



## SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

### Course 4, *The Promised One*, Lesson 13

The Problem: Millions of people in our world today, Christians and non-Christians, are concerned about the future. Economic, political, racial, social, and religious instability are so much in evidence everywhere that people are wondering how civilization as we know it can survive. Even those who have given little attention to the Bible's message are often found living in expectation of some major world catastrophe, whether that be in the form of economic collapse or nuclear holocaust.

Speaking of the difficult times that are ahead of us, Don McAlvany wrote: "Most Americans are not prepared either financially, politically, psychologically, or spiritually for these crises. In the book of Genesis, a famine swept the known world at that time. The Lord forewarned the Egyptians, however, through Joseph, and preparations were made in advance when the disaster arrived. Americans should be making preparations for the tough times that are coming: economically and spiritually." (The McAlvany Intelligence Advisor, April, 1985.)

Those who do not believe the Bible's predictions have various opinions about what will happen to our world, but none of them include the second coming of Christ. Some think that perhaps this civilization will simply be obliged to give place to the next, as has happened a number of times in history. Others are convinced that our world will be totally annihilated by nuclear war. Yet others are pinning their hopes on space exploration and the possibility of ultimate escape from the ravages of world conflicts. Many people are just not thinking seriously at all about the future. The line of least resistance, they feel, is to live one day at a time and hope that things will turn out all right. What a shock is awaiting them!

Christians espouse one of several different views regarding God's plans for the future of our world. Some Christians believe that human progress, both technologically and spiritually, will eventually introduce a millennium (1,000 years) of peace and prosperity at the end of which Christ will come and establish His earthly Kingdom.

Other Christians believe that conditions on our earth will become progressively worse until, at the point when mankind is about to destroy his world, Christ will intervene, saving believers and destroying unbelievers. Some Christians think the second coming of Jesus will involve a "secret rapture" for the righteous, who will be caught up secretly to heaven so that they will not have to suffer the terrible tribulation of the final days of earth's history. Then, they think, Christ will come a few years later with these translated saints in a public way to deliver those on earth who have repented during the tribulation and to destroy those who have failed to repent. The millennium will then be enjoyed on this earth with Christ as the ruler of His people.

Yet another group of Christians believes that Christ's faithful people will pass through the tribulation just before His advent and will see His great public coming in the clouds of heaven with all His angels. They believe that then the righteous dead will be raised and, with the believing living, will be caught up in the clouds to meet Jesus, who will not touch this earth but will take the saved of all ages back to heaven. Then, the millennium will follow in heaven. At the end of that 1,000-year period, Christ and the saved will descend to this earth, and His eternal kingdom will be established here. Thus, our world will become the center of the universe.

Which of these many positions is the truth? What does the Bible teach? Will our world become a better place or a worse place in which to live? How will Jesus come the second time to save His people, secretly or publicly? Will the believers have to pass through the tribulation of the last days? What happens when Jesus comes? Where are the saved taken, and what happens to the lost? Can we know that Jesus is coming soon? Did He give any indication as to when He might come back to our earth? How can we prepare to meet Him?

These are questions to which the Bible gives direct and very clear answers. We don't need to stay uncertain about the future of our world. Praise God for revealing, time and time again, what lies ahead and how we can be ready for it. This is one of the most thrilling studies in the whole Bible. Let us prayerfully turn to the Scriptures and see how they unfold for us the future of the human race.

## Objectives

- I. We note that the Old Testament prophets predicted Christ's second advent.
- II. We study Jesus' promise that He would come again.
- III. We inquire as to how Jesus will come. Will it be secretly or publicly? Will everyone know that He is coming?
- IV. What happens when Jesus comes again? Where are believers taken, and what happens to the unbelievers?
- V. When will Jesus come again? What are the signs that the Bible tells us to look for? Are we seeing any of these signs fulfilled today?

## I. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS PREDICTED CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT

The second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of human history was foreseen by inspired prophets long before His first advent. In fact, one of the big mistakes of the Jews was that they confused the first and second advents. They were not looking for a suffering Messiah when Jesus came the first time. Since they were looking for a great, powerful deliverer from the incursions of their enemies, they took the prophecies of the Messiah's second advent and applied them to His first advent. Thus, they were unprepared to receive Jesus. We will note that when the Old Testament prophecies spoke of the second advent they described that event in terms which distinguish it sharply from the conditions of the first advent.

### The Word:

1. What did Enoch, who lived in the seventh generation after Adam, have to say about the second coming of Jesus Christ? Jude 14-15.
2. What was Job's hope for the future? Job 19:25-27.
3. How did the Psalmist describe the end of our world? Psalm 50:3-6.
4. In what words will the Lord's people welcome Him when He comes the second time? Isaiah 25:8-9.

Explanation: Enoch was probably born about 622 years after our world was created. The Bible says that he walked so close to the Lord that he was taken to heaven without seeing death. See Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5. We can have confidence that this great prophet, who is living in heaven today, received His message directly from God. His prophecy of the second coming of Christ was the first that we have on record.

The Book of Job was very probably the first book of the Old Testament to have been written. Job expected that death would not be final for him but that on the last day, he would be raised to see his Lord. This is one of the great assurances in Scripture that there is to be a hereafter for believers.

The Psalmist, Isaiah, and other Old Testament prophets, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), looked forward to the day when Satan, sin, and sinners would be forever destroyed, and God's people would have immortal life in the Kingdom of their Lord. This is the blessed hope for believers of all ages.

Relevance: The blessed hope of Christ's second coming is timeless, stretching back as far as the foundations of the earth. From the earliest days of human history, this promise has been a constant source of hope and assurance for God's people. If the inspired prophets of the ages knew about it, why should we doubt it?

## II. JESUS AND THE APOSTLES PROMISED A SECOND ADVENT

Jesus' ascension to heaven at the end of His first advent would have been a terribly sad event if His followers had been given no hope that He would come again. The beautiful fact is that both Jesus and His inspired apostles promised that this old world would come to an end when the second advent would occur.

The Word:

5. What comforting assurance did Jesus give to believers of all ages? John 14:1-4.
6. How did Jesus describe His second coming? Matthew 24:30-31; 16:27; 25:31.
7. What did Paul, Peter, and John have to say about the promise that Jesus would return? Colossians 3:4; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 22:20.

Explanation: John 14:1-4 makes it very clear that Jesus went to heaven with the definite intent of preparing a place there for us. He promised that He would return and take us to His heavenly home so that we could share it with Him. The promises and predictions that we have given so far are just a few of the many throughout the New Testament. In fact, this truth of the second coming of Jesus is one of the most prominent teachings of the New Testament. Jesus had no intention of leaving His people without hope of deliverance from this old world of sin. His sacrifice on Calvary has made possible the final purging of our world from sin and its terrible results. The second coming of Christ will be the time when His people receive their inheritance of eternal life with Him.

Relevance: Whatever the circumstances of our lives, we do not have to look into the future with a feeling of hopelessness and despair. Paul wrote that "*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*" Romans 8:18.

### III. HOW WILL JESUS COME?

Some of the passages that we have read already indicate that the second coming of Jesus will be a great public event. In Scripture, there is no hint of a "secret rapture" for the people of God. The coming of Jesus will be seen by the saved and lost at the same time. They will be together on this earth witnessing the most amazing display of glory that our world has ever known.

The Word:

8. What warning did Jesus give in regard to reports that Christ has come and is living in a certain part of our world? What metaphor did He use to describe His coming? Matthew 24:23-27.
9. How many of the world's population will see the second coming of Jesus? Revelation 1:7.
10. What kind of event are Christ's believing people to expect? Titus 2:13.
11. What did Peter mean when he said that Jesus would come as "a thief in the night"? 2 Peter 3:8-14?
12. According to the angels who spoke to the disciples at the time of Jesus' ascension, how will He come the second time? Acts 1:10-11.

Explanation: The second coming of Jesus will be a great public event witnessed by all of those living on the earth. He will come with all the holy angels and in the glory of His Father (Matthew 16:27; 25:31). It is clear from the passages we have read that the believers were to look forward to this great public, cataclysmic event. They are not to expect any kind of secret to appear. In fact, Peter makes it abundantly clear that Christian believers are to look for "*the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat*" 2 Peter 3:12. It is because this event is coming that believers should be persons of "*holy conversation and godliness*" (verse 11). Paul wrote to Titus that we are to look for the glorious appearance of Christ (Titus 2:13). Believers will be here on this earth

and will see Jesus come in the same way that He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). He ascended in a physical, visible form. He was caught up by a cloud of angels. Just so will He come; a real Person resplendent with the glory of His Father and accompanied by all the angels of heaven. What an event that will be! The entire heavens will be filled with the glory of the Lord, and God's faithful people will know that their redemption from this world of sin has come at last.

Relevance: Are you looking for the glorious appearance of Jesus Christ? Are you preparing for that great event? You do not need to be deceived by the false Messiahs present in our world today. They have not come as Christ was predicted to appear. They are led by the enemy of souls who does not want us to wait for the coming of our one and only Lord.

#### IV. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN JESUS COMES AGAIN?

Since it is not until the glorious coming of Christ witnessed by all that the believers are taken out of this world, we can be sure that there is no secret rapture for the saints before this great public advent. The living, saved and lost, meet their Maker at the same time and receive their just rewards.

The Word:

13. What happens to unbelievers when Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven? 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8; Revelation 6:14-17.
14. Who are raised from the dead at the second advent of Jesus? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.
15. What happens to the dead who have been raised and the living believers? 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54.
16. Who gathers the faithful of all ages and takes them to meet Jesus in the sky? Matthew 24:31.
17. Where are the saved then taken? John 14:3; Matthew 8:11; Revelation 7:9-17.

Explanation: The lost are destroyed by the brightness of Jesus' coming. The righteous dead are raised, and with the righteous living, they are caught up in the sky to meet Jesus. These are the saved of all ages. They are then taken to heaven. There is no indication in the Bible that Jesus places His feet on the earth at the second advent; that does not happen until the end of the millennium. In a future study, we shall consider what happens after the believers have been taken to heaven. For now, we just want to clarify the Bible's teaching that the wicked are put to death at the second coming of Jesus, and the faithful of all ages are taken to heaven. When Paul says, "*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*" (1 Thessalonians 4:14), he does not mean that the faithful dead are brought from heaven with Jesus when He comes. Paul means that, just as Jesus rose from the dead, so the faithful who have died will be raised at the second advent. We know that this is his meaning because of the statements that follow. In verse 16, the "dead in Christ rise first." They could not rise if they had come down with Christ. The fact is they remain asleep in their graves until they are awakened by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Then they rise to meet the Lord in the sky, and "*we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air*" (verse 17). It is then that all the saved have immortality bestowed upon them. Together, the righteous dead, who have been raised, and the righteous living, who have been caught up into the sky with them, are taken to heaven.

There is no kingdom set up on this earth at the second coming of Jesus. God's people spend a long period in heaven (1,000 years) before the earthly Kingdom of Christ is established. We know that the saved are taken immediately to heaven because John's vision of the redeemed of all ages standing before God's throne (Revelation 7:9-17) depicts them as being in heaven right after the second advent. "*They are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple*" (verse 15). God's throne is in His temple, which is in heaven. See Revelation 11:19; 15:5. Since the saints are before the throne in the temple of God, they are in heaven.

Relevance: The blessed hope of Jesus' second coming is a timeless truth cherished in the heart of every true Christian. To be a follower of Christ means longing for His return, eagerly anticipating the fulfillment of His promise to bring eternal life and restore all things. A genuine belief in the New Testament naturally leads to this anticipation, as its message is centered on the hope of His glorious advent. What an incredible joy it is to know that Jesus is coming again! Whether we live to see that day or rest in the grave until He appears, we will be united with Him and the redeemed of all ages, taken to heaven to dwell with our Lord forever

## V. WHEN WILL JESUS COME AGAIN

There are many signs of the second advent given throughout Scripture. Bible prophecy, specifically the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, provides an outline of the events of history, with emphasis on those events that will immediately precede the second advent. Jesus Himself had much to say regarding conditions just prior to the advent, and New Testament writers reiterated His teachings.

The Word:

18. What relationships between the nations will exist just before the second advent? Matthew 24:6-7.
19. What will be the moral and ethical state of society at the end of time? Matthew 24:12, 37-39; 1 Timothy 3:1-7.
20. To what extent will false religions be influential just before the advent? Matthew 24:5, 11, 24.
21. What does the preaching of the Gospel have to do with the coming of the advent? Matthew 24:14.

Explanation: Throughout history, wars and rumors of wars have been constant, but humanity has never possessed instruments of destruction as sophisticated and devastating as it does today. The threat of global annihilation looms large in modern conflicts. Additionally, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes have become increasingly frequent and destructive in recent years, fulfilling the warnings of Matthew 24:7.

The moral and ethical state of society has deteriorated, even within nations that claim Christian heritage. There is widespread rejection of the moral imperatives of the Christian faith, leading to epidemic levels of crime and immorality in many forms. False religions are replacing Christianity in the lives of millions, as traditional faith no longer seems sufficient for multitudes. Without turning to Scripture for guidance and strength, many are left vulnerable to pagan ideologies and even demonic influences.

Amid this sobering reality, one powerful and encouraging truth shines: Jesus' prophecy that the Gospel will be proclaimed throughout the entire world to give everyone a chance to accept or reject it before the end comes (Matthew 24:14). Modern communication technologies have enabled the rapid spread of this message to every nation, and witnessing the Gospel reach the farthest corners of the earth is an incredible testament to God's plan. Very soon, every person will have had the opportunity to choose for or against the Lord's will, and then the end will come.

Relevance: The coming of the Lord is drawing near, and the signs are fulfilling just as Jesus foretold. This prompts an essential question: Are we ready to meet Him? Jesus Himself urged, *"Take heed, watch and pray, for you do not know when the time is"* Mark 13:33. Paul likewise prayed that believers would be preserved *"blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

God's desire for His people is clear: He calls us to depend fully on Him for victory over sin, making us fit to enter His heavenly kingdom. Jude 24 assures us with the profound promise, *"He is able to keep you from falling."* Jesus offers the power to transform us into pure and holy individuals. As Peter reminds us, *"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct; because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy"* 1 Peter 1:15-16. This holiness is not our own achievement but a gift from Christ, made possible through His indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:9-10).

We receive this gift daily as we come to the Lord by faith, seeking and claiming His transformative grace. Through consistent time in Scripture and prayer, our character is strengthened, and we are progressively shaped to reflect the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). What an incomparable joy it will be to meet the Lord, with His Spirit reigning in our hearts and our lives free from the crippling grip of sin. His return is both our hope and our joy.

Are you experiencing this life of victory in Christ? Will you resolve with us to come to the Lord daily to receive the presence and power of His Spirit in your life?

#### *Review Questions*

1. True or False
  - a. The concept of the second coming of Christ at the end of human history was not known until New Testament times.
  - b. Jesus will come secretly, like a thief
  - c. When Jesus comes again the righteous dead will be raised
  - d. The wicked dead are also raised at the second coming of Jesus
2. Discuss: There is no further chance for unbelievers to repent and be saved after the second coming of Jesus. Our opportunity to be forgiven for sin and saved for eternity is available now. See Revelation 22:11.

Further study: Ellen G. White, [The Desire of Ages](#), pp. 627-636.