***The First and Second Comings of Jesus Christ

RV37-02***

We're continuing now in Revelation 3:1-6. We are studying the letter to the church at Sardis. The believers in this particular local church in the city of Sardis in Asia Minor were promised a future white garment from God. We have read in verse 5, "He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. Those who overcome, we have learned, are those who are born again. This white garment symbolizes the imputation of the absolute righteousness of God which is necessary for entrance into heaven. Absolute righteousness also signifies ultimate sanctification; that is, that point when a believer possesses sinless perfection. That is when you are ready and fit to live with God. Ultimate sanctification means sinless perfection. That is what the white garment ultimately symbolizes. However, the white garment of ultimate salvation is a future event here for the believer. It is experienced at the moment that he comes into the presence of Jesus Christ. This event is naturally related to the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

In 1 John 3:2, we read, "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it does 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." It is at that point that the white garment (promised here) comes into full operation. We fully put it on. So, the event is connected with the return of Jesus Christ.

For that reason, we have been considering, for the past few sessions, this subject of the return of Christ to the earth. Perhaps it is a very fitting subject in terms of the point of time in which we live. Every year that goes by, in terms of where human history has now moved, and where the world stands at this point in time, makes the return of Christ more and more likely. That is exactly what the Lord told us to do – to go about His business; occupy till He comes; but, in the meantime, to be prepared to be moving out at any moment. You are very foolish and a very unbelieving individual if you are not prepared to move out. Come next New Year's Eve, when we gather here and meet that new year in prayer, you should enter that year with a determination to live it (every moment) prepared to move out, and to stop making too much of the immediate future, let alone the distant future, because it's not likely to be ahead for you. So, live so as to be prepared to move out at any moment.

The idea of the return of Jesus Christ to earth from heaven to judge the evil of mankind is, of course, very much under attack by Satan. The return of the Lord signals the final doom of Satan, so this is not something that he looks forward to. Christians who understand the doctrine of the return of Christ to the earth are motivated to prepare for His return, and they are motivated to prepare in terms of storing treasures in heaven. As you realize that your time is shorter and shorter, then you realize that you better get with it. The storing of treasures in heaven is going to make the difference between one person's eternity and another person's eternity. It is not going to be the same for every believer up there. It is going to vary in direct proportion as treasures have been stored in heaven – as God the Holy Spirit has been able to function through you; to use your gifts; and, to invest your life in terms of eternal matters rather than temporal matters.

So, the Christian who understands this doctrine indeed proceeds to live in such a way that he is preparing for that eternity. For this reason, Satan does not want people to understand this truth, because if Christians are storing treasures in heaven, then they are undermining the work of the devil. As Christians are about the Lord's business, they are in direct conflict with what Satan is trying to accomplish. This return is going to be sudden (at any moment), so we live in that moment-by-moment expectation.

Satan himself knew that he was in serious trouble when in Genesis 3:15 we have recorded the words that God pronounced to Adam and Eve following their fall into sin. You remember that, in that passage, we have the promise that there would come a Savior, and that while this Savior would be bruised by Satan, the Savior in turn would bruise Satan with a mortal blow from which he would not recover. For that reason, the devil did everything that he could to frustrate the event of the arrival of this Savior.

Satan actually built his own counterfeit savior in the mother-and-child cult of the Babylonian religion which was established by Nimrod, and which was later absorbed into the Roman Catholic Church, and which permeates the whole Roman Catholic system in the Mary-and-Jesus substitution for the mother-and-child of the ancient Babylonian system. But in spite of all that Satan could do with counterfeits and oppositions of one kind or another, in God's proper time, the God-man Jesus Christ was born in the city of Bethlehem, and the first Christmas day took place.

This first coming fulfilled numerous details which had been predicted about this event centuries before in the Old Testament Scriptures. Satan's best efforts have actually been frustrated by the grace of God. The Jewish nation, as you know, was chosen as the channel for the humanity of the Savior Jesus Christ. These Jews were not chosen (they were not brought into being as a nation) because there was something very special about them. Moses, in his final pronouncements to the Jewish people, after he had led them out of Egyptian captivity (out of enslavement), and they were on the border of entering the Promised Land, reviewed with them their history. And one of the things he pointed out to them in Deuteronomy 7:6-8 was the fact that God did not select them for the prime role that they were to play in the history of the world (including to be the channel for the humanity of Jesus Christ) because there was something special about them. God didn't choose them for that reason. He chose them simply because, by His grace, He decided to take them, and not someone else.

So, in Deuteronomy 7:6, Moses says, "For you are a holy people unto the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself above all people who are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn into your fathers that the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh, King of Egypt."

And indeed, that is what we are dealing with – a rather insignificant group of people – not a mighty nation, as nations on the face of the earth went. They were a people who themselves had just recently been brought out of slavery. This people God had selected for this fantastic event of solving the human problem of sin. This nation has seen the hand of God working for them in bringing them across the Red Sea, and preserving them during the 40 years of wilderness wandering.

This selection by God's grace has, of course, made the Jewish people the object of great satanic persecution. If Satan could destroy the Jewish people, then there could be no messiah through this line. Yet, it is amazing as we think about the birth of Christ, to realize that the very Jews, who were so favored by God and so miraculously delivered from slavery in Egypt, refused to be faithful to their God. It is very difficult to put ourselves into their position, and to say, "How in the world could they be so unfaithful to a God who had demonstrated such grace toward them?"

Moses knew that that was going to be a problem. In this same chapter of Deuteronomy 7, the first five verses are a specific warning to them concerning the temptation to drift off into worshiping other gods and not to be faithful to the God who had destined them for such greatness. Moses said, "When the Lord your God shall bring you into to the land where you go to possess it, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you; and when the Lord your God shall deliver them before you, you shall smite them and utterly destroy them, and you shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy unto them. Neither shall you make marriages with them. Your daughters you shall not give unto his son, nor his daughter shall you take unto your son. For they will turn away your son from following Me, that they may serve other gods. So will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall you deal with them: you shall destroy their altars; break down their images; cut down their idols; and, burn their carved images with fire."

Moses said, "You're going into the land. We are going to take it. God is going to give it to us. You are going to be victorious. There is no question about that. This will not be a war without victory. This will be a war that is destined with victory for you. But you must follow the basic principle of warfare – that you establish peace and protection for your nation by totally annihilating the enemy." Here is a principle of warfare. You must establish peace only in one way – by stopping the enemy's ability to make war and to undermine your moral fiber so that you become weak so that he can destroy you. A morally strong people is a people that other nations cannot destroy.

So, they were told to destroy the people; that is, to kill them all. That includes the babies in the cribs that are crying – to destroy them; and, the young people and the toddlers – to destroy them, as well as the adult population and the teenage population. They were to be wiped out. They were a cancerous element on the human race, and they were to be destroyed. And their religious systems, and all the accouterments of their religious systems, which was again the product of Nimrod's Babylonian substitute religion that Satan established in the worship of the sun – all of that was to be destroyed.

Well, you would think that all this would certainly be very clear, and that all of them, after what they had come through for 40 years; what they had seen; and, what they had been taught, would have made them say, "Man, I know. You don't have to tell me. I know who God is. I know what He can do, and I'm with Him. I don't propose to set myself up against the living God. God has promised a great future for our nation to our father Abraham. Eventually, all the nations of the world are going to be blessed because of us, because from us will come a Messiah Savior. Through us will be fulfilled Genesis 3:15. Do you think I'm crazy? Do you think that I'm going to fight a God who has destined us for that kind of glory? Nothing doing. I'll stay with Him."

But that was not to be. Moses tried to alert them to the fact that there was nothing but good ahead of them if they would obey the Word of God. In Deuteronomy 7:12, Moses tried to make that clear to them. Moses said, "Wherefore, it shall come to pass, if you hearken to these ordinances (that is, the doctrines that they had been taught), and keep and do them, that the Lord your God shall keep unto you the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of the land: your grain; your wine; your oil; and, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you."

Notice that verse 13 begins: "He will love you." He will love you on what basis? On the basis of their keeping the doctrines that they had been given – that verse 12 refers to. What is it that God loves in you and me? Our sincere efforts? Not for a moment. That's the delusion of most Christians. What God loves is what He puts into you. What God loves is what He produces through you. It is what God produces (that you are the beneficiary of) – that's what He loves. Until you understand that there is nothing within us that draws the affection of God, you do not understand how great is the grace of God.

Verse 14: "You shall be blessed above all people. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and will put none of the diseases of Egypt, which you know, upon you, but will lay them upon all those who hate you." He even promised physical well-being. This was, in part, because they had dietary laws. They were told they shouldn't eat certain kinds of foods. They were told that they should proceed to wash their clothing in certain ways. They were to follow certain sanitary procedures. These, in themselves, would preserve them from the diseases that were commonplace among the pagan nations around them. They should have sensed that, indeed, they were under the protective care of God in a very special way.

The religious systems of the Promised Land, which had descended from Nimrod's worship of the sun, were entirely to be destroyed. Deuteronomy 7:16 says, "And you shall consume all the people whom the Lord your God shall deliver to you. Your eye shall have no pity on them. Neither shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare onto you." All they had to do was believe it. All they had to do was say, "I'll have no pity. When I move in on these nations, there are going to be (as there always is in a combat setting) babies and children who cry. When I find them crying, I will silence their crying by killing them on the spot. They are part of a condemned people under the divine judgment.

Do you see why some people who do not understand the bleeding hearts of our society, and who do not understand divine integrity, will read a Scripture like this and recoil in their human viewpoint horror about the God of the Old Testament, and they will make blasphemous snide remarks about Him? How well they are going to learn in the future what the integrity of God is relative to evil, and the consequences of being a part of an evil people.

That's what we face in our nation today. We who are believers (while our destiny is better than the evil people who make up our society) will not escape the consequences that are brought down upon this nation by those who are persistently following the evil of the kinds of things that the Jews pursued here in the Old Testament, and in dealing with the enemies of righteousness.

In verse 25 and 26, at the end of the chapter, Moses says, "The carved images of their god you shall burn with fire. You shall not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto yourselves, lest you be snared therein, for it is an abomination to the Lord your God." Even the very precious metals that were used in connection with these idol gods – they weren't to touch it. It was a filthy thing. It was a contaminated thing. While it was going to be very tempting for them to try to save the gold and silver in the process of destroying the idols, God said, "Don't do it. Neither shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be a cursed thing like it. But you shall utterly detest it, and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing." Don't even bring these images. Don't even say, "Oh, here's a piece of art. Here's a piece of a cultural representation of this people, and I'm not going to save it. I'm going to bring it into my house, and I'm going to have it there." The Lord said, "You detest that thing. You abhor it." Why? Because of what it represents against a righteous God.

That is the problem we have today. We do not detest the evil of our society. We do not abhor the evil of our society. What kind of a nation do we live in when we think of what we have just gone through with the adulation toward the death of a recent famous personality in the form of John Lennon, who was a man of obscenity and of degradation and influence upon the human race? He was a man of great creative ability who was prostituted to an evil end. He was a man whose expression of his lifestyle and his convictions and his beliefs were demonstrated by the record cover on which he and his wife posed for in the nude in order to represent what was inside – the music that they had prepared. Yet, we do not abhor the idols of their music, do we? We put it on; we play it; we enjoy it; and, we think it's wonderful. Some of it is pretty nice. Some of it has quality, but some of it is very definitely designed for an evil purpose. It is an idol expression of a god that is contrary to God whom we worship. It is an insult to Him for us to participate in that music, and to tolerate its words as if it were no matter. That is exactly what the Jews were doing here.

Now, instead of destroying the system, they became enamored with it. It's hard to believe it. I've had many people ask me often, how could they do it? And I must confess, I'm at a loss to explain how they could do it. After all they'd seen, and after all the warnings they had. In Judges 2:10, we're told what their response was to all of this cautioning and all of this preparation for God's blessing: "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers, and there rose another generation (the children of the original generation after them) who knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim. For they forsook the Lord God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods – the gods of the people who were around about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord in anger against the parents."

The parents had somehow failed in conveying to their children, and instilling in their children the same kind of abhorrence that they had for the Baal worship system. The Baal worship system was religious pornography. We have been over that. We don't have to review that now. But basically at the core of the Baal worship, which was the worship of the sun god in the Nimrod system, the core feature of that was illicit sex. That was what permeated the pagan world round about Israel. It was the thing that permeated the pagan world when Jesus Christ was born. This system of Baal worship was very attractive to the Jews, and to the children of the first generation, and beyond them there was this captivating attraction for the Baal system of worship so that more and more the nation moved in that direction. It came to a point under Jezebel and Ahab, where it was the overwhelming majority of the people who were involved in that kind of worship. Elijah himself was so discouraged. He thought he was the only one. But God said, "No, you're not the only one. There are 7,000 other than yourself who have not bowed down to Baal, but out of a nation of a million-and-a-half people, that wasn't too many.

So, when we're talking about the nation through which the Savior is going to be born (the first coming), we're talking about something that was indeed a fantastic act of divine grace. For it was from this kind of people that had subjected themselves to this kind of evil that God was going to bring the Savior.

Well, Satan's successful temptation of the Jewish nation brought upon them great national disasters and ultimately military defeat. Yet, in spite of all this with Israel, the grace of God overrode their rebellion and their evil, because they were His chosen people. From the subjugated nation of Israel, located at an obscure outpost on the fringe of the great Roman Empire, one day there was born the God-man Jesus Christ through a nation that had so rebelled against God; through a nation that had received such chastening; but, through a nation, indeed, who finally, after its Babylonian captivity, had its fill of worshiping the Baal gods, and never went back to Idol worship after that again. The birth of Jesus Christ through such a sinful race of people lets the grace of God shine forth in brilliant glory.

The coming of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem was but the first stage of the fulfilling of Genesis 3:15. The promise of Genesis 3:15 includes the coming again from heaven to this earth. This promised Second Coming has been deliberately perverted, of course, by Satan in ways that we've already studied in order to try to remove its realities from the experience of people. But the return of Jesus Christ is future – seemingly the immediate future. It will be premillennial (before the millennium is set up). It will be pre-tribulation (before the final seven years of Daniel's 70-week/year prophecy is fulfilled). The church will be removed before the tribulation period begins, and the Lord will come before that.

**Humanism**

Humanism, when He does return, will be judged. Humanism is what Satan has established as the latest expression of Nimrod's religious system. So, when we talk about humanism, which is a religious system which permeates our society today, you want to understand that it began back there in the renaissance of the 16th century, where man became the solution. Man was viewed as having ability to solve his problems – the problems of his fallen nature, and the consequences to society. You want to make this connection: humanism was a religion, and humanism expresses itself in a political creed.

**Liberalism**

The political creed is called liberalism. The word "liberalism," unfortunately, has nothing to do with liberty. There was a time, even in our country, in the earlier part of the 20th century, when to be a liberal was identical with what we call a conservative today. Terms have change. There was a time in the early part of the 20th century where, if you were labeled a liberal, it meant that you were a person who was for liberty. But in the early part of our political life here in the United States in the 20th century, if you were for liberty, you were a biblical person. You were for liberty on biblical concepts; biblical morality; the restricted role of government; and, the responsibility of the individual to secure through his efforts the desires that he had rather than to have it provided through some superior government form. That's what liberalism meant. But then, especially since the 1930s, the word liberalism began to be twisted around until it became just exactly the opposite of what it meant at the earlier part of the 20th century. This is sometimes confusing for students of history.

So, remember that liberalism today has nothing to do with liberty. People who are liberals believe in rules and regulations and controls. Liberals want to control people so that they can direct them toward goals that the liberals believe are desirable. They do not begin with the idea of what is human liberty. They begin with the idea of saying, "This is a good goal; this is a good goal; and, this is a good goal, and we're going to put a rope around the neck of humanity, and we're going to jerk him up here to this ideal that we have for them, whether they (by their volition) want to go there or not." That is the concept of liberalism. Therefore, liberalism has at the heart of it, intense government control so that it can force people to its ideals. Liberalism is collectivist; it is totalitarian; and, it is hostile to the family and to Christianity.

You can look back in history, and take the more recent example in Nazi Germany. It did not take Adolf Hitler very long to realize that if he was going to control the people of that nation, he had to change the structure of the family. And he went right for it. The Hitler youth groups were the very first thing that were established. He was spectacularly successful in being able to take children, and through the educational system of the public schools, to put those children to the point where they were so loyal to him personally; to the German nation; and, to Nazi socialism and to national socialism, that they would go to their teachers and they would report on their parents. The children in school were taught to watch for certain things at home. They would spot these things; they would go and tell their teachers; their teachers would report it to their superiors; and, parents were brought under legal action. Many times, children were taken away from their parents. The family unit (the control and the authority of the parents over the children) was successfully undermined.

The full control of people means minimal personal freedom. The antichrist, which is coming in the tribulation, will be the final proof that liberalism is the greatest hindrance to the promotion of human welfare. The greatest liberal of all times will be the antichrist. When he comes on the scene, he will set the economic and the social goals that he considers desirable. Then he will use government to compel compliance apart from the volition of the citizens. So, without his authority, you won't be able to buy your food. You won't be able to have a job to work. He will have brought liberalism to its epitome, because liberalism means control over the personal freedoms of individuals.

This is the kind of a world that already existed in the New Testament when Jesus Christ came into it. He came into it to a nation, the Jewish people, who had a history of moral degeneracy and of rebellion against God. But the grace of God came through. In the future return of Jesus Christ (the Second Coming of Christ), He is going to come back to the same kind of scene. He is going to come again to the scene where humanism reigns supreme as the religion of mankind. We call it secular humanism. Liberalism will be reigned supreme as a political expression. To this picture (to this scene), Jesus Christ is going to return a second time.

**The First and Second Comings of Jesus Christ**

The Old Testament has told us some very interesting things about the coming of Christ. I want to tie this up with the fact that there was a problem, as you read the Old Testament, that the prophets themselves recognized about the coming of Jesus Christ. It was exciting to them, because it was made clear what Jesus Christ was going to do to change the structure of human society from what it had been brought to by liberalism and the religion of humanism. It was exciting. Yet, there was a problem. Here's the problem. There were conflicting lines of prediction.

When the Bible in the Old Testament told about the coming of the Messiah, He was to come as One who would be a ruler over a kingdom on the earth. We have this thought in Isaiah 9:6-7. A Messiah was going to come. He was going to come in power and glory. He would be a great conqueror. Notice what it says: "For unto us a child is born (humanity of the Messiah). Unto us a Son is given." He is deity. The son is not born. He already was the son of God: "And the government shall be upon His shoulder (the world government). And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there should be no end. And upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order and to establish it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

The Jews read that passage and they said, "Hey, our Messiah Savior is going to be the ruler of the world. He is going to be human, and He's going to be God. He's going to be a God-man. He will have a kingdom which will be in the line of our father David. He'll be in the lineage of David. He will rule over the kingdom of Israel. The kingdom of Israel will be a kingdom based upon divine holiness and divine integrity. Do you see the words "justice" and "righteousness" there? That's what makes up divine integrity. That's the kind of a kingdom it will be. He himself will be ruling. And we will be the nation that leads the world. It will be our Messiah coming in power and glory." You may compare many other passages. I'll just give these to you: Isaiah 11:1-5; Isaiah 40:9-10; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Daniel 7:13-14; and, Malachi 3:1-2. All of those passages present the Messiah coming in the line of the tribe of Judah – the conquering powerful line of the tribe of Judah. He is coming in great glory and power. That was very exciting when they read about it.

However, then they would read other prophets, and sometimes even the same prophet, as in the case of Isaiah. Then they would say, "Hey, wait a minute. Here's a different picture of the Messiah. Here, He comes in humility, in rejection, and in suffering. Actually, it says He's going to die." And it is in the writing of the same prophet. Here in Isaiah 53:2-6, you've got an example of this conflict. It is a totally different picture of this Messiah. Isaiah 53:2-6, speaking of the coming Jesus Christ: "For He shall grow up before him like a tender plant, and like a root out of a dry ground. He has no form or comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."

That certainly doesn't sound like a royal personage that you're impressed with – a conqueror. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon him. With His stripes, we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Now, what kind of a picture is this? Here is a picture not of a conquering lion. Here is a picture of a meek and lonely suffering lamb. You may compare this with: Psalm 22:1; Psalm 22:14-18; Daniel 9:26; and, Zachariah 13:7. All of these passages present the coming Messiah as a Lamb in humility and in suffering.

It was sometimes strange when the prophets read their own writings. When Isaiah, for example, finished writing this, and he read this, Isaiah had a problem. He could not figure out how in the world he could have written about the Messiah what he wrote back in chapter 9, and then wrote about the same person what he wrote in chapter 53. And this was repeated many times, as you will see, if you want to pursue those verses that I've given you. But Peter sums it up in 1 Peter 1:10-11 when he says, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and search diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, who was in them, did signify when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." What Peter is saying here is that the prophets themselves were confused. They did not understand how he could be talking about a person who is going to go through such intense humiliation and suffering, and at the same time, he was going to be a conquering world ruler. The picture did not fit together. How could He come in suffering and in glory?

Well, some of the Jewish rabbis have solved this problem by saying that there are two Messiahs. That would make sense. One comes as a conqueror, and one comes in suffering and defeat. When you point this problem out to most Jewish Rabbis, they'll say, "Oh, that's no problem, I know what it is. The suffering refers to our nation." They say that these passages do not speak about the Messiah in suffering. That only speaks about the Jewish people. The idea of the death of Messiah was completely alien to the Jewish people when Jesus came. That was the one thing they simply could not grasp about the statements that Jesus Christ was making in connection with His claims to be the fulfillment of these passages.

In John 12:33-34, John says, "This He said, signifying what death He should die. The people answered him, 'We have heard out of the law that Christ abides forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of Man?'" They just couldn't grasp the idea of the Messiah being a person who could die.

Well, these two aspects of the coming of Christ are often blended into one passage. If you take time to read Psalm 22, you'll see these two aspects: a conqueror; and, a sufferer, and they don't make sense. You read them, and they're all gelled together in one passage. Well, here's the solution, obviously. We, from this side of the cross, see what the problem was. When you visit a mountain range, you realize that you see can see two mountain peaks. From your point of view, the two peaks look very much together. Here is the First Coming of Christ; and, here was the Second Coming of Christ. But when you looked at them, they looked like they combined one peak. It was not until you got closer, and you looked down into the valley and saw the vast territory that often exists between one mountain peak and another, that you realize that you're looking at two different events, but which, from your point of view, seems to be one event.

That's what had happened to the people who were reading the writings of the prophets. The two images of Christ in the Old Testament are clarified by New Testament revelation as two comings. In the first coming, Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God. He fulfilled all the prophecies relating to suffering and death of the Messiah of Israel. The disciples on the road to Emmaus did not associate the sufferings first in the life of Jesus Christ. That's why, in Luke 24:26, Jesus said to them, "You foolish men, do you not understand from the Old Testament prophets that it was necessary for the Messiah first to come as one who is a suffering lamb, and then He comes as a conquering lion?" The Second Coming of Christ is the conquering lion phase. That's the second mountain peak. He fulfills all prophecy, when He comes the second time, that relates to power and glory. The ruler phase comes after the suffering phase.

In Matthew 24:30, we have this principle pointed out: the ruler phase after the suffering phase: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven. 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." The Emmaus disciples just didn't believe all the Bible doctrine that they knew. That is the problem we all have. So, in Luke 24:25, relating to that incident: "Jesus said unto them, 'O, foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." What had the prophets spoken? The prophets had spoken of the coming of Christ in two distinct phases: in power; and, in humility, but they were separated.

**Isaiah 61**

Here's an interesting passage description to tie this up: the indication of two separate comings. Turn to Luke 4:16-21. This is an incident when Jesus Christ goes to the synagogue on one Sabbath day, and He requests to read the Scriptures, and we have this incident recorded: "And He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. As His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. There was delivered to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. When He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written." This is the same book we've been reading from earlier. Here's what Jesus read: "'The spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives; recovering the sight of the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; and, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' And He closed the book and gave it again to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him."

I'm going to tell you that the eyes of them were fastened on because He startled them by what He had just done. He had just declared the words, "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord," and then He closed. He rolled up the scroll, and He handed it back. And people looked up. They looked at Him. They were startled by the fact that He had stopped there. Verse 21 says, "He began to say unto them, 'This day this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears.'"

I want you to turn back to Isaiah 61:1-3 which is where Jesus was reading from... I'm going to read now the translation from the Hebrew which is what Luke was recording as exactly what He was reading: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," and then Jesus stops. But do you notice what is there? It's a comma? And that's what's in the Hebrew in terms of punctuation. You don't stop reading at a comma. That's the middle of the sentence: "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," and the rest of the sentences is, "And the day of the vengeance of our God to comfort all that mourn."

Do you know what happened? The Lord Jesus Christ could not have read past the comma, and yet have said to those people, "This day this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." That is because after the comma is the description of the Second Coming. Up to the comma is a description of the first coming. And do you know what the comma is separating? Between these two mountain peaks is the age of the church. That's what was not revealed in the Old Testament. Between the First and Second Comings was to come in the marvelous era of the unique body of humanity known as believers – Christians who are in the church body of Christ. And they are between those two peaks. So, the comma has been almost 2,000 years long already. It will not be much longer, apparently, but that's how long this comma has been now.

Jesus stopped reading, very fittingly, at that point. The acceptable year of the Lord had to do with the First Advent of Jesus Christ. The day of the vengeance has to do with the Second Coming, as is described for us in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, describing what that vengeance will include. Paul is describing the day of vengeance: "And to you who are troubled, rest with us. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (the Second Coming) in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all of them to believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day."

That passage in 2 Thessalonians is declaring to you the vengeance that Jesus Christ is going to exercise upon humanism and upon liberalism, as it will have come to its epitome of expression in human society in the era of the tribulation. The whole return of Jesus Christ is an exciting and a wonderful future that you and I have before us. It is perverted and distorted, and this was done so by Satan in the early church. You remember that Peter writes how some people are saying, "Where is His coming? Nothing has changed. We've been going on for hundreds of years, just like we have in the past. Where is His coming? Satan has perverted the nature of the coming, trying to spiritualize it. Satan has perverted the expectations of His coming. But when you read the Word of God and you put the pieces together, He's on His way, folks. Never doubt that for one moment.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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