

The Second Advent

Christ the King is coming to reign.

Manfred E. Kober

The promised Second Coming of Christ to earth is the most significant unfulfilled prophecy. In relation to the prophetic Word, the Second Advent (or Revelation of Christ) is mentioned more than any other future event in the prophetic Word. Someone has calculated that in the New Testament alone, 319 verses (1 out of every 25) are devoted to Christ's Second Advent. Further, in relation to world history, the Second Advent will be the great watershed dividing world history into two epochs: (1) man's control by Satan ever since the creation of Adam and Eve; and (2) the control of the world by Christ the returning King.

The first recorded human prophecy anticipates the Second Advent. Jude recorded that "Enoch . . . the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints" (Jude 14).

The glorious return of Christ was first prophesied seven thousand years ago. Zechariah depicted the triumphant appearance of Christ by observing, ". . . And the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zech. 14:5). Essentially the same prophecy that Enoch and Zechariah uttered is found in amplified form at the end of the New Testament, where John envisioned Christ returning from Heaven, seated on a white horse,

and the armies of Heaven following Him on white horses.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. . . . And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean (Rev. 19:11, 14).

The return of Christ, it should be noted, has two aspects: the Rapture, when Christ returns *for* the believers (John 14:1-3); and, seven years later, the Second Advent, when Christ returns *with* the believers. The Rapture cannot be predicted by any preceding signs. From the human perspective, it could occur at any moment. It is imminent. On the other hand, the Second Advent of Christ is preceded by hundreds of signs.

It is important to distinguish between these two comings of Christ. They and the intervening seven years of tribulation constitute a significant part of the yet unfulfilled prophetic Word. Dr. John F. Walvoord has observed on many occasions that if one is straight on the Rapture, Tribulation and Second Advent, he is also most likely correct on the interpretation of the rest of the prophetic Scriptures.

How does one cover approximately

one thousand references to the Second Advent in a few short pages? Obviously one has to be selective. Perhaps it is best to highlight several events surrounding the Second Advent, listing them as much as possible in some kind of chronological order.

The Return of Christ

At the ascension of Christ, the angels addressed the startled disciples with these words: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Christ will return personally and visibly. He will come to deliver His people (Luke 21:28), to judge a wicked world (2 Thess. 1:7, 8) and to establish His righteous and just rule on the earth. Daniel described that aspect of the revelation of Christ.

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not

pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13, 14).

Whereas the return of Christ at the Rapture is sudden, occurring "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52), the Second Advent appears to be a deliberate, drawn-out process to give mankind one more chance to respond in faith to Christ as Messiah. As Christ spoke of His Second Advent in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 25), He referred to some kind of sign that will appear in Heaven before He Himself will return (Matt. 24:30). Zechariah graphically depicted the return of Christ with the view of destroying the nations yet at the same time delivering the Jewish people who accept the crucified One as their personal Savior in the final hours of the Tribulation (Zech. 12:10).

The Rescue of Jerusalem

While Bible scholars differ on the sequence of events surrounding the Second Coming, it appears that Christ first of all returns to the city of Jerusalem, where the nations are gathered in defiance of God. In fact, Jerusalem, "the city of peace," shall have just been destroyed one more time by the Gentile nations. While in Revelation 16:16 Armageddon in Northern Israel is mentioned as one area of conflict at the Second Advent, Zechariah emphasized the extreme situation in and around Jerusalem (Zech. 12:2; 13:1-3).

The Lord at last will say "Enough!" to the Gentile powers who are destroying, desecrating and debauching Jerusalem. He and His armies will return to rescue the city. In His all-wise counsel, He will wait until the last minute before intervening and bringing urgent deliverance.

In the majestic description of the Second Advent by John in Revelation 19, he saw the avenging King returning to rescue the remnant. The armies are aware of the approaching heavenly army and in hatred turn their weapons against Christ and His saints. "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army" (Rev. 19:19).

What a futile effort! While still in the air, Christ will destroy the warring Gentiles with a "sharp sword," "which sword proceeded out of his mouth" (Rev. 19:15, 21). Christ will finish His descent to earth, touching down on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). The shortest route to Jerusalem for Him would be to cross the Kidron Valley and enter through the Eastern, or Golden, Gate. This gate, which has been closed for centuries, perhaps is awaiting the royal return of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

The Removal of Antichrist and the False Prophet

As Christ enters Jerusalem, He will direct His attention to the only two Gentiles who remain alive. Without permitting the false christ and the false prophet to die, Christ will fling them headlong into the Lake of Fire. John described the scene.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Rev. 19:20).

These two insidious individuals, who will have plagued mankind the previous seven years, will suffer in solitude in that eternal place of torment called the Lake of Fire. A thousand years later at the Great White Throne Judgment, they will be joined by Satan and his hosts, as well as the unredeemed of all the ages (Rev. 20:10, 15).

The Restraint of Satan

If the sequence of Revelation 20 to 22 is chronological, then the removal of the two beasts is followed immediately by the restraint of Satan, who had empowered the beasts during their reign of terror (Rev. 13:2, 14). How disgraceful it will be for Satan, who as the former cherub named Lucifer covered the holiness of God (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:14-16), to be bound by another angel and put

out of circulation for a thousand years. John described the binding of Satan in great detail.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season (Rev. 20:1-3).

Satan's demonic host appears to join his fate in the pit for a thousand years. Zechariah quoted the Lord as purging all idolatrous and demonic elements during His reign.

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land (Zech. 13:2).

The Resurrection of the Saints

The binding of Satan will be followed by a remarkable reference to the resurrection of individuals who died a martyr's death during the Tribulation. John wrote:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

Another group that will receive their resurrection bodies at the Second Advent of Christ is the Old Testament saints. While opinions differ as to the time of their resurrection, Daniel seemed to teach that after the Tribulation, "a time of

trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time . . . many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life . . ." (Dan. 12:1, 2). The Old Testament saints, dead by that time at least two thousand years, will receive their glorified eternal bodies along with all the martyred Tribulation saints.

The resurrection at the Rapture is said to be "of the dead in Christ" (1 Thess. 4:16). It seems best to see this resurrection as a reference to Church-age saints exclusively, those who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Of course, all the saints of all the ages have been saved because of the redeeming work of Christ. However, only the Church, the Body of Christ, can be said to be in Christ, through the unique baptism of the Spirit in this dispensation.

The Regathering of the Saved and Unsaved

Christ's Second Advent will be a time of glory for the saints (2 Thess. 1:10), but it will be a time of gloom for sinners.

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not 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 them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (2 Thess. 1:8-10).

At His descent to earth, Christ will be accompanied by glorified saints and by the angelic hosts. These angels will be sent forth to gather believing Israel from all over the globe. Christ spoke of this impressive scene in Matthew 24:31: "And he shall send his angels with great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Through the witness of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5), the ministry of the prophet Elijah (Mal. 4:5; Matt. 17:11), the two witnesses (Rev. 11), the angel (Rev. 14:6) and redeemed individuals testifying

of their Savior (Rev. 20:4), many Jews and Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation. The angels will gather the elect—most likely Israel, but possibly also saved Gentiles—to an audience with their Savior and King in Jerusalem.

Eventually every unsaved individual will be brought to the land of Israel as well, for Israel is where the nations will be judged. Christ spoke of summoning all the nations, or literally the Gentiles, into His presence.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31, 32).

The Reckoning of the Gentiles and Israel

Since the reckoning, or judgment, of the unbelieving Gentiles and believing Israel will take place in Israel, it is reasonable to assume that soon after the Second Advent every single individual on this planet will appear before Christ.

A. The Judgment of the Gentiles

Christ will be seated upon the throne of His glory (Matt. 25:31), separating believing and unbelieving Gentiles as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats (v. 32). He will set the goats (unbelievers) on His left hand, and declare, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (v. 41). How sad it is to realize that though Hell was prepared only for fallen angels, men will be consigned there as well because they have spurned the gracious offer of free salvation.

According to the prophet Joel, the location of the judgment of the Gentiles will be the Valley of Jehoshaphat:

I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. . . . Let

the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about (Joel 3:2, 12).

The Valley of Jehoshaphat may be the Kidron Valley or a valley formed by an earthquake at Christ's return (Zech. 14:4). The "throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31), on which Christ is seated, is the throne of David, which was, of course, located in Jerusalem. Mary was told that to her son would be given "the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32). There are those who teach that Christ is even now occupying the throne of David in Heaven. However, only unwarranted spiritualizing can place an earthly throne in Heaven. Christ distinguished carefully between the throne of His Father in Heaven and His earthly millennial throne: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

B. The Judgment of the Jews

The Jews will also be judged soon after the Second Advent. Ezekiel used the same imagery in Matthew 25, of a shepherd and his flock, to describe the judgment of Israel: "And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people . . . , and I will cause you to pass under the rod . . . , and I will purge out from among you the rebels" (Ezek. 20:35-38). Like the goats of Matthew 25, the rebels will be put to death. The believing remnant will enter the Kingdom.

Where will this judgment of the Jewish nation take place? Some have surmised that the wilderness area is the vast valley called Wadi Arabah, extending from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Eilat. Daniel mentioned the areas of Ammon, Moab and Edom east of the Dead Sea (Dan. 11:4), which will be safe from Antichrist's rule. Israel will possibly find a refuge there from her satanic persecution during the last three and a half years of the Tribulation (Rev. 12:6, 14). Bozrah and Edom are mentioned in connection with the judgment (Isa. 63:1), suggesting that Christ's removal of the unbelieving Jews will take place in the valley south of the

Dead Sea, whereas the Gentiles will be judged in a valley near Jerusalem.

It is impossible to say what percentage of the Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation and become the sheep Gentiles. The apostle John noted that people from "all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9; 14:6) will be saved, though some, of course, are martyred. Among the Jewish people, two-thirds will perish. One-third will be saved because they are believers (Zech. 13:8). What a revival must take place during the Tribulation that such a large percentage of Jews will respond in faith to their Messiah. Along with the sheep Gentiles, they will enter the millennial Kingdom without experiencing death.

The Rejoicing in the Kingdom

Once the judgments are over, and it appears that their duration is seventy-five days after the Second Advent (Dan. 11:12), only redeemed Jews and Gentiles will inhabit the world at first, some in their glorified and some in their natural bodies. The inauguration of the Kingdom will be celebrated with a magnificent meal. Christ promised His disciples a banquet in the Kingdom. As He instituted the Lord's Supper, He assured His disciples: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29).

Similarly, Luke quoted the Savior as promising, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29, 30).

Earlier in His ministry, Christ had promised a joyful meal in the Kingdom: "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29).

All the redeemed of all the ages will be present. The Bridegroom and the Bride will have just returned from Heaven, where the Bride was rewarded and where the Judgment Seat and the Marriage of the Lamb took place. All

nations will rejoice in the Bridegroom's presence. Even nature itself will join in the jubilee of praise as "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 55:12).

Who would want to miss this exhilarating experience in the presence of the

Savior? Simple faith in His redeeming blood will guarantee that we will be on the right side at the Second Advent and at His right hand rejoicing and ruling in the Kingdom. ■

Third in a series on Bible prophecy by Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.



Peek at the Past

50 Years Ago

The lead article in the August 1946 *Baptist Bulletin*, "Why We Entered the Fellowship of the GARBC," by Pastor Arthur F. Williams, related how and why the First Baptist Church of New York City left the Northern Baptist Convention. September's lead article featured Dr. W. B. Riley's endorsement of separatism to the Fundamental Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention. It was read in his absence by Dr. John W. Bradbury, editor of the *Watchman-Examiner*. Stated Riley, "It has taken me fifty years to reach this conclusion. . . . Having been privileged of God more than eighty-five summers, I have seen . . . the political maneuvers (and perfectly comprehended them at the time that they were indulged in). . . . The Convention was created for the express purpose of centralization of power to put over a liberal theology. . . . In some instances we had to wait for years for these gentlemen to write books to uncover their own infidelity."

Calvary Baptist Church, Greene, Iowa, dedicated its new church home.

25 Years Ago

Think it was hot and humid at the 1996 annual conference in Lakeland, Florida? Carl E. Elgena, reporting on the 1971 conference in Winona Lake, Indiana, noted that the thermometer reached 101

degrees the first day of the meetings.

One of the scheduled speakers at Winona Lake that year was Dr. Earle G. Griffith, pastor of several GARBC churches over the years, and third president of Baptist Bible Seminary, Johnson City, New York. Just a few days before the conference, Griffith went to be with the Lord. The GARBC family cherished his memory.

Dr. Bob Jones III assumed the presidency of Bob Jones University.

Each of these churches had (and were praising God for) more than 30 decisions for Christ: Calvary Baptist Church, Monroe, Michigan; First Baptist Church, Grove City, Pennsylvania; First Baptist Church, Newark Valley, New York; and Grandview Park Baptist Church, Des Moines, Iowa.

Calvary Baptist Church, Bellefontaine, Ohio; Banbury Road Baptist Church, North Aurora, Illinois; and Alaska Baptist Church, Caledonia, Michigan, dedicated new church buildings. Midway Baptist Church, Watervliet, Michigan; Brookdale Baptist Church, Moorhead, Minnesota; Bethel Baptist Church, Cherry Hill, New Jersey; and Mount Tabor Baptist Church, Beckley, West Virginia, were in the midst of building construction.