

The Second Advent: The Day of Redemption

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The Bible is so full of references to the second coming of the Lord Jesus that we shall waste no words in proving it, but rather take it for granted. It can only be denied at the cost of such a treatment of Scripture as would destroy all certainty in regard to every truth of our holy faith.

Our present object is to show the place it holds as ushering in the "day of redemption;" and how thus it completes the great foundations of revelation according to Scripture, and gives consistency and stability to the whole.

The first advent, together with the work of atonement which it involved, has for nineteen centuries been an accomplished fact. Then was brought to pass redemption by blood. Yet throughout all the years, and still today, is there ample scope for those who would speak injuriously of God and His ways. The love of God fully shone forth at the Cross and the anointed eye perceives it; nevertheless, the powers of darkness still dominate the earth, and sin still ravages it. Hence the creation groans; the children of God continue in affliction; the mystery of God's ways in His government of the earth persists; and men are found who blaspheme His holy name.

All this shall shortly be ended. God's judgments will swiftly work for the disentanglement of good from evil, and for the vindication of all that is good, in the condemnation of all that is evil. Then the "mystery of God" shall be "finished" (Rev. 10: 7) and "songs and everlasting joy" will supplant the "sorrow and sighing" (see Isa. 35: 10). The Second Advent will bring to pass *redemptive by power*.

The Old Testament prophets have much to tell us of the glories of this coming Day. They indicate not only its character, both in the way of judgment and blessing, but also that it depends altogether upon the Advent of the Messiah. When first they spoke, however, it would have been well nigh impossible to determine how much of their utterances related to the first Advent, and how much to the second. Theirs was a long-distance view, and both merged indistinctly one into the other; just as there are many distant stars which to the naked eye shine as a single point of light, and no one suspected them to be anything but *one* until powerful telescopes were turned upon them. Then at once they were discovered to be twin or *double* stars.

The New Testament has furnished us with telescopic powers and we can clearly see that

Messiah's advent is like a double star. Astronomers assure us that though these stars are apparently one to the naked eye yet often immense distances lie between them, and for all that they revolve mutually round each other. Even so the two Advents are mutually related, pivoted one upon the other, though we now know that at least nearly two thousand years roll between them.

One of the most striking New Testament passages upon this subject is Romans 8: 16-25. Give it a careful reading.

The earlier part of this epistle has dwelt exhaustively upon the wonderful results of the work accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ at His first coming. The "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" is expounded in all its bearings upon the individual believer. It has resulted in his complete SPIRITUAL emancipation, so that he stands in the unclouded favour of God as a justified man; he is animated by the brightest hopes of glory; and, further, he is liberated from sin's dominion though sin itself is still in him. He possesses the Spirit of God, and consequently he not only is a child of God, but he *knows* that he is. He has the consciousness of the relationship.

At this point the passage we have indicated starts. The Spirit-led children of God, who are also "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," are still in a suffering condition. They are not yet PHYSICALLY emancipated. Their bodies truly are the Lord's, being even "members of Christ," and "temples of the Holy Ghost," because "bought with a price" (see 1 Cor. 6: 13-20), still they are not yet redeemed.

Verses 19 to 22 of our passage show us that the whole earthly creation lies under thralldom. The usurper still holds sway; the ravages of sin and death continue. Its decayed estate did not come upon it by some act of its own, or by some weakness or evil inherent in matter, as some would teach; but by reason of Adam's will exercised in defiance of God. Adam was its constituted head, its intelligent link with the Creator. Just as the snapping of the first, or top link of a chain involves every link in its fall, so the fall of Adam brought about the fall of all creation. Is the creation, dumb and inanimate as it may appear to us, to groan and travail on for ever?

No, indeed! In these verses creation is pictured as peering into the future with "earnest expectation," or "anxious looking-out," to a day when it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

And when shall its hopes be fulfilled? We answer, When the sons of God are manifested. When the children of God step into their glory, then into the liberty of that glory the whole creation will step with them. Then there will be the proclamation of "liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." Then will the forfeited land be redeemed. Then will men's toil and labour cease and they will "eat the increase thereof out of the field" (see Lev. 25: 10-13). It will be the true and final year of Jubilee.

But not only does creation groan; we who possess the Spirit groan also. We wait for that which will complete our glorious estate as the sons of God, viz. "the redemption of our body."

When and how will this redemption of our bodies take place? Have we any clear light as to it? The answer is supplied by 1 Corinthians 15: 51-54. Our bodies will be redeemed when the Lord comes, whether it takes the form of a resurrection from amongst the dead into an incorruptible condition, or an instantaneous transformation of the living into a similar condition, when "we shall all be changed." "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" all will be accomplished. "They that are Christ's" will rise "at His coming" (v. 23).

In regard to ourselves, then, the second Advent will witness the full completion of redemption's

work. Our very bodies will be brought under its power. We may note in passing how clearly this negatives the idea, so prevalent to-day, that only a select few of superior faithfulness are to be taken when the Lord comes. He comes to redeem the bodies of His saints, and redemption is *never* a question of human faithfulness, but of the power and grace of God. We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of God "unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4: 30). Every true believer is thus sealed with the great day in view. Our faithfulness, or the reverse, will mightily affect our place in the coming kingdom, but *redemption* lies on another plane altogether.

Thus far we have dwelt upon what we get, and what creation gets in a subsidiary way, as a result of the second Advent. Reading the glowing predictions of the Prophets we might wonder if anything could exceed the blessedness of it. When The saints shine in heavenly glory, and quietness and assurance for ever fill the world; when such is the exuberant fertility of the emancipated earth that it is no exaggeration for the prophet to say, "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), we might well imagine that the climax is reached. But it is not so. God has a good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself for the glory of Christ, and this concerns a sphere even wider than that of redeemed saints and a redeemed millennial earth. Christ is the Heir of all things. His glory is the supreme consideration. He is Pre-eminent. It is only when we view things from this angle that we reach the climax.

We get this view presented to us in Ephesians 1: 9-14. Here, as in chapter 4, we read of the Spirit being given to us as a seal until redemption's hour is come, but He is also spoken of as "the earnest of our inheritance," and the redemption is called "the redemption of the purchased possession," because not only the bodies of the saints are in view, but the whole inheritance in so far as it has been marred by sin.

God has a "*will*." As to it the world remains in ignorance and indifference. The "*mystery*" or secret of it is made known to us, however, as verse 9 states; and we find it to be according to His "pleasure," which is neither harsh nor arbitrary, but emphatically "*good*."

And what is this "mystery of His will according to His good pleasure"? First, it is to have an age or dispensation which is to be the "fulness of times" — the climax and completion of the ages, since it is to be marked by administrative perfection, and every preceding age will be seen to have been but preparatory to it. Second, it is to administer that coming age by Christ, the MAN of His good pleasure, the One of whom it had been said prophetically "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isa. 53: 10).

When our Lord Jesus comes again in glory with all His saints it will be to take His place as Head over all things. God is going to purify the earth through judgments and then "gather together in one all things in Christ" — that is, He will head up all things in Him. Christ will be as the exalted apex of a pyramid — if we may use such a figure. The apex or top-stone of a pyramid is itself a perfect pyramid in shape. All the upward lines and faces of the pyramid converge in it. It crowns the whole.

Nor will it be only earth that lies blessed beneath Him, for the "all things" is said to include both those "which are in heaven, and which are on earth." The "all things" then evidently means all things which exist in every sphere of blessing, whether heavenly or earthly, to the utmost bounds. One sphere is excluded — the sphere of judgment. Yet even this — "the things under the earth" — is to bow at the name of Jesus according to Philippians 2: 10. It must acknowledge Him, though severed from Him and under the frown of God. All things, that then shall lie in the sunlight of God's favour, will find their Head and supreme glory in Christ.

In this way God is going to redeem His purchased possession. For long, sin has lain like a heavy

encumbrance or mortgage upon a large part of the fair inheritance, upon every part of it which has in any way been touched or tarnished by evil. All was His by creation, but at the first Advent it became a "purchased possession" by the death of Christ; just as in the parable the field was purchased as well as the treasure in it (see Matt. 13: 44). At the second Advent the encumbrance will be lifted from the inheritance. The Lord Jesus will put into effect by *power* those rights which were established by *blood* when He came in lowliness and humiliation, for it was —

"By weakness and defeat

He won the meed and crown."

We add one thing: When He thus takes up the inheritance He will do so in His saints. This was indicated in Daniel 7, for when in the vision " One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven . . . and there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom" (vv. 13, 14), then "the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (v. 22). Just as a king might occupy conquered territory by putting his troops and officials in post session, so will it be then. We shall get our inheritance when Christ gets His. This is what the Apostle means when he prays that we "may know . . . what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints " (Eph. 1: 18). It is not that the saints *are* His inheritance, but that He takes up His inheritance *in* His saints, by putting His saints in possession.

That we should have any inheritance at all in the day of glory is wonderful. But how greatly will its sweetness be intensified by the fact that what we then shall be possessed of we shall hold as on God's behalf and as joint-heirs with Christ.

You have made a distinction between purchase and redemption. Can that distinction be clearly found in Scripture?

Yes. Scripture speaks of some who go as far as "even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2: 1). They were "bought," for the Lord Jesus has acquired universal rights by His death and resurrection, and He is Lord of all. They were not, however, redeemed.

No one can be redeemed without purchase: yet many may be purchased who are not redeemed.

The fourth chapter of Ruth illustrates the point. When Boaz challenged the kinsman nearer than himself as to the redemption of Elimelech's inheritance, at first the man proposed to act. All that occurred to him for the moment was the question of *purchase*, and it might have been a profitable transaction. When Boaz reminded him that *redemption* went further than mere purchase and involved his taking up all the rights and duties connected with the estate, the lifting up of the fallen, the entering into personal relationship with Ruth, and through her with Naomi, then he declined.

This makes the distinction pretty clear.

We read in Scripture of our mortal bodies being quickened. Some say that has already taken place and that therefore no Christian should *suffer* from sickness. Is that correct?

It is not. The passage in question does not say that our mortal bodies *have been quickened*. It says, " If the Spirit . . . dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead SHALL *also quicken* your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8: 11); and here we have an explanation of how "the redemption of our body," spoken of in verse 23, is going to be accomplished. God will do it: but as John 5: 28 shows it will be by the voice of the Lord Jesus, and it will also be by the energy of the

indwelling Spirit. All three Persons of the Godhead will be active in our final redemption.

The premise thus being false, the conclusion drawn from it, as to sickness, falls to the ground.

Apart from this, however, one wonders why people content themselves with such shallow reasonings. If our bodies were quickened there would be no "should not" nor "ought not" about it; we simply "*could not*" be sick. We could not even DIE! After all, sickness is mere child's play when compared to *death*. Why do not people come boldly out with the full consequences of their theories? Because to do so would involve their folly being manifest to all men.

Will the whole work of redeeming the purchased possession take place in a moment?

Not in a moment, but in a comparatively short space of time.

First in order the Lord will redeem the bodies of His saints. He will come for them, raising the dead, changing the living, and rapturing all into His own presence according to 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17. He will espouse His bride as is typified in the peaceful way in which Boaz took Ruth.

Then He "shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people which shall be left" (Isa. 11: 11), i.e. the remnant of His people Israel. This will be no peaceful process, but involve terrific judgments upon earth. Isaiah 63: 1-6 gives us a description, and the victorious, all-conquering Messiah speaks in verses 3 to 6 by the prophet's lips. He says, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." Israel will be redeemed by judgment once more, as of old out of the land of Egypt.

Then, thirdly, "He will destroy . . . the face of the covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations" (Isa. 25: 7). The nations will be first judged and then blessed.

Lastly, when His throne is exalted in Zion the living waters will flow forth (see Ezek. 47: 1-12) and bring amazing fertility to the very earth. This passage is doubtless emblematical of spiritual blessing but primarily must be taken in its literal sense. The curse will be lifted from off the face of creation.

All this will not take long, for "a short work will the Lord make upon the earth" (Rom. 9: 28).

We read in Acts 3: 21 of "the restitution of all things." Does not this mean that ultimately everybody will be redeemed and brought into blessing?

It does not. That verse speaks of "the times of restitution of all things," i.e. the millennial age of which God had spoken by His prophets from the earliest moments. Enoch's prophecy, for instance, was concerning that day, as recorded in Jude 14, whilst the fifteenth verse describes the judgments that precede the ushering in of the reign of peace. That phrase exactly describes the character of the millennium. Throughout the ages God has brought forth to men many things that are His purpose for this world. He created Adam as *head*, and he sinned. He established *government* in Noah, and it was corrupted. He gave His *law* through Moses, and it was broken. He instituted *priesthood* in Aaron, and it was perverted. He set up *kingly authority* in David, and it collapsed.

These *things* and every other good *thing* that is in His purpose will be restored in the coming age. And not only restored, but established in much greater fulness and in absolute perfection because all will then be centred in CHRIST. He will be set as God's King upon His holy hill of Zion (see Psalm 2). He will be crowned with glory and honour as the Son of Man — the last Adam — and have dominion over the works of Jehovah's hands (see Psalm 8).

Nothing is said as to the restitution of all *persons*. Many plain scriptures refute this universalist theory, and to attempt to foist it into this passage is an outrage on Scripture language.

How do you reconcile the fact that the second coming of Christ brings about the day of redemption, with the fact that His millennial reign closes with a great rebellion?

No reconciliation is needed. If any one or anything redeemed by Christ at His second Advent were in any way again brought under the power of evil, there would of course be grave difficulty. There is, however, no trace of this. Satan, released from the abyss, is the instigator of the great final rebellion (see Rev. 20: 7-10) and he is *not* redeemed. Vast multitudes will have been born during the thousand years. They will never have known the blighting effects of sin by sad experience, and if not *born again* will fall before Satan's fresh temptations. But such were *never* redeemed.

Nor will anything be accomplished by their mad rebellion save their own utter destruction and final judgment. They may compass about the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but not a hair of the head of any of the former nor the least stone of the latter will be disturbed by them.

God will seize that occasion, however, to fold up as a worn-out vesture the present heaven and earth and perpetuate redemption's wonderful story in a new heaven and a new earth.

How then would you summarize the distinction between the millennium and the eternal state?

The one is as the vestibule or ante-chamber to the other. Both are characterized by righteousness; but in the one it *reigns*, for sin is not finally dealt with but rather sternly repressed, in the other it *dwells* for, the last judgment over, it retreats from the judicial throne to the sweet freedom of love and home.

The millennium will be the vindication on this earth of all God's ways in righteous and holy government. How necessary is this! In this world His authority has been repudiated, and every thought of His has been abused in men's hands. How appropriate then that here in this world there shall be manifested for the complete cycle of a thousand years the perfection of all His thoughts and arrangements when once taken up and put into execution by Christ.

That demonstration accomplished, Satan is permitted to display once more his implacable hatred, and men their irremediable corruption by nature. This leads to the final great act of judgment. As its consequence sin, whether in the devil and his angels, or in evil men, will for ever lie under wrath and penalty in a limited and circumscribed place — "the lake of fire." As an active principle, capable of further mischief, it will cease to be.

In the new heaven and new earth *all* will be new (see Rev. 21: 5). That is, everything will then be on the basis of "new creation," and suitable to the full and unrestrained expression of all God's nature, the fruition of His eternal purpose. We, thank God, are on that basis now as "in Christ" (see 2 Cor. 5: 17).

New creation rests, as we know, upon Christ's death as its basis. By and by the Sitter upon the throne, who is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ, will say, "Behold, I make all things new . . . *It is done*" (Rev. 21: 5 and 6). He will say that then because there was a day when on the Cross He said, "*It is finished.*"