

# *The Approaching Advent of Christ*

by  
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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CHURCH AND THE END IN THE EPISTLES

The two previous chapters on the Parable of the Tares and the great Missionary Commission dealt with the relation of Christians to the Consummation (*sunteleia*) of the Age. In the Parable we found that the wheat, representing the Church, is gathered at the Day of the Lord, when the unfaithful are also judged. In the Great Commission we found it presupposed that the Church will continue on earth until the Lord Himself comes in His glory, at the same Consummation of the Age.

There is another word used in the Gospels for the End. It is *telos*, which, when used of the Last Things, means simply the End or close of the present world-period, the Day of the Appearing of the Son of Man, our Lord and Saviour. We are so fortunate here as to have most Darbyists with us. It is they who insist most strongly on the point, as anyone can verify by referring to the comments of Kelly, Scofield, and many others on Matthew 10:22, and 24:6, 13, 14, where the End (*telos*) is spoken of. See also F. C. Jennings, *The Time of the End* (pp. 4-6).

But if we argue that those texts presuppose that Christians will exist on earth till the Coming of the Son of Man in glory, as described in Matthew 24:29-31, we are immediately told that it is the Jewish Remnant that is in view, and that the Church will have been raptured off the scene years and perhaps generations before.

It is quite impossible to deal with the convenient Remnant hypothesis in this work. One literally requires a volume to examine it and the whole "dispensational" system on which it rests. There isn't the remotest hope of finding common ground now unless we go to the Epistles of Paul and Peter and John. In another volume I shall pay pre-tribs the compliment of meeting them on their own ground.

Let us therefore go to the Epistles, especially as our opponents affirm vigorously that "the End" is never found there for the hope of the Church. Writing in the London *Christian* (October 17th, 1907), Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas remarked on Matthew 24:14: "I cannot find the word 'end' is anywhere else applied to the coming of the Lord for His people." And another scholarly Anglican writes: "As regards the word 'End'--'and then shall the end come.' This is not the Coming of Christ; that event is nowhere called the 'End.' Here is the source of error with so many Bible students. . . ."<sup>1</sup> So also Dr. Gaebelein frequently and emphatically. I propose to show that not fewer than five texts in the Epistles associate "the End" (*telos*) with the Christian hope; and if one text of Scripture availed to "hang the universe on" in William Kelly's day, he would be the first to agree that five will stand the expanding universe of Einstein, Lord Rutherford, and Sir James Jeans, and should suffice to support a biblical doctrine.

(1) 1 Corinthians 1:7-8.

1 Dr. J. H. Townsend: *A Bright To-morrow*, p. 46.

Waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto *the end* (*telos*), that ye be unreprouvable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (R.V.).

There is a wealth of exegetical literature to confirm our view that the End here is the Parousia of Christ. It is scarcely necessary to cite it, because the juxtaposition of the two eschatological terms *Revelation* and *Day of Christ*, which all the pre-trib leaders applied to the Day of the Lord, is right at hand to show what Paul meant. Yet a few brief quotations will be serviceable. A. T. Robertson says that "Unto the End" means "End of the age till Jesus comes, final preservation of the saints" (iv., p. 71). Robertson and Plummer in *ICC* say: "The doctrine of the approach of the end is continually in the Apostle's thoughts: 3:13; 4:5; 6:2, 3; 7:29; 11:26; 15:51; 16:22" (p. 7). Godet says in his commentary: "The end is the Lord's coming again, for which the Church should constantly watch, for the very reason that it knows not the time of it; comp. Luke 12:35 and 36; Mark 13:32 (p. 58). Canon Evans in one of the more brilliant volumes of the *Speaker's Commentary* remarks: "The end, not of life, but of this Aeon, or dispensation." So also Alford, Bachmann, Bousset, and J. Weiss. Admirable is Meyer:

*Unto the end* applies not to the end of *life*, but, as the foregoing "the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" and the following "in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" clearly show, to the end of the pre-Messianic period of the world's history (the "this age," see on Matt. 13:32) which is to be ushered in by the now nearly approaching (7:29, 15:51) Parousia. Comp. 10:11; 2 Cor. 1:13. It is the "consummation of the age," Matt. 13:39 ff.; 24:3; 28:20; comp. Hebrews 10:26.

(2) Hebrews 3:6.

If we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto *the end* (R.V.).

(3) Hebrews 3:14.

We are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto *the end* (R.V.).

Of these two passages A. B. Davidson says in his commentary: "The *end* is not the end of life, but the moment when hope becomes reality with the coming again of the Son (see on i., I; comp. x. 37)" (p. 85). Alford says: "The *end* thought of is not the death of each individual, but the coming of the Lord, which is constantly called by this name." Lunemann comments thus: "As verse 14, 6:11, 1 Cor. 1:8, *al.*, *unto the end of the present order of the world*, intervening with the coming again of Christ, and thought of as in the near future (comp. 10:25, 37), at which time faith shall pass over into sight, hope into possession." In the true spirit of the Apostolic writer Adolph Saphir writes:

Cherish the hope which in Christ Jesus is given unto you who believe in the Saviour. Look forward to the coming of the Lord, to the joy and glory which He will bring unto His disciples. Be not afraid, for He will sustain you during all your difficulties and trials, and you will surely be kept unto that day. And be not afraid that the glory and brightness will overwhelm you; for Christ the Lord will be glorified *in* you, and thus be your strength, and you shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father. Hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of your hope. In calm and humble assurance, looking only unto Christ crucified for sinners. you cannot but rejoice in hope of the glory of God. As you trust in Jehovah your righteousness, so you look

forward to Jehovah your glory. The God of hope (the source and object of hope) fill you with joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. 15). . . . The end spoken of is nothing else but the appearing of the Lord Jesus, when hope shall be changed into sight. The day is approaching (x. 25), and with it our glory (i., pp. 185-6).

(4) Hebrews 6:11.

Show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to *the end* (R.V.).

In this verse the same piercing truth is set forth. Alford says: "'The End' is the coming of the Lord, looked for as close at hand." And Lunemann comments: "*unto the end*, i.e., in such manner that ye cherish and preserve to the end the Christian's hope of the Messianic kingdom to be looked for at the coming again of Christ, as a firm confidence of faith, untroubled by any doubts . . . until (at the Parousia of the Lord) hope passes over into the possession (of the kingdom) itself."

It is noteworthy, but not at all surprising, that two of the ablest of pre-trib commentators, F. W. Grant in his *Numerical Bible* and Kelly in his full and lucid lectures on Hebrews, leave this expression "unto the End" unnoticed at each of its three occurrences. It is simply passed by as of no significance. Had they been dealing with the Gospels, undoubtedly the Remnant would have been brought out to solve the difficulty. In Epistles to the Churches, however, no such resource is available; for, happily, it is only an odd expositor like Bullinger who deprives Christians of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(5) Revelation 2:26.

And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto *the end*, to him will I give authority over the nations (R.V.).

The reluctance that pre-trib writers exhibited to expound the phrase "unto the End" in Hebrews clings to them at Revelation 2:26. Kelly, Scofield, Ottman, Grant, Jennings, Baines, Newberry, and others, all leave it alone. Kelly has two expositions of Revelation, one of five hundred pages, but he can't bring himself to look the expression in the face. Ottman has a massive commentary of five hundred pages, and he does the same. F. C. Jennings has a volume of two hundred and twenty-two pages on the fifty-one verses of Revelation 2-3, applying them marvelously to seven ages or states of Church history, mostly corrupt, but he has neither time nor space for the pregnant phrase "unto the End" of 2:26. All this is very natural; for this passage, read naturally, presupposes that the people who overcome--the Christian survivors who gain the victory over the temptations and trials that characterize the present time of waiting--keep Christ's word and Christ's works *unto the End*, the end of the present Age at the Day of the Lord. And the whole context requires this interpretation. In verse 25 the Lord enjoins the overseer at Thyatira to hold fast till He come--that glorious Coming which had been mentioned at 1:7, and not since: "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." Synchronizing with this, and synonymous too, is the next expression (v. 26), "the End," when the overcomers assume authority over the nations. Verse 27 clinches the interpretation by giving the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom, according to the Second Psalm. Verse 28, a beautiful one, does not refer to a pre-tribulation Rapture of the saints but, more probably, to the Lord Himself and His kingly-rule.

Exegetical literature supports this interpretation. A. T. Robertson says that "unto the end" is the same as "till I come" in v. 25 (vi. 312). So also Swete and Anderson Scott, who links the phrase with Mark

13:13.

In a comprehensive paragraph Zahn goes to the heart of the writer's meaning:

The fundamental thought is the same as that which has already come to light at Rev. 1:5f, namely, that Christ through His atoning work for our sins not only made us priests having free access to God, but also constituted all members of His community partakers of His kingly-rule over the world and the kings of the world. There exists, however, the difference that this idea is here referred to the End of the present world-period, as also the "I come" in v. 25, and the saying about the Morning Star in v. 28. In comparison with the dawning Day of the future Parousia the time of waiting for this Parousia is night. Only when the Lord returns does there begin the time of shepherding all nations with an iron sceptre, that is, of an imperative rule of Christ and His Church over that part of mankind, which at present does not belong to the Church.

This development is presented in this way at three other places of the Apocalypse where parts of the second Psalm are applied to the prophecy of the End (11:18, 12:5, 19:15), and in the second place, where Jesus designates Himself as the Morning Star, shining forth brightly in the End-time, and at the close testifies this once more to the Churches (Rev. 22:16). A more precise explanation of the development comes only at Rev. 20:1-10, and is there comprehensively set forth (*Offenbarung*, i., pp. 294-5).<sup>2</sup>

If the reader, with this new light from the Epistles on *the End*, will return to the occurrences of the phrase in the Gospels, he will readily see that if Jewish Christians are in view at Matthew 10:22, [then] Christians of every land are contemplated at 24:6, 13 (Mark 13:7, 13); for Matthew 24:14 says expressly that the spread of the Gospel to all mankind is the last event heralding the End. Even v. 15, though particularly appropriate to Christians in Judea, will be exceedingly serviceable to the Church Catholic [universal].

The underlying presupposition in all this is that in the Gospels, as in the Epistles, Christians continue on earth till the very End of the Age; and this is totally opposed to pre-trib theories.

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2 In his *Offenbarung des Johannes*, *in loco*.