

The Approaching Advent of Christ

by
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CHAPTER X

THE UNVEILING OF THE SON

It is a simple element of Christian belief that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and is now at the right hand of God; also that He will one day come forth in power and glory. One of the names given to this crisis is *apokalupsis--Revelation* or unveiling. All pre-trib teachers taught that this great event coincides with the Day of the Lord and the inauguration of the Kingdom.

Now, if pre-trib theories of the End-time are true, it follows that this word, when used in the Epistles, must never be found associated with the existence of the Church on earth. If it is so used even once, then the theories are wrong. We found that the Glorious Appearing is called "the blessed hope." What of the *Revelation*?

(1) 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

The first occurrence of the word is in 2 Thessalonians 1, where the Apostle describes in splendid and awful colors the very arrival of the Day of the Lord. The common versions are good, but the sense is brought out rather better in the modern ones. Here is Goodspeed's:

This is a proof of God's justice in judging, and it is to prove you worthy of the Kingdom of God, for the sake of which you are suffering, since God considers it only just to repay with suffering those who are making you suffer and *to give rest to you who are suffering and to us, when our Lord Jesus appears¹ from heaven*, with his mighty angels in a blaze of fire, and takes vengeance on the godless who will not listen to the good news of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with eternal ruin and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and his glorious might, *when on that Day he comes* to be honoured in his people, and wondered at in all who believe in him--because our testimony has been confirmed in you.

Could Paul have written this passage if he believed that Christians are to be raptured away to heaven several years or decades *before* the Day of the Lord comes? The suggestion is fantastic. Once it is seen that "rest" is a noun, the object of "recompense," then Darby's scheme falls like a house of cards. He and his associates and followers have a comforting scheme that the Elect will be raptured away several years before the Day of Judgment described in this chapter. Yet Paul, dealing specifically with the question of relief from tribulation, says that Christians will get it "at the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel" (R.V.).

Not all the wisdom of Rabbis and sophists has succeeded in fitting this text into the new program of the

1 Literally "at the revelation" (R.V.).

End-time.²

(2) 1 Corinthians 1:7.

The next (chronological) occurrence of the word *Revelation* is in 1 Corinthians. In the immediate context the Apostle thanks God for the grace that had been given unto the Corinthians, enriching them in everything, especially in "readiness of speech and fulness of knowledge" (Weymouth); and he adds,

so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the *revelation* of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto *the end*, that ye be unreprouvable in *the day* of our Lord Jesus Christ (R.V.).

The great Apostle warmly commends his readers because they were waiting for the unveiling of Christ in His glory; and lest anyone should misunderstand his meaning, the writer clinches the matter by affirming that God will confirm them unto the End of the Age. He even goes further. He is confident that they will be free from reproach³ on the Day of the Lord Jesus Messiah, when another Age is ushered in. *Revelation*, *End*, and *Day*--all three terms--indicate the same glorious event that the Corinthians were waiting for; [namely], the appearing of the glory of our Great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, which is the blessed hope of all Christians, as we have already seen.

A. T. Robertson comments, iv., p. 71:

It is an eager expectancy of the second coming of Christ here termed revelation like the eagerness in *prosdchomenoi* in Titus 2:13 for the same event. "As if that attitude of expectation were the highest posture that can be attained here by the Christian" (F. W. Robertson)

And Canon Evans in his volume in the *Speaker's Commentary* says:

The sense of this definitive clause is, "awaiting,⁴ as you are," i.e., in full, "looking *away* from all else and looking *out* for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"; the name and titles at full length, as in verse 2, denoting the majesty of the unveiled Presence. Comp. for thought Phil. 3:20, "out of which heaven we do look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall transfigure the body of our humiliation unto conformity with the body of His glory."

2 See chapter on the "Saints' Everlasting Rest" for an examination of some attempts to evade the obvious meaning of this chapter, 2 Thess. 1.

3 "Unimpeachable, for none will have the right to impeach." Robertson and Plummer, quoted by A. T. Robertson.

4 The same word is used in the following instances besides 1 Corinthians 1:7: -- [1] Rom. 8:19, "The earnest expectation of the creation *waiteth for* the revealing of the Sons of God" (R.V.). [2] Rom. 8:23, "ourselves also . . . *waiting* for our adoption, to wit the redemption of our body" (R.V.). [3] Rom. 8:25, "If we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience *wait for* it" (R.V.). [4] Gal. 5:5, "We through the Spirit by faith *wait for* the hope of righteousness" (R.V.). [5] Phil 3:20, "Whence also we *look for* the Saviour." [6] Heb. 9:28, "And unto them that *look for* him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Nobody holding to a secret Coming of Christ and a pre-tribulation Rapture of the saints as the immediate hope of the Church could have written the words of 1 Corinthians 1:7. If we compare them with those in Titus 2:13, written by the same hand, we cannot possibly avoid the conclusion that the true hope of Christians is the approaching Advent of our Lord in great power and glory.

(3) Romans 8:18-19.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for *the revealing* of the sons of God (R.V.).

This passage does not mean that Christians will have been some years previously raptured to heaven and concealed there, as the theorists assert. It simply means that Christians, who are sons of God now, though in humiliation and not recognized as such by the world, will be manifested in their true character and glory at the Revelation of Christ (1 John 3:2).

Christians will be transfigured and openly manifested as the sons of God. This is the "redemption of the body" that he refers to in verse 23 of this same chapter, and "the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward" according to verse 18. Just as in 1 Corinthians 15:23-54 the Parousia is followed at once by the resurrection and transfiguration of the redeemed (vv. 23, 51-52), and the inauguration of the Kingdom,⁵ so in Romans 8:18-30 the Revelation of Christ ushers in the redemption and transfiguration of the body⁶ and the regeneration of nature (vv. 19-22). The saints are conformed to the image of God's Son, and creation itself is delivered from bondage into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

No wonder the Church waited for the Revelation!

In their volume on Romans, Sanday and Headlam remark on our passage:

The same word *apokalupsis* is applied to the second Coming of the Messiah (which also is an *epiphaneia*, 2 Thess. 2:8) and to that of the redeemed who accompany Him: their new existence will not be like the present, but will be in "glory," both reflected and imparted. This revealing of the sons of God will be the signal for the great transformation (p. 207).

(4) 1 Peter 1:7.

That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ (R.V.).

Very evidently this passage treats of the blessed hope of Christians, for after speaking of Christ's appearing Peter says, "Whom having not seen ye love." At the Revelation, Christians will see Christ and share His glory. Moreover, according to this text, the saints will be tested and rewarded at the Revelation of Christ. It must also be the time of resurrection as Luke 14:14, Revelation 11:18, and 22:12 prove.

5 Vv. 25, 50, 54; Isaiah 25:8.

6 Vv. 23, 18-19, 29-30.

(5) 1 Peter 1:13.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ.

Here again the Christian's hope is the Revelation, for then it is that grace and glory will come to them. Moreover, at 4:7 in this Epistle, he desiderates [strongly desires/covets] for his readers similar alertness and sobriety in view of the approaching *End*. Could Peter have written like this if he believed that several years before the End and the Revelation of Christ Christians would be raptured secretly to heaven?

(6) 1 Peter 4:13.

But, insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings rejoice; that, *at the revelation* of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy (R.V.).

This verse is a companion of 2 Thessalonians 1:7. Each deals with the tribulation and trials of the saints. Paul tells his readers that at the Revelation of Christ Christians will be recompensed with rest. Peter has the same message. Just now Christians suffer and pass through fiery trials; at the Revelation of Christ's glory they will rejoice.

It is clear from the above use of the word *Revelation* that the Apostles Paul and Peter knew of no coming prior to the Revelation of Christ in His glory. This revelation is everywhere implied as being the hope of the Christian Church. It brings rest from tribulation (2 Thess. 1:7), and reward for service here below (1 Pet. 1:6-7). It is the grand event that Christians ardently wait for (1 Cor. 1:7), being the time for the redemption and transfiguration of the body, and the regeneration of Nature (Rom. 8:19-30). It is the time for fulness of grace and glory for all saints (1 Pet. 4:13; 1:13). No wonder Peter spoke of the Revelation as a time to be glad with exceeding joy.

We have now found that the terms *Consummation*, *End*, *Appearing* and *Revelation* are all linked indissolubly with the hope of the Church. Shall we find that the *Parousia* brings the triumph of the *King*? Let us see.