

The Second Coming of Christ

Numerous wars within this century have gripped world leaders with the possibility that the end is near. Among today's prophets of doom are statesmen, educators, sociologists, scientists, and environmentalists.

Thousands are stunned with bewilderment regarding the future. They wander in a maze of confusion. God reveals through prophecy an outline of coming events for the informed Christian. According to Bible prophecy the crisis at the close is not merely a military struggle. It is the last battle in the long-standing conflict between Christ and Satan.

The Seven Last Plagues, preliminary to and including the Battle of Armageddon, focus on the end of human history and the coming of Christ. It is with this background that we enter into this Bible study.

1. What great crisis will this world soon face? Revelation 13:16, 17.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "And he causes all . . . to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

2. If any individual worships the beast, what will he receive? Revelation 14:9, 10.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "If anyone worships the beast and his image . . . he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation."

3. What is the "wrath of God, poured out full strength"? Revelation 15:1.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "Then I saw . . . seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete."

Since Satan hates God, he desires all men and women to receive his mark rather than God's seal. When every human being has chosen between the Mark of the Beast and the Seal of God, the plagues will fall. All who knowingly accept the allegiance of the beast, substituting a human decree for the divinely inspired commandments of God, will be recipients of the Seven Last Plagues.

4. Revelation 16:2-15 lists the first six plagues (1. grievous sore, 2. sea as blood, 3. fountains and rivers of waters as blood, 4. sun scorching men, 5. darkness on seat of the beast, Armageddon). After these six plagues are described, what announcement comes from heaven? Revelation 16:15.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, •'

What sense would it make for Jesus to declare that He was coming as a thief after the plagues if He had come before? This text is Christ's encouragement to His followers urging them to perseverance in light of the imminence of His return.

These plagues are called "The Seven Last Plagues." Ten plagues fell on Egypt in Old Testament times. The first three fell on both the Egyptians and the Israelites; the seven fell only on the Egyptians.

At the end, the Seven Last Plagues fall only on the wicked while the righteous, still on earth, are protected. In ancient Israel the wicked Egyptians held the Israelites in captivity. The plagues broke the hold of the wicked upon the righteous and enabled them to go free.

How does the Bible compare the experience of ancient Israel with the church today? I Corinthians 10:11.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come."

5. Does God promise to protect His people during the plagues? Psalm 91:2-10.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; . . . You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, . . . A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; . . . For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.' "

6. What assurance does God give that He will feed us during this time? Isaiah 33:16, 17.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "Bread will be given him, his water will be sure. Your eyes will see the king in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off."

7, How will Satan attempt to unite all nations at war? Revelation 16:14.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "For they are spirits of demons, . . . which go out to the kings of the earth . . . to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

8. What is this battle called? Revelation 16:16.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."

The word Armageddon comes from the Hebrew "Har Megiddo" meaning mountain of assembly.

During one of Israel's greatest crises, described in the Old Testament, when it appeared that doom was certain, God intervened and sent reinforcements at precisely the right moment. During the last days of earth's history, infuriated by the plagues, the whole world will be turned into a vast battlefield as the wicked attempt to destroy God's people. It will appear as if their doom is certain.

9. As the whole world is mobilized to destroy the people of God, what divine act takes place? Revelation 16:17-21.

THE BIBLE SAYS: "Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, 'It is done!' . . . And there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth."

10. How is Jesus described in Revelation 19:11 - 16?

THE BIBLE SAYS: "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. . . He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood . . . and the armies in heaven . . . followed

Him on white horses. . . . And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

In the last moments of time, Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to finally and completely destroy Satan and his work. Christ's followers triumph; right conquers.

The keynote of the Holy Scripture is the doctrine of Christ's second coming to complete the work of redemption and set up the reign of righteousness. This prophesied event—which has been the great hope of God's servants in all ages—is repeated many times both in the Old and New Testaments. Job 19:25-27; Psalms 50:3; 97:3-5; Isaiah 66:15 (cf 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10); Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28; 10:37; Jude 14; Revelation 22:20.

The Purpose of Jesus' Coming

The main purpose of Christ's coming is to take His people with Him to the heavenly mansions in the New Jerusalem. Isaiah 25:9; John 14:1-3; Matthew 24:31; 25:31-34; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Revelation 22:12. He will then bring to an end the kingdoms of this world, execute judgment upon the wicked, and give the kingdom unto the saints forever. Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:27; Jude 15; Acts 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Signs of the Saviour's Second Advent

Many signs point to the nearness of Christ's coming, but we do not know the exact time of that great event. Isaiah 24:4-6, 17-21; Joel 1:15-20; 2:30, 31; 3:9-16; Matthew 24:2-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5. Satan will try to personate the coming of Christ, but he will not be able to deceive the elect. Matthew 24:23-26; 2 Corinthians 11:14.

Preparation for the Second Advent

At His coming, Christ will receive only those that are "ready." He will not then make us faultless; He is to "find" us faultless. We must be made blameless while the door of probation is open, so that we may "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude 24; Matthew 25:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Peter 3:11, 12, 14; 1 John 3:2, 3; Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 21:27.

The Manner of Jesus' Coming

The coming of Christ will be personal, literal, visible, audible, and universal. Luke 9:26; Matthew 24:27, 30; Titus 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 1:7; 6:15-17; 19:11-16. It cannot be counterfeited by Satan. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Some of the Important Events Connected with the Second Advent

The door of probation is closed shortly before the second coming of Christ. Matthew 7:22, 23; 25:6-13; Luke 13:23-25; Revelation 22:11.

The fullness of the wrath of God will come upon the earth in the seven last plagues. When the sixth plague is poured out, then the way is prepared for the battle of Armageddon. A mighty earthquake will shake the whole earth at the beginning of the seventh plague. Revelation 16:1-21. (The Great Controversy, p. 637.)

There will be a partial resurrection a short time before Christ's return. Daniel 12:2; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7

"Graves are opened, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth . . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced Him' (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient."—The Great Controversy, p. 637.

At the coming of Christ, the righteous dead will be resurrected immortal and the righteous living will be changed from mortal to immortal. They meet the Lord in the air and taken to heaven where they will stand before the throne of God. John 5:25, 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Philippians 3:20, 21; Revelation 7:4, 9-12.

"The living righteous are changed 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air."—Ibid., p. 645.

The unrighteous that will survive the seven last plagues will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. Isaiah 24:6; Luke 17:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 6:15-17 (cf Isaiah 2:19-21). There will be no second chance for them. Isaiah 26:10; Jeremiah 8:20; Luke 13:24-28; 2 Corinthians 6:2.

The whole earth will be made desolate. Isaiah 13:6-13; Jeremiah 4:23-25; 2 Peter 3:10.

Identifying the Antichrist

Read Matthew 24:23-25.

"We are warned that in the last days [Satan] will work with signs and lying wonders. And he will continue these wonders until the close of probation that he may point to them as evidence that he is an angel of light and not of darkness."—The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1099.

"Satan came as an angel of light in the wilderness of temptation to deceive Christ; and he does not come to man in a hideous form, as he is sometimes represented, but as an angel of light. He will come personating Jesus Christ, working mighty miracles; and men will fall down and worship him as Jesus Christ. We shall be commanded to worship this being, whom the world will glorify as Christ. What shall we do?—Tell them that Christ has warned us against just such a foe, who is man's worst enemy, yet who claims to be God; and that when Christ shall make His appearance, it will be with power and great glory, accompanied by ten thousand times ten thousand angels and thousands of thousands; and that when He shall come, we shall know His voice."—The Review and Herald, December 18, 1888.

"In this age antichrist will appear as the true Christ, and then the law of God will be fully made void in the nations of our world. Rebellion against God's holy law will be fully ripe. But the true leader of this rebellion is Satan clothed as an angel of light. Men will be deceived and will exalt him to the place of God, and deify him. But Omnipotence will interpose, and to the apostate churches that unite in the exaltation of Satan, the sentence will go forth, 'Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.' "—Testimonies to Ministers, p. 62.

The True Christ

"One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming to complete the great work of redemption."—The Great Controversy, p. 299.

"The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers." —Ibid., p. 302.

"The proclamation of the judgment is an announcement of Christ's second coming as at hand. And this proclamation is called the everlasting gospel. Thus the preaching of Christ's second coming, the announcement of its nearness, is shown to be an essential part of the gospel message."—Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 227, 228.

"Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. . . . As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun. 'And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Revelation 19:16."—The Great Controversy, pp. 640, 641.