

What Christ is Coming For

Sentimental pictures have sometimes been drawn of Christ returning to live humbly among men as he did before, and to search men's hearts by the impact of his own character and teaching. These bear no relation to the realities of Christ's Second Coming as they are shown in Scripture. Having suffered, he "entered into his glory" (Luke 24:26), and it is in glory that he will appear again in the earth. He will accomplish a work just as real and necessary as that of the days of his flesh, but wholly different in kind.

1. He will raise from the dead and judge those who have known his message and so are responsible to him.

He repeatedly says of the man who truly believes on him, "I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39, 41, 44, etc.).

He also speaks of two classes coming forth from the graves: "They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

This is very like the prophecy of Daniel: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2).

Paul says of the day of Christ's coming: "The dead in Christ shall rise" (1 Thess. 4:16, 1 Cor. 15:23).

Christ links together his judgment and his glory when he says: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in the adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

"Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:33).

Men cannot be ashamed of or deny him unless they have known of him; therefore Christ limits this judgment to a class made responsible by knowledge. This is in harmony with his teaching elsewhere on that which brings men into condemnation: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19).

"The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you" (John 12:48).

"If ye were blind ye should have no sin" (John 9:41).

Paul teaches the same when he says: "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13).

He is writing to the Church at Corinth, "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints", when he says: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10).

And in the parable, it is those to whom their master has "given the money" that are called to render an account before him at his return (Luke 19:11-25).

They are judged according to the responsibility entrusted to them. These Scriptural limitations exclude the old idea of a universal assize. There is evident justice in the teaching of Scripture: those who have not heard the message, though they cannot be rewarded with life as though they had been faithful to it, also will not be condemned as though they had despised it.

Like the animals to whom God "gives their meat in due season" (Psa. 104:27), such men enjoy the benefits of this mortal life only: then they pass away "like the beasts that perish"; "they shall never see light" (Psa. 49:19-20).

2. His Kingdom being an actual earthly realm with a political center, Christ will establish his throne in Jerusalem.

In Psa. 2, which gives a picture of the raging of the nations at Christ's appearing, God says: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion" (v. 6).

"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3);

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom" (Isa. 9:7);

"The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (Luke 1:32-33).

3. He will execute judgment on those nations who try to resist his reign.

"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way" (Psa. 2: 9-12).

“The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake” (Joel 3:16).

“A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord” (Jer 25:31).

In his prophecy of the successive phases of human rule under the symbol of wild beasts Daniel has a vision of the divine judgment to come in the time of the fourth beast; and he says: “I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away” (Dan. 7:11-12).

4. Christ will extend his dominion over the whole earth, and after a reign of a thousand years, which is the final stage in the process of the world's redemption, will surrender the rule to God himself.

“He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust...Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him” (Psa. 72:8-11; Zech. 9:10).

John, describing his vision in Revelation, says the saints who were “made kings and priests unto God” (1:7,5:10) “reigned with Christ a thousand years” (20:4).

“Then (says Paul) cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death...And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15: 24-28).

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