

The Voice of Truth # 483

Behold the Bridegroom Cometh

Every born-again believer looks for the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ for his own. This is the blessed personal hope of every child of God. Listen to God's word, Hebrews 9:28, **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;** apart from the sin offering, unto them that look for him. This truth is brought out so clearly in Titus 2:11, **For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.**

At the end of the church age, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is coming for his own. You know, everywhere I've gone, folks are looking for the coming of Christ. Christ makes this truth very clear in his seven letters to the churches of Asia. In every letter he is pointing the believer to his imminent return. In every age, every believer has looked for the personal return of Christ. Now, you get this truth, death is not the second coming of Christ to the believer, as the modernists would have us believe. Let me be bold and make this statement, nowhere does the Scripture set forth that the born-again believer should ever expect to die. But on the other hand, he should always be looking for the coming of his Lord from heaven. We are taught in the Scriptures that there will be a generation of believers who shall never die, but who will be raptured when their Lord cometh as the bridegroom from heaven for his own. It is preached and taught over our land that death is certain. But how could death be certain for the born-again ones if we are looking for the imminent return of our blessed Lord? Death is not certain to me. I'm looking for Christ, and be in that number that shall never die. If he tarries, according to the laws of nature, I will die. But I'm not looking for death, I'm looking for Christ. Now, I want that soak in? Now, you get that, will you? This great truth is set forth in every letter that Christ dictated to John on the Isle of Patmos. This great doctrine, our teaching of his return and the very prominent

place it occupies, produces hope, steadfastness, and godly fear. We find that the language of our blessed Lord and all his inspired servants harmonize exactly with this great truth. The doctrine of his second coming, get this now, is so interwoven so definitely in the very fabric of the scriptures, until you would tear your Bible to pieces to take them out. Yes, you would. You would be surprised, if you would sit down and read your Bible with that thought in view, how many times the second coming of Christ is mentioned. It is mentioned at least three times more than his first coming.

Let's look at these seven letters with that great fact in mind. In the letter to the Ephesians, who had left their first love, he said, I will come unto thee quickly unless you repent and return to your first works. He is pleading here for repentance on their part, lest his coming should suddenly overtake them. Christ pleads with his people, not only in these letters, but over and again throughout the scriptures, that their lives should harmonize with the word of God and be conformed unto him, lest his coming should overtake them and find them unprepared for his coming. I remember some few years ago, I was with a group at Lake Arrowhead in California, which is a great pleasure resort. Hundreds of people were in bathing more nude than clothed. I was urged to come on out into the cool water, but I kept refusing. And finally, they said, Pastor why? Why won't you come? My reply was, you know, I'm afraid my Lord will come while I'm in there mixing with the world, the flesh and the lust thereof.

When we turned to the letter to the pastor and church in Smyrna, we find that our Lord taught them to look for nothing but tribulation, trials, and death in this world. And we find that he exhorted them to be faithful unto death in view of him giving them a crown of life. This crown was to be given to them at the day of his coming. To that church, the personal return of Christ was their blessed hope, their inspiration. Beaten down by the enemy, burned at the stake, suffering death from starvation, and imprisoned, what else could they have to look forward to but the coming of their blessed Lord, whom they knew and worshiped and were giving their lives for? I want to tell you, friends, you take away from my heart and mind the consciousness of the imminent coming of my Lord, I'd have nothing to live for. But to know him, to walk with him and to look for him to return just any moment

is the deep joy of my very being. I'm going to tell you frankly, I look for his return before I get off this air. That's how I look for him.

Then when we look at the message to the pastor and church at Pergamos and find how the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans had fastened their hold upon that church, Christ holds out his coming as the great incentive to their immediate repentance in these words, Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. In the face of all the false doctrine and the denial of the body of divine truth that we face today in our midst, our only hope is the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everywhere I travel among God's people I find an intense longing for the speedy return of the Lord Jesus. I find a deep cry in the heart of the born-again believer, come quickly, Lord Jesus, come. You might say, has this not been in every age? It certainly has, because that is the great incentive that God uses with his people to bring them to repentance, to the confession of their sins, to the forsaking of their sins, and the following of him. I'll tell you something else, friends. Every born-again believer, while under intense Holy Spirit conviction for salvation in Christ, is afraid that Christ will come before God saves them. Yes, they are. I was. I'll tell you this, those whom I thought were saved, I'd call up and see if they were there. I'd never tell them why, but I wanted to know if the Lord had come and left me behind.

When we read the letter addressed to the Church in Thyatira, we know Christ sets forth a great motive for holding fast the faith, and that is his personal return, expressed in these words, **but that which ye have already hold fast until I come.** The second coming of Christ, to the believers there, would end their struggles and temptations. In the midst of the battles with Satan, the flesh and the world, the believer often cries out, Lord Jesus, come quickly. I know many times personally, I've cried unto him from the very depths of my soul, Lord, I'm tired, Come, let's go home. It's the longing of the believer to be with Christ. As Paul said, **to depart and be with Christ is far better.** He longs to see the Christ that died for him. Then on the other hand, knowing that Christ is coming, gives him courage and boldness and strength in Christ to fight on and be loyal to him, true to his word and not compromise. I know at this very moment the cry of my heart is, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Has not this world trampled thee under its feet long enough? Have they

not whittled to pieces thy word long enough? Have they not blasphemed thy name long enough? Lord, come quickly Lord Jesus, is my cry. I want him to come. I want him to come. Do you?

Reading the letter to the church at Sardis, we find that Christ commands them to remember how they had received and heard the message, and for them to hold fast and repent and watch, lest our Lord should come upon them as a thief, and they should not know what hour he should come, which should be calamity of all calamities. My friend, it's going to be an awful day when our Lord returns and finds Christians taken up with the world and the things of the world, unmindful of him, and they'll be left behind because they do not know him. Everywhere I've gone, folks are taken up with buildings and programs and doctrines and everything else but Christ. From all outward evidence, if the Lord should come today, there'd be probably very little change in the average church. There'd be very few pulpits empty, very few pews vacant. There'd be plenty of preachers to carry on all of organized religion. As I've traveled over this nation, I find very few looking for the Lord's return. But every born-again believer that I meet is looking for his return.

When we read the letter to the Philadelphians, we find that the great truth of the coming of the Lord is the subject of comfort and hope. He says, **I will keep thee from the hour of temptation.** That is, he will deliver them from the great tribulation. Then he says to them, **Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.** The coming of the Lord is a comfort to the believer. I find as I study the scriptures that heaven is never held out to the believer as a comfort. It's always the coming of our Lord, that the scriptures present as a comfort to the believer. This is so clearly stated in 1 Thessalonians. Listen to God's word, will you? **But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and**

remain shall be caught up together with him in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. So shall we ever be with the Lord. Now get these words, **Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.** We see here in that 18th verse, these words, **wherefore, comfort one another with these words**, not with the words about heaven, but the glorious fact that Christ is coming back for his own. What is heaven without the risen Lord? There can be no resurrection of our bodies until Jesus comes. Our full, complete salvation of body, soul and spirit rests in the fact of his return to earth again. These are comforting words.

As we look at the letter to the Laodiceans, we find Christ inviting us to sit with him on his throne, as he sat down with his Father on his throne. He is presented to us as the conquering Christ, and we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. We are the overcoming ones in Christ, we will rule with him. What a promise, what an event to look forward to, sitting with Christ on his throne. Reigning with Christ on this earth as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. A lot of folks don't believe that, but the Bible teaches it, and I believe it. These letters were not written to the world, but to the believers. They were dictated directly by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. They're his last word to his bride, the believers. He is here pointing his bride to his second coming and saying to her, **Occupy till I come.** These letters have no message for the world. The world will meet him in judgment. He'll come to the world as a thief in the night. Therefore, when Christ comes as a bridegroom for his bride to catch her away in the air with him, as set forth in the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians, he'll bring to the close the church age. And as Christ himself said, the gospel of the Gentiles, or the fullness of the Gentiles, has come, as set forth here in these letters of Christ on his return. Listen, this great truth as set forth in these seven letters is taught throughout the entire scripture. There is more said in the Old Testament about the second coming of Christ in all his glory than is said about his first coming. There are two great mountain peaks in the Old Testament. One is the coming Christ as the suffering Savior, his first advent, coming as the sin offering. And the second great mountain peak is his second advent, coming in all his glory as the ruling king. That's the reason the early disciples mistook his first coming as the coming of the king. They knew from reading the Old Testament that the Messiah was to come, break the political yoke, and be their king. They rejected him in his humiliation. Therefore, he turned to the Gentiles, which were included in his great purpose of

redemption, **to take out a people for his name**. This period is called the Church Age, and when the fullness of the Gentiles has come, he will come for his bride, take his people out and then meet the world in judgment. My friends, you read from the fourth chapter of Revelation on, it's Christ meeting the world in judgment. Christ himself, during his earthly ministry, constantly pointed his disciples to his second coming, even the night of his betrayal, he said to them in the 14th chapter of John, **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**. In the 25th chapter of Matthew, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, he said, **And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bride groom cometh. Go ye out to meet him**. Then again he said, **Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour that ye think not the Son of Man cometh**. Then again he said, **But of that day and hour no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only**. Then he said again, **Then shall two be in the field, one shall be taken, the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, one shall be taken, the other left**. Will you be taken and the other left, or, will the other be taken, and you left? Watch, **watch therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord doth come**. Then again he said, **But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be**. Christ in John 21 said to Peter in regard to his second coming, **If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me**. Then in Mark 8, is set forth his personal, visible, imminent return, **whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and my word in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father and the holy angels**. In Mark we find this glorious statement, **And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory**. The Lord commands his children to be watchful for his coming. Listen, **for the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore, get it now, listen, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at evening or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning, lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch! Watch! I say to you, friends, watch! Look up! Your redemption draweth nigh. Here we find the Lord earnestly asking us always to be on the lookout for His coming, waiting for His coming. The same great truth is taught in Luke 21, **And take heed yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be****

overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the whole earth, watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man. We see in these scriptures and many others we could quote, that Christ is saying to the disciples, Occupy till I com, I'm going to return for you. You look for me. I can't tell you the hour I'll come back, but I'm coming. You watch. You wait. You live with the expectancy of my imminent return. As we said, these great promises are not made to the world, nor to unsaved Christians, but to every born-again believer. They are not made to the modernists, the evolutionists, the Unitarians, the infidels; only to blood-bought, blood-washed, blood-redeemed sinners. And they are precious, aren't they? Ah, how precious these promises are to the hearts of God's children.

Then when we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, we find Christ out on Mount Olivet, after his resurrection, giving instruction to his disciples. We then behold him as he's taken up, and a cloud received him out of sight. Then two visitors from heaven stood with the disciples and spoke these words, listen, **ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.** Now you go into Jerusalem, you wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. But in all your waiting, your labors, you watch for his coming. He's coming. He's coming. Are you watching for him? A preacher said to me one day, well, I'm not taken up with his second coming, I preach his first coming. Well, that preachers just blinded. Just blinded, that's all. In Acts 3:19, Peter, in his sermon before the multitude of the Jews, presents this great truth, listen, **Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all of his holy prophets since the world began.** My friends, that restitution is the setting up of the kingdom of Israel.

As we go through our Bible, we find these great truths, the great truth of his coming, interwoven, in the very fabric of the scriptures. You can't tear it out. Turn

to Romans and all of Paul's epistles, and you'll find, as he said here, are not ye our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ? **For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.** What a promise to the believer. It means nothing to the unsaved church members. It means nothing to unsaved theological professors, because you try to make us believe the only coming of Christ is at the death of the believer. You deny the word of God. You try to take every comfort we have away from us, but it's there. Praise the Lord.

And in closing, let me read you this scripture, will you? I wish I had time to continue on for another hour, showing you from God's Word, these great eternal truths. Listen here, in Philippians, the contrast between the world. **Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.** That is the unsaved religionist. Listen now, **but our conversation is in heaven. From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, and that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.** God help us in this hour. Look for his coming. Christ is coming, coming any moment. There is nothing to keep him from coming.