received good things. Likewise, Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted, and you are tormented.'" He is saying, "Rich man, you had everything in life. Now you have nothing. Lazarus had nothing in life. But now he has everything. The truth of the matter was, rich, man, you didn't have anything in life because you did not have God. Without eternal life, you were a zero. Lazarus, who did not have anything in terms of the world's goods, was born again. He had everything. The best was yet ahead for him while the worst was ahead for you."

Verse 26: "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed so that they who would pass from here to you cannot. Neither can they pass to us that which would come from there." You cannot go from the Torments side to the Abraham's Bosom side. You cannot go from heaven to hell. There is no intermediate position. The Roman Catholics have propagated a monstrous and monumental lie which they picked up centuries ago from the Babylonian mystery cult religious system of a place called Purgatory, where a person could come into an intermediate state, and go from a place of suffering for his sins to a place of comfort and joy. But that is very clearly contradicted by the Scripture. You cannot go in eternity from a place of suffering to a place of comfort. You go either to one or the other. It is a very serious matter that you understand that.

I get a little tired, once in a while, of people who come up to me and think I'm a little too tough on the Roman Catholics, and ask me, "Do you really mean that? Do you really mean to portray them as being a hideous and a terrible and a monumental source of deceit upon the human race?" You bet that's exactly what I mean. And anybody who believes what the Roman Catholics have to say concerning eternity and the entrance into eternal life is going to find himself rubbing shoulders with this rich man. I can guarantee you that on the basis of Scripture. So, you better believe it when we say that the Roman Catholic system is a system which is devised by his majesty the devil to keep people from entering the blessings of eternal life. Unless people understand that now, they're going to go along with that system. So, don't you back off and be so interested in being an accommodating person and having good public relations that you will hesitate to sound forth to people the terrible danger in which they stand in these systems that do not have a plan of salvation that is structured upon non-human doing and the grace of God as a gift from Him alone. That is critical.

Verse 27: "Then he said, 'I pray you, therefore, Father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." This rich man's thoughts go back to the days when he and his five brothers used to live it up. They were a bunch of hell-raisers, and they had a wonderful time around town, and they had everything materially to be able to live like that. They all made light of the religious people. Whatever they heard about God, they passed it off. They made cute remarks like, "Well, I don't mind if I do go to hell because all of us are going to go there together. Boy, we're having a good time now. We're going to have a good time there when we get there because we'll all be together. That's where my friends are going to be. Man, that's where I want to be." All of these cutesy-poo remarks are trying to justify a very serious future.

This guy is not laughing anymore. He's not having a gay old time anymore. In his mind, he is saying, "This was true. What has happened to me is going to happen to them. They don't know what dire mortal danger they stand in if they keep thinking the way we used to think together, and if they keep making light of preparing to meet their God, as I once made light with them. I want to warn them. If it's too late for me, it's too late for me, but I must reach out." This is a very tender moment here, in Hades itself, for this man to be concerned for his own brothers. He says, "I want to reach out, and I want to stop them." It's a pity that we cannot have more Christians who are alive and kicking on the face of this earth who want to reach out and stop – people who are not so concerned as to what people think about them; what profit there is to their business; and, what benefits there are to them socially if they mark themselves as the so-called fundamentalists, and as they mark themselves as one of those narrow Biblicists who believe that there's only one way to go to heaven, and if you don't take that way, you're out. This man would have given anything in the world if he could have made that clear to his brothers now. But that was not to be.

Verse 29: "Abraham said unto him, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.'" You understand that, don't you? How did they have Moses and the prophets? They had them in the Old Testament Scriptures. That's where they had what Moses had to say and what the prophets had to say about God. They had Amos's statement, "Prepare to meet your God," and all the full explanation as to how to go about doing that.

And he said, "No, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." This tells us something about the attitude of this man and his brothers previously toward the Bible. Right away, Abraham says, "They have all the information in Scripture." Obviously, these brothers apparently knew the Scriptures. They knew what God expected of them. But the brother says, "No, we didn't take the Bible seriously. We didn't view the Bible as a book from God. We didn't view it as a supernatural book. We viewed it as a book of man trying to express his religious opinions. Man is fallible. Therefore, man cannot express anything without making mistakes. Man can't say anything just exactly right. So, the Bible, written by men, can't be exactly right. There have to be mistakes in it. There have to be errors. It's got to take something more. It's got to take something that'll get their emotions going."

Somebody recently told me that someone who had been listening to Berean church tapes, who is in the charismatic movement, criticized the tape saying that, "They only appeal to the intellect." And the person who heard it said, "What else is there?" But the person who was objecting didn't want to have to think through what God had said. She (a female) wanted to feel something as to what God had said, thinking that these empty feelings were somehow going to get to God.

I'm sure the rich man had some feelings about religious matters, and it got him straight into Hades. He was trying to argue with Abraham here, saying, "No, it must be something that has some emotional kicks. They're not going to respond just because you give them a Word of Scripture. That's just appealing to the intellect. We've got to get something that will scare the devil a lot of. If I come back from the dead, I guarantee you that I'm going to scare the devil out of them." No, you're not. This is Scripture, so don't argue with it.

Verse 31: "And He said to them, 'If they don't hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.'" That's a little clue to as to what the answer is as to what the world is going to think when, suddenly, at the beginning of the tribulation period, all of us are taken up to meet the Lord in the air, and there are millions of human beings suddenly missing off the face of the earth. Are they going to believe? No, they're not. They're going to have an explanation. All of the ignorant intellectuals of the Eastern establishment are going to start braying answers that will demonstrate that there is a logical explanation for all this, and nobody should get excited because a bunch of people have rushed out to their survival huts out in the desert that they've all prepared, and they all left on the same day. There'll be an explanation. I guarantee you.

This man is told, "If somebody comes up and says, 'I've just been raised from the dead,' his brothers wouldn't believe it, even if they saw their own brother." What He is saying is, "They won't believe it. They'll say, 'You so-and-so, we thought you were dead, and you played a trick on us. You never did die.'" They would have some explanation as to what happened, but they won't believe it.

That's interesting, isn't it? Boy, does that make the Bible important? That's probably the most important book you own. The content of the Scriptures is probably the most important thing you need to know. There is hardly, it seems, anything that's going to make it for you if you don't know the Bible.

**John Lennon**

This week in the news, we have had the sad picture again, in all likelihood, of the incident which we have just read being repeated again by a very famous personality in the death of John Lennon. John Lennon of the Beatles once declared that he and his fellow Beatles were more popular than Jesus Christ. And that probably was true on this world scene. But John Lennon should have been warned by the fact that that was true. This should have been a big clue to him to say, "Hey, I'm moving through a culture that has no end of adulation and worship and praise for me and my three companions here. What is there about us that is so appealing that the same people are so antagonistic toward Jesus Christ? Why are they so indifferent and so neutral that they don't care about Him? The very fact that we appeal to these people must tell us that we are some someplace on the wrong track." It apparently never occurred to him.

Yet, we cannot fail to recognize that one of the qualities of deity in which human beings seem to approach to become most godlike is in the quality of creativity – the ability to create. John Lennon had this in a very fantastic degree – musical creation that is not often found. He had it. Yet, what did he do with it? He took that gift of God of creativity to encourage rebellion against all principles of biblical morality. He didn't make any pretense about it; his followers didn't make any pretense about it; and, his fellow Beatles didn't make any pretense about it. They exhibited antagonistic rebellion of biblical principles of morality. Therefore, they indulged all aspects of sensuality. So, that creative capacity was taken to write a song like Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds – the code words for the exaltation of LSD, and for the acid-dropping lifestyle. Nobody was pretending that the song meant anything else. The Beatles didn't pretend, and Lennon didn't pretend. It was an exaltation of taking the temple that God has designed for the indwelling of His Holy Spirit to be perverted and to be destroyed with chemical indulgence.

A few hours before John Lennon's tragic death, he had an interview. In that interview, he spoke about the 80s, and how we had to make the 80s better than the past, and how that it was a time when all would be well. He was stressing the fact that it's up to us to make it that way. This again revealed where his orientation laid. It was up to fallen man to make it – not for man to look to God to give us direction. And he reminisced about the 60s and the days of turmoil. You may remember those days of the college rebellion and those days of the dropping-out era of the drug generation. He told about the turmoil of the 60s. He said, "We survived it. We survived those days." And he said, "And we thank God." And I listened as I heard these chilling words come over the air with his voice: "And we thank God, or whatever it is that's out there, for the fact that we survived."

How tragic that he has repeated the rich man's experience of Luke 16, and he has discovered what is out there. It's not Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds. It is a God of maximum integrity whose judgment is going to be executed on those who do not have the white robes of salvation, and who are destined for ultimate sanctification. What a tragic statement it was, only like two or three hours before his soul left his body, to say, "Whatever it is that's out there."

Since then, some have committed suicide in their grief over Lennon's demise. They committed suicide while Lennon is, in all likelihood, screaming out to them from Hades, "Don't do it." He was like the rich man trying to shout to his brothers, "I was wrong. The Bible is right. There is a God to face. Prepare to meet Him, but prepare to meet Him on God's basis – not on your own basis, because you can't make it that way." I can hear Lennon screaming out in his agony: "This is a horrible trip. Don't do it."

Amos 4:12 says, "Prepare to meet your God." He really is out here. Some people are saying, "I would come back to tell you, but it's all in the Bible. I can't come back, but it's all in the Bible." Only Jesus Christ is going to return and execute divine wrath on unbelievers. When He returns, He is going to execute that divine wrath. Only through Him could John Lennon have escaped the tragic destiny which his creative personality will experience for all eternity. Burning candles; holding vigils; or, stopping the National Football League game for ten minutes today (as his wife had asked for ten minutes of silence), is never in the world going to release John Lennon from the role of the rich man in Luke 16.

So, when the Bible talks about having the white robes with which to face God, it is talking about something for which there is no substitute. The life of John Lennon, with all of his human qualities, is placed in perspective for us in two passages of Scripture that deal with the same incident. The first one is Matthew 16:26-27. I hope that you will put this event (which is on everybody's minds) into perspective for your children. We have asked the teachers and Berean Academy to do this. We have briefed them on some of the ideas related to this man who was so influential, and will continue to be influential in the music that he has written, so that they can put into perspective what God has to say about life and a view such as Lennon held. His was a view of human good.

In Matthew 16:26, we read, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels. Then He shall reward every man according to his works." The tragedy that awaits Lennon is to be compounded when Jesus Christ executes the finality of judgments. For Lennon must leave Hades; he must (with all unbelievers) stand before the Great White Throne sometime in the future; he must have those books opened; and, there will be that monumental list of human good works that was so characteristic of this man. He was a man of peace; he was a man of privacy; he was a man of not hurting other people; and, he was a man of various good works. But all of these, produced by an unbeliever, are evil in the sight of God. It's human good production. And the more human good you do, the greater will be your condemnation in eternity because it's a greater pile of evil that you're going out there with on your record. When they open those books at the Great White Throne, that's what they're going to read. They are going to read this record of human good (this record of evil) against your soul.

Mark 8:36-38: "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels?" It was pathetic when one of the Beatles (I think it was Harrison) wrote a song called My Sweet Lord, and a very famous evangelist was announcing to the public, in his great campaign, of the progress that we had made when one of the Beatles was now singing a song of praise to the Lord. But, unfortunately, the lord in My Sweet Lord was the lord Hare Krishna that it was written to, and not the Lord Jesus Christ. Evangelists aren't often very bright.

I spoke with a man this week, and in the course of our conversation, he presented the argument to me that there has to be something more than Bible doctrine in life. And when he said it, I had to call his attention to a few Scriptures which scream out at us to a statement like that, "That is wrong." There is nothing more in life than Bible doctrine in the soul. I reminded him that Psalm 138:2 said, "I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your truth, for You have magnified Your Word above Your name." Is there anything more sacred that we can conceive of than the sacred name of God? The word "name" represents everything that God is: all of His essence; all of His perfection; and, all that constitutes deity. Yet, He says that He has exalted Bible doctrine above everything that He Himself is as deity. That sounds to me like that is the biggest thing in life. That sounds to me like there just isn't very much else in life of significance other than doctrine in the soul.

There is also Luke 16:29-31 that we just read for one moment that we can add that to this picture that screams out, "You're wrong." There isn't anything more than doctrine: "Abraham said unto him, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.'" This means positive volition toward the Word of God. Verse 31: "He said to them, 'If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.'"

Then, of course, we have Matthew 4:4 which says that, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God." So, don't come around telling me that there has to be something more in life than Bible doctrine. If someone had given John Lennon a really straightforward presentation of the Bible doctrine of salvation, he would have had the opportunity to escape the agonies of Hades that he is, in all likelihood, experiencing now. If someone had given him the doctrine of salvation, there was nothing more important in his life than that.

**The Coming of Jesus Christ**

While Satan has deceived the world in a very great way about the return of Jesus Christ with many false theories, there is indeed a true biblical revelation concerning the return of Jesus Christ. We have looked at the false concepts of this return. We now want to look at the truth. This is, of course, a major theme in the Bible – the coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals the sending of a Messiah Savior by God to the earth. The very first promise of this, as we have already seen, is in Genesis 3:15. At the very point that sin entered the human race, a Savior was promised to come through the line of the woman. The seed of the woman referred to there is Jesus Christ who was born of the virgin Mary.

This same event is referred to in 1 Timothy 2:15 where it speaks about the woman saying, "Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in the childbearing." The Greek doesn't just say "in childbearing." It is definite. It is *the* childbearing, meaning the bearing of a particular child, namely the child Jesus Christ. The woman, along with the man, is to be saved through *the* child which was born by the virgin Mary on that first Christmas day. The coming of Jesus Christ was actually promised to the Jewish people, and it was given in several details. There were several details given in the Bible about the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Let's look at a few of those, because they are important background material.

**The Line of Shem**

First of all, we know that the Bible promised that deity would come through the line of Shem. Genesis 9:27: "God shall enlarge Japheth, and He (that is, God) shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be His servant. Deity is to be dwelling in the tents of Shem. So, here, through the line of Shem, deity was to come into the human race.

**All Nations Will be Blessed**

Genesis 22:18 gives us another detail about the coming Christ: "And in your seed, all of the nations of the world shall be blessed because you have obeyed My voice." All of the nations are to be blessed through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You may want to compare Genesis 28:14 and Galatians 3:16, which apply this seed (singular) to the person of Jesus Christ. So, all nations are going to be blessed through someone who is coming who would be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**The Tribe of Judah**

Genesis 49:10 gives us another detail about this coming one: "And the scepter (that is, ruling authority) shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver, from between his feet until Shiloh, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." So, here you have declared that the tribe of Judah is to be the source of the royal line which is Jesus Christ. You may want to compare Hebrews 7:14 with that.

**A Prophet**

The promise of a coming Messiah was frequently repeated then in Scripture. There was no doubt about it that a Messiah was going to come. He would be deity, and He would be in a royal line. We are told that there would be certain things that would be true about Him. He was to come as a prophet like unto Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). You can compare John 6:14 which recognized that Jesus came as a prophet like Moses.

**A King**

The coming Messiah would also be a king (Psalm 2:6-9, Isaiah 9:6-7). Compare Luke 1:31-33. All of these indicate that the Messiah was to come as a king. The New Testament indicates that this Jesus, born of Mary, was the fulfillment of that promise.

**A High Priest**

We're also told the coming Christ would be a great high priest (Psalm 110:4). Compare that with Hebrews 5:10 where Jesus Christ is identified as that high priest.

**Self-Sacrifice for the Sins of the World**

Another detail is that Christ would make an offering of Himself for the sins of the world. The whole chapter of Isaiah 53 deals with that. Compare that with Acts 8:32-35.

**He will Come on the Clouds of Heaven**

We're also told that Christ will come to earth on the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13-14). Compare that to Matthew 26:64. His coming, yet in the future, will be in that fashion.

**From Bethlehem**

Then we are told that Christ would come from Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 predicted that. Compare that to Matthew 2:5-6 which recognized that fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

**The Sun of Righteousness**

We're also told that he would come to Israel as the Sun of Righteousness – with healing (Malachi 4:2). Of course, that's just what He did.

**The Final Promise**

The final promise in the Bible is about the return of Jesus Christ to this earth in Revelation 22:20.

There is a pattern of expanding revelation in the Bible concerning the return of Jesus Christ. First, there was the simple promise of a coming Messiah Savior. As you read about this in the Old Testament, you get the impression that there is going to be *a* coming of the Messiah Savior. But as you read the Old Testament, you begin to find that there are some conflicting details that are very odd that you can't put together. They seem to be at cross-purposes. In the gospel, you have the revelation expanded from the Old Testament confusion (almost) into two distinct comings to earth. Now, that helps a lot. Suddenly, the gospels make it clear that He comes twice – not just once. In the Old Testament, you get the impression that He only comes once. The first coming proves to include the virgin birth in order to prevent a sin nature. He comes with a sinless life and a ministry of 33 years. It includes His atoning death for the sins of the world; His resurrection from the dead; and, His ascension into heaven.

Then when you get to the epistles of the New Testament, the information expands still more. Here, the return of Jesus Christ is clarified as being in two phases: the rapture for the church (that is, in the air); and, then the return actually to earth with the church. So, you have the rapture, and what we call the revelation. The rapture is related only to believers, and the revelation is related to the whole world.

These two events are separated by the seven-year tribulation period. So, as you look in the Bible about the coming of Christ, the Old Testament says that He is coming, but it describes His coming in a way that is confusing, because it has seemingly contradictory descriptions of that coming. You get to the gospels and you discover that there are two comings. You get to the epistles and you discover that that Second Coming has two phases: the rapture; and, the revelation – two events separated by the seven-year tribulation period.

**The Rapture**

When you get to the book of the Revelation, the information is expanded further to indicate that the rapture includes the resurrection of the dead church saints and the transfer of the living saints into heaven. In heaven, the church then faces the Judgment Seat of Christ called the "Bema" for the determining of rewards for service. After the "Bema" judgment comes the ceremony of the marriage of the church to Jesus Christ. On earth, in the meantime, the final week of Daniel's 70-week prophecy is being fulfilled with the antichrist ruling the world assisted by an apostate super church. During the tribulation, God executes judgment on the world for all the consequences of following Satan's philosophy of humanism. The antichrist, during that period, persecutes believers, although many are saved. So, that's what's happening that we find from the book of Revelation: Christians in Heaven being married to the Lamb on the earth; and, the final judgments of God being executed.

**The Revelation**

Then Jesus Christ returns from heaven with all of us – with the saints. He completes what is called the Second Coming of Christ. The tribulation climaxes in a terrible slaughter in the military campaign called Armageddon. The Old Testament and tribulation saints are then raised from the dead. Old Testament people were not raised in the rapture. Tribulation people, obviously, are not raised in the rapture. Those saints from the Old Testament (all the great people of the Old Testament) are raised after the tribulation. Jesus Christ executes judgment upon the living unbelievers (Jewish and gentile), and He puts them to death. The millennial Messianic Kingdom is set up on earth with Jerusalem as the capital of the world and Jesus Christ as the supreme ruler of all nations.

The Old Testament had many details to give us about the coming of Jesus Christ, but it did not indicate (in so many words) that He would come to the earth twice. He was to come as the seed of the woman, as we have indicated in Genesis 3:15 and Matthew 1:1. He was to come through the nation of Israel (Genesis 12:1-3). Compare Matthew 1:2-3. He was to come from the Jewish tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). Compare Matthew 1:3-5. He was to descend from the family line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-5). Compare that with Matthew 1:6. He was to come through the line of King David (2 Samuel 7:12-13). Compare Matthew 1:6-7. He was to be born in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Compare that with Matthew 2:5. He was to be born of a virgin mother (Isaiah 7:14). Compare Matthew 1:18-23.

So, we have lots of details about the coming of Jesus Christ that are very specifically identifying Him. But, nevertheless, as the person is described, there's an obvious conflict. When you read the Old Testament, you have all of these specific details about this person. Yet, He is described in a way that the Old Testament prophets (Peter said) would look at their own writings, and they would shake their heads and they would say, "I don't understand this. I'm saying things about the coming Messiah Savior that are just the very opposite." They did not understand what was later revealed in the New Testament that is directly related to the judgment of God upon those who lacked the white robes of absolute righteousness. That conflict, in the lines of the prediction concerning Jesus Christ, was finally resolved in the New Testament.

But as we look back upon that in the Old Testament, it's a fantastic evidence, again, of the absolute accuracy of the Bible, and of the truth of the Word of God in every respect. The Lord Jesus Christ returned to the city of Nazareth, where He had grown up, and it was Saturday. So, He went to the synagogue to worship, and He stood up to read the Scriptures, and they gave Him the book of Isaiah to read. He opened it up to a passage in Isaiah 61, and He began to read. And then He did a most amazing thing. I'm sure that everybody in the synagogue gasped and looked up at Him, startled when He did this. But that incident demonstrates to us a very critical factor concerning His own coming to this earth. We'll look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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