

Christ's Three Appearings

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"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. "Heb. 9: 27, 28.

"Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world" — 1 John 4: 17.

The verse in 1 John 4 brings out most distinctly and clearly what the new place is that the believer has before God. It is this: *Christ's place*. "As he is, so are we in this world." In the most marvellous way does the Holy Ghost condense the present position of the believer, to the joy of our hearts — we who are Christ's. But some may say, "Impossible! Does the gospel unfold to a poor guilty sinner on earth a standing before God in the perfection of Christ?" Yes. "How can this be?" The passage in Heb. 9 tells you how; you have there the grand foundation on which this blessed truth is built — "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." The effect of the once-offered sacrifice of Himself to put away sin — the fruit of the corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died, so that it might not abide alone — is, that of the children of God it can be truly said: "As he is, so are we." And mark, it is not, "so we *shall be*," but, "so *are* we in this world." How wonderful is this word of the Holy Spirit! Truly man could never have penned it of himself.

Look at Christ in all His love and grace while here on earth. Look at Him in all His perfection now in glory, and then consider for a moment this most wonderful passage: "Herein is love with us (God's love, not ours) made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." But let us look for a little at what was first required in order to bring about this grand result. In Heb. 9 it is all beautifully unfolded. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And *as* it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

There are three periods in the history of Christ brought before us in these verses. In verse 24, He does appear; verse 26, "He has appeared;" and in verse 28, "He shall appear." I will take them up briefly in their chronological order; and may the Holy Spirit lead you, my beloved reader, to search more fully into these wondrous truths, the outlines of which I now present to you.

1. — HIS PAST APPEARING.

"Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Why was this needed? The following verse tells us: "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." As it belonged to man to die and be judged, so Christ was offered up in death, and bore God's wrath and judgment in man's stead.

I can understand the "as" and "so" in John 4: 17 when I have grasped the mercy of the "as" and "so" of Hebrews 9: 27, 28. As I was a ruined, guilty sinner, only fit to be judged and condemned to death, so Christ went down into death for me; He suffered that I might never suffer; He bore my judgment and the wrath of an offended God, which was my due; He completed the work of my salvation; He has done all that is needed to bring me to Himself in glory; and now the Holy Spirit can give out this grand truth to the believer, to say with joyful boldness, that in the sight of God, "As he (God's Son) is, so are we in this world."

Oh, beloved fellow-believer, what is this? What is the force of these words, "As he is, so are we"? It is not merely substitution, grand as that work is, but it is transmutation — the taking of us into identity and association with Himself.

"He has appeared" to do a work we never could have done. In all the counsels of God one thing alone was found that could save ruined man; and in His great love for us, the Lord Himself came down to perform the work. As we deserved, so He received; He bore the judgment of God upon sin, so that there is now no condemnation to them who believe. Now "we may have boldness in the day of judgment." Well may the Holy Spirit preface this wondrous truth with these words: "Herein is love with us made perfect." Yes, this indeed was love, perfect love on His part; love sufficiently perfect to cast out all our fear. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear."

"No man of greater love can boast

Than for his friend to die.

Thou for Thine enemies wast slain!

What love with Thine can vie?"

This is the Friend the believer has — the Friend and Saviour, God wishes you to have. Will you not have Him? See what He has done for you. "He was once offered to bear the sins of many." You may be one of the many whom Christ died to save. God is now beseeching you to be one of the blessed number. Oh! refuse Him not; for if you will not have this Christ now, while He is willing and waiting to receive you, it will be this same Christ and Lord, to whom all judgment is given, who when this long day of grace is over, will say unto you: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." And you shall then be one of the many — ah! how many — to whom the words will apply: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." With which will you have to do, — God in grace, or God in judgment?

Jesus wants you to know Himself in grace, to know Him *now*. He is seeking you, yearning for you, waiting to receive you with outstretched arms, of welcome. Oh, come to His loving embrace. You must either come to those outstretched arms of love and mercy, or sink for ever beneath His uplifted arm of judgment. Can you for a moment delay in your decision? Which shall it be, God or Mammon? Is there aught on earth that can lure you from His arms? — aught that can blindly lure you on to death? Jesus is calling you to come to Him. "Come unto me" are His words to you. Oh, come and taste the blessedness of belonging to Him, of being loved by Him, of having Him as the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

2. — HIS PRESENT APPEARING.

In Hebrews 9: 24 we read, that Christ has gone into heaven, "Now to appear in the presence of God for us."

While telling you of the first blessed truth, "He has appeared," I made no restriction. I tell it to you, my reader; I would it were told to ALL. But now I have to confine myself to the BELIEVER when I say, "in, the presence of God for us." But my prayer is, that He may stand as the Representative of all who may read these pages, and of thousands more.

Believers in the Lord, Christ represents you in the presence of God, and soon there will be the lovely sequel which verse 28 gives: "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." But again, I would turn to all, and say, Look at Jesus there in the glory of heaven itself; gaze on Him by faith at God's right hand, and remember that place may be yours. Earnestly I would entreat you not to let haunting memory have the task of echoing in your ear, through an endless eternity, "That place might have been yours."

Who is the One who stands in the presence of God for us? It is Christ, the same Christ who was here on earth, and who died on Calvary's cross. He is the only one who can represent us there, and He does it. Michael the Archangel would fail to do it. Angels know not the extent of our need; but Christ is there. Dwell on the thought, REPRESENTATIVE OF His PEOPLE. Oh, how much it includes! Christ is there in the presence of His Father-God, not only to represent you, but also as your Advocate and High Priest. As Aaron the high priest bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his shoulders and breast, so that they might be presented to the Lord Jehovah; so Christ bears our names on His bosom before His Father's throne — your name and mine graven on His heart! Amazing thought! Yes, our names indelibly carved there with the graving-tool of love. The love and power of Christ combined bear us before God continually.

What a place of security the believer in Jesus has! How could he have a doubt or fear as long as he looks at Christ in glory? and knows from God's Word that "as he is, so are we." Look at Christ and His finished work, and believe on Him, and the question of salvation and security is settled. I see in Him the One who has espoused my cause — the One who has so merged me in Himself, that God, while looking upon me, sees me in Jesus — He sees me in "Jesus only."

3. — HIS FUTURE APPEARING.

"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The first time Jesus appeared, it was to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He bared His bosom to Jehovah's wrath, and the uplifted sword of justice fell on Him. The storm-cloud of wrath burst upon His head; but the second time He shall appear, it shall be without sin unto salvation.

The question of sin was all settled the first time; and now He has to do with salvation alone. Has not this a voice for you, O careless one? You who are not looking for Him; you to whom it would not be glad tidings were you told, "The Bridegroom cometh;" pause, I beseech you, and consider your situation. You, as an unbeliever, are going on to meet two things — DEATH AND JUDGMENT. The believer also is going to meet two things, but oh! how different are they — CHRIST and GLORY. Death and judgment are behind him, not before; he looks back to the cross, and knows that for him they were ended there. He is on the other side of judgment; and now the bright prospect before him, and for which he looks, is the time when the Lord shall again appear unto salvation, i.e., the deliverance of the body from this evil world.

The manner of His future appearing is two-fold - First, as the Bridegroom He will come into the air only, and catch up, His Bride, i.e., those who are His own. The 4th of 1st Thessalonians, and 15th of 1st Corinthians, describe this moment. "The dead in Christ" are raised, and those alive on earth changed, and both are caught up together *to* the Lord, and thus are with the Lord for ever. What a bright hope for the believer, instead of looking for death!

Later on the Lord will appear manifestly in glory to the world, as Son of Man. Then His saints will all be *with* Him. His second advent thus has the two stages. Into the air when His saints go *to* Him, and on to the Mount of Olives when His saints all come *with* Him.

The first Adam brought death into this world by sin; but for the believer, the death of the last Adam has put away sin, and delivered him from death and judgment.

To you who care not to look for Him, I would give this solemn warning: "If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and *they shall not escape.*"

But unto you, who look for Him, are these blessed words written: "They shall see his face." Delight yourselves therefore in the Lord; be ye ever on the watchtowers looking for His appearing the second time without sin unto salvation. Wait patiently for Him though He should tarry. "He that shall come will come." Meanwhile, beloved Christians, let us rejoice in the blessed truth that "as he is, so are we in this world."