

Christ's Coming

Our question for this month's issue of our newsletter is: "What does the Bible mean when it says that Christ will come *quickly*?"

This is an important question, for the believer's life in this world is lived in relation to the coming of Christ. Always his prayer is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). And, inasmuch as he sees the coming of Christ as near or far, so he lives more or less carefully here in the world and in expectation of seeing Christ.

We believe that the Bible means a number of different things when it speaks of Jesus' quick coming. It is teaching first of all that He comes as soon as possible for His own and does not delay one moment. This is what Peter says in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness."

It may seem to us that He delays, especially when we are suffering at the hands of our enemies or see the wickedness of the world we live in, but that it not so. In fact, His coming as soon as possible speaks of His great love for His people, His desire to take them to himself, and to be with them forever.

He also comes quickly in the sense that all of time, and especially this New Testament age, when viewed over against the eternity of God is nothing at all. This Paul emphasizes in Romans 10:28, "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." That is also what Peter is getting at when he says that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8).

But Christ also comes quickly in that He comes in different ways during the lifetime of the believer. He does not yet come personally and visibly, but He comes through the preaching of the gospel: "My sheep hear my voice" (Jn. 10:27). He comes through the Spirit: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." He comes at death: "And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

One might object that these are not personal comings of Christ, but all that is part of His coming at the end of the world takes place through these events also. When the gospel is preached then all who hear it stand before the judgment seat of God and answer the question that will be asked again in the great day of judgment, "What think ye of Christ?" When the Spirit works, He works either eternal life or eternal damnation in the hearts of men. And when I die then for me the world ends and I go according to the judgment of God Almighty either to heaven or to hell.

Life and death, heaven and hell, the end of the world and the final judgment are always the issues when Christ comes and no matter in what way He comes. That makes the coming of Christ something immanent and urgent for every one of us. It is something with which we must reckon every day, and the thought of which we may not put off. For me the end of the world and the final judgment may very well come before I put my name to the end of this article, and I had better be ready now to face my Lord.

RHH