

# *The Approaching Advent of Christ*

by  
Alexander Reese

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CHURCH AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

In previous chapters of our inquiry we have sought to find out when the resurrection and rapture of the saints will take place, before or after the apocalyptic Week of Daniel. Except, in an incidental way, we have not examined the great words used by the Apostles in reference to the Second Coming of Christ. It now remains to do this, because in view of the frequent and lengthy references to this subject in the Epistles, it cannot but be that we shall find light there on the subject of our inquiry.

Let us search the Epistles and see whether any evidence exists there of the Apostles' revealing a new coming, which is to precede by several years the one spoken of so frequently by our Lord in the days of His earthly ministry. It is admitted that our Lord taught the Apostles on Mount Olivet to expect Him at the Day of the Lord, when He would appear visibly in great glory for the overthrow of His foes and the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. If, therefore, we can find in the Epistles that the Apostles and their converts also were looking expectantly for the revelation of Christ from heaven at the Day of the Lord, then we shall be able to conclude not only that the Coming of the Gospels and that of the Epistles are identical, but also that the theory that the Church will be raptured to heaven some years before the day of the Lord is a delusion.

There are four principal words used in the Epistles in reference to the End of the Age and the Return of Christ. They are (1) *Manifestation* or *Appearing*; (2) the *Revelation* or *Apocalypse*; (3) the *Coming*, and (4) the *Day* of the Lord.

It is admitted by the real leaders of the pre-trib school that the terms *Appearing*, *Revelation*, and *Day* of the Lord are all synonymous, or at least related, expressions referring to the Day of Christ's glorious Advent at the close of the Age. It is contended, however, that the term *Coming* refers to an advent of Christ that will take place some years--at least seven--prior to the *Appearing*, *Revelation*, or *Day* of Christ. The *Coming* is for the Church; the *Glorious Appearing* for the world and Israel.<sup>1</sup> Now, if the Apostles revealed a new coming prior to the Glorious Appearing, there must be a clear trace of it either in their discourses in the Acts or in their Epistles. Again, the scheme is that Christians will be raptured to heaven at the *Coming* and will return *with* Christ seven or more years later.

Such is the statement, remarks B. W. Newton in *The Second Coming*. It is a very intelligible statement. But is it true? Its truth may easily be tested. If it were true, we should be unable to point out one single passage of Scripture that recognizes believers as remaining on the earth until either "the Epiphany" or "the manifestation" or "the revelation" of the Lord--three distinct expressions all used in the Scripture and all equally implying *publicity*. If we are to be removed from the earth *before* the Epiphany of Christ, it is evident that the Scripture can *no where* either state or imply that we are to remain on the

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1 See chapter i., where extracts are given from "the Big Four": Darby, Kelly, Trotter and C. H. M.

earth until the Epiphany. If we can point out *one* passage that speaks of believers being on the earth until the Epiphany, the whole argument is disproved and the system connected with it falls (pp. 7-8).

Not only so, we must nowhere find the *Coming* associated with the reward of the saints, the judgment, or the destruction of Antichrist. Likewise we must nowhere find the Christian hope associated with the *Appearing*, the *Revelation*, or the *Day*.

Let us study the Epistles on this important subject; and we may begin with the occurrences of *Appearing--epiphaneia*.

(1) 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (R.V.).

The first use of the term is in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, where we read:

And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the *manifestation (epiphaneia)* of his coming (*parousia*).

Clearly the Appearing of Christ is His Glorious Coming at the Day of the Lord. And, used in connection with the regal word *Parousia*, it indicates the triumphant arrival of the King. "It is a powerful picture how the mere breath of the Lord will destroy this arch-enemy."<sup>2</sup> As an eschatological term, *Appearing* has a clear and definite meaning at its first mention in the New Testament. Of extreme significance is the use of *Parousia* for the same crisis of judgment; but we leave the word till next chapter.

(2) 1 Timothy 6:14 (R.V.).

That thou keep the commandment without spot, without reproach, until *the appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But how can Christians observe this instruction if, as pre-tribs assert, they will be raptured to heaven several years or decades *before* the Appearing of Christ? Undoubtedly the Appearing is the event that will terminate the service of Christians on earth. Clearly, therefore, they cannot be raptured before it takes place.

(3) 2 Timothy 4:1.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead, in the light of *his appearance and his reign*, I adjure you to preach the word (Moffatt).

Here the Appearing of Christ is held out as the time when Christ's Kingdom will come and when Christians will stand before Christ Jesus. Alford says: "We have here His coming, when we shall stand before Him--His *Kingdom* in which we hope to reign with Him."

(4) 2 Timothy 4:8.

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2 G. Milligan, cited by A. T. Robertson.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His *appearing*.

Does this look as if the Apostle Paul did not make the Glorious Appearing of Christ his hope? He himself loved that appearing. He had his heart set upon it, because of the reward that the righteous Judge was to give him. Undoubtedly this refers to the hope of the Church, "the first stage of the advent," since our Lord said, "Thou shalt be recompensed *at the resurrection of the just*" (Luke 14:14). The Glorious Appearing and the resurrection of the saints synchronize. Both occur, as the context shows, "at that Day"--the well-known Day of the Lord.

(5) Titus 2:13.

Awaiting the blessed hope and *appearing* of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Darby).

Now it is to be pointed out that in the Greek of this great passage the two substantives *hope* and *appearing* are, as Ellicott points out in his Commentary, "closely united, and under the vinculum of a common article." It is not "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing," as if two separate events were in view. It is simply "looking for the blessed hope and appearing." The one expression explains the other, or as Green says in his *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament*, "The 'manifestation' is but another expression for the hope" (p. 198). See also A. T. Robertson, *iv.*, p. 604, and his *Grammar of the N.T.* (p. 786), where he applies the law to a famous example in this same passage.

If Greek grammar is our guide, then we are bound to the conclusion that "the blessed hope" of Christians is "the glorious appearing" or "the appearing of the glory" of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence it is that in the translations of the New Testament into modern idiomatic English, the passage in Titus 2:13 runs:

Moffatt:

Awaiting the blessed hope of the appearance of the Glory of the great God and of our Saviour Christ Jesus.

Weymouth:

Awaiting fulfilment of our blessed hope--the Appearing in glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Goodspeed:

We wait for the fulfilment of our blessed hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus.

Conybeare:

Looking for that blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the great God, and our Saviour

Jesus Christ.

Wade:

Looking forward to the hope (so fraught with happiness) of witnessing the Manifestation.

The new rendering, "the appearing of the Glory of our great God and Saviour" is most significant. Every Christian Hebrew would know at once that the Coming of Jehovah at the Day of the Lord is in view. This was the hope of Israel. Every Israelite looked forward to that great Day when the chosen People, looking upon Jehovah, would say: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).

At Pentecost the Church of Christ shared this hope, for the Coming of Jehovah is now the Coming of Jesus for the Church. This is seen already at Acts 1:11--"This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner"--a promise that Darby rightly referred to the glorious "manifestation in this lower world," when "He will return to earth to be seen of the world." (*Synopsis in loco.*) In Acts 3:19-21, Peter preached the same Glorious Appearing as is found in the O.T. and the Gospels, and at Acts 1:11. It is for what our Lord called the "Regeneration" (Matt. 19:28). At 2:19-21, the Apostle quotes from Joel, applying to the Day of Pentecost a prophecy of the End-time, which I shall quote in some modern versions, including Darby's:

Moffatt:

The sun shall be changed into darkness  
And the moon into blood,  
Ere the great, open Day of the Lord arrives.  
And everyone who invokes the name of the Lord  
Shall be saved.

Weymouth:

To usher in the Day of the Lord--  
That great and illustrious Day;  
And everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord  
Shall be saved.

Wade:

Before there cometh the great and impressive Day of the LORD;  
And it shall ensue that everyone that invoceth the Name of the LORD will be saved.

Goodspeed:

Before the coming of the great, splendid Day of the Lord.  
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Darby:

Before the great and gloriously appearing Day of (the) Lord come.

On the Greek word used here (*epiphane*), Darby says that it "has in it the sense of 'manifestation, appearing, displaying itself.' Compare Titus 2:11, 13." *New Translation*, notes at Acts 2.

These words of Darby's enable us to see that Paul in Titus 2:13 has the same day and the same majestic event in view, namely, the Coming in glory of Jesus the Messiah, who is Jehovah, the Hope of Israel, and our Hope as well (1 Tim. 1:1).

And a man half-asleep can see that modern scholarship's contribution at Titus 2:13 spells the ruin, and the irretrievable ruin, of pre-tribs' comforting program of the End. For according to them "the blessed hope" is a secret event, clean detached from all connection with the Day of the Lord, which, they tell us, is a terrible and terrifying affair occurring several years or decades later, whereas according to Paul the blessed hope of Christians *is none other than the Glorious Appearing itself*.

The use of the word *appearing* in the Pauline Epistles is absolutely decisive on the principal issue of our inquiry; for Christ's Appearing brings Antichrist to the pit (2 Thess. 2:8), closes the career of Christians upon earth (1 Tim. 6:14), sets Christians before their Lord when He comes to reign (2 Tim. 4:1), forms the object of Christians' affection (2 Tim. 4:8), and is definitely held out--as clearly as language can make it--as the "Blessed Hope" of the Church (Titus 2:13).

Is it not terribly serious, therefore, that pre-trib leaders should attribute to Satanic influence the rejection of a secret Pre-tribulation Rapture, and the acceptance of the Glorious Appearing of Christ as the Blessed Hope of Christians?<sup>3</sup>

Several years ago an expositor of note among pre-tribs,<sup>4</sup> who had some concern for exact exegesis and saw that the Christian hope in Titus 2:13 is nothing else than the Glorious Appearing of Christ, took to task the Editor of a prophetic magazine for erroneous exegesis on this passage. Exegesis apart, he deserved a prize for his courage. Well, he corrected the Editor's carelessness in perpetrating the error--which had always been a foundation pillar in the school---that "the blessed hope" of Titus 2:13 referred to the Rapture several years before the "Glorious Appearing." He pointed out that the Greek demands the sense that the blessed hope is simply the Glorious Appearing. I was astonished to see this in an orthodox magazine and was curious to see how this courageous writer was going to square his sensible exegesis with the pre-trib presupposition that the blessed hope *precedes* the Glorious Appearing by at least seven years. Or could it be possible that a reaction had set in with a return to the truth of Scripture?

But, alas, for the vanity of human wishes! The writer who began so well ended up with a more violent leap in the dark than the confrères whom he criticized; for he would have us believe [that] Paul in Titus 2:13 was not referring to the proper hope of the Church at all! "The blessed hope" of the Glorious Appearing, [he writes] is not strictly for the Church, since it occurs some years after the more blessed hope of the Rapture of 2 Thessalonians 4:17. We are to believe, *ex hypothesi*, either that Paul (like the

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3 See C.H.M., p. 31; A. J. Pollock, *May Christ Come at Any Moment?* p. 3, and Gaebelien, *The Olivet Discourse*, p. 89.

4 C. F. Hogg, "The Morning Star," Aug. 1st, 1912. His position twenty years later is examined in a subsequent chapter of this volume.

opponents of pre-tribs) "confused" the Rapture and the Appearing of Christ, or else that, knowing that the Secret Rapture seven years before the Glorious Appearing was the true hope of Christians, he carelessly led Titus and the whole Church universal to believe that the Glorious Appearing was the true hope. An imaginary pre-tribulation rapture is to be more esteemed than the blessed hope of 2:13. I do not think we need to expose the hollowness of this latest contention and its implications.

It is like nothing so much as a man's having a gourd that he dug around and manured and watered and covered with a booth of leaves to keep out the sun, which was arising with withering in his wings.

The candid student will see that there is one and only one sound interpretation of Titus 2:13, and that is that "the appearing of the Glory of our great God and Saviour" is the true and proper hope of the saints. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 is but a more detailed reference to the same event. The theory that the latter is a secret event is one of the most amazing innovations ever made on the faith of the Church; and the theory that it occurs several years before the Day of the Lord is once and for ever shattered by the sure and satisfying statement of the Apostle's that Christians, redeemed and schooled by the grace of God, live lives "of self-mastery, of integrity, and of piety in this present world, awaiting the blessed hope of the appearance of the Glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself up for us to redeem us from all iniquity and secure Himself a clean people with a zest for good works" (Moffatt).

Just as Paul taught that the Glorious Appearing is the hope of the Church, so did the Apostle Peter. Addressing the Elders of the Churches he says in his First Epistle:

And when the chief Shepherd *shall be manifested* ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away (v. 4, R.V.).

A comparison of this with Paul's similar declaration in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 proves that the crowning and the rewarding of the saints take place at the *Coming* of Christ. Luke 14:14, 1 Corinthians 15:52, and Revelation 11:18 show that the rewarding takes place at the resurrection on the Day of the Lord. For ordinary people, therefore, it is clear that in Peter's view the Appearing of Christ coincides with the Coming and the first resurrection.

The Apostle John taught the same thing, as the following passages from his first Epistle show:

And now my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be *manifested*, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his *coming* (2:28, R.V.).

Here again the Appearing and the Coming are but two aspects of the same event--the Glorious Appearing of Christ the Lord.

In 1 John 3:2 the Appearing of Christ is both the cause and the occasion of the transfiguration of Christians, just as in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 this blessedness is linked with the coming of the Kingdom: "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (R.V.).

But the most decisive text to prove John's attitude is found in Revelation 1:7, which reads as follows: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

To appreciate properly the presence of this moving passage on the first page of the book, it is necessary to bear in mind that the book of Revelation as a whole is an *Epistle*, written by John the Apostle to the Seven Churches of Asia. It contains an opening salutation (1:4-6),<sup>5</sup> continues throughout in the first person, and concludes, like the other N.T. Epistles, with the Apostolic benediction upon the readers of the letter--"the grace of the Lord Jesus be with *the saints*, Amen" (22:21, R.V. and Darby).

This character of the Apocalypse as an Epistle written to the Churches of Asia (which were founded in great part through the evangelistic labours of Paul and had already received an earlier encyclical from that Apostle, i.e., the Epistle to the Ephesians) has been overlooked by pre-tribs but is well established by many eminent students of the Apocalypse.<sup>6</sup>

Some time before the war the British Admiralty addressed an important communication on Imperial Naval policy to each of the overseas Dominions. Accompanying this common memorandum was a covering letter for each dealing with local considerations. So it is with the Revelation. The Apocalypse proper is an Epistle to the Seven Churches, and to the Church universal, concerning the approaching times of Antichrist and the sufferings of the saints. The Seven Epistles are special messages (*not* letters) to the overseers of the Churches of Asia, praising, exhorting, or reproving them according to the condition of their congregations.

The importance of this fact can scarcely be exaggerated, for it shows that when John wrote his fourth and last Epistle in A.D. 96, he was animated by precisely the same hope as animated Paul when he wrote his last Epistles, those to Timothy and Titus in 65-66. Paul rejoiced in the blessed hope of the Glorious Appearing of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. John is thrilled by the very same hope, the Coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven, to be seen by every eye, and specially by the penitent tribes in the land of Israel (1:7, Darby).

This same Advent of the Coming One takes place, as we saw when studying the resurrection, at chapter 11:17, when the first resurrection and the rewarding of the saints are effected. It is described in detail at 19:11-20:6, where Antichrist is overthrown, the dead in Christ are raised, and the living saints are translated to sit upon thrones and exercise kingly rule in the Days of the Son of Man.

What shall we say to these things? Simply that all the sophistry of men cannot find room for a secret rapture or a pre-tribulation rapture. They are forever ruled out by the fact that the book from beginning to end knows nothing<sup>7</sup> of any coming of the Lord prior to His Glorious Appearing at 1:7, 11:18, and 19:11. And what is true of the Apocalypse is true of the whole N.T. revelation, from our Saviour's oral teaching until the close of the Apostolic Age. Messiah comes in great glory, the holy dead are raised, the sons of Jacob look penitently upon their brother Joseph whom they rejected and sold into Egypt, the Kingdom comes and with it the glory of the righteous. The Coming *for* the saints

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5 "John, to the seven Churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, *etc.*"

6 See Ramsay, *The Seven Churches of Asia*, pp. 36-8; Hort, *Romans and Ephesians*, p. 89; Zahn, *INT*, iii., pp. 389-413; Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. 217; Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*, p. 237.

7 Chapter 14 gives a proleptic view of the End without describing the Coming.

and the Coming *with* the saints take place at the same crisis--the day of the resurrection and transfiguration of the holy dead, and of the renewal of Israel.

I have shown that this was the hope of O.T. saints, of the Pentecostal Church, of the Churches founded by Paul, and of those addressed in the Revelation. It is also the hope of Hebrew Christians of our own generation. Many will welcome the beautiful testimony of one of the greatest Hebrew preachers since the Apostles:

The New Testament has also a point to which it looks; and what is that point? Oh, I will speak freely on this subject. It is the second advent of our Lord, when He will return with His saints and when He will make Himself manifest to Israel and the whole world, not in order that the last judgement may be held, but that another historical period may be ushered in, when God's will shall be done upon this earth as it is in heaven, and when Jesus Christ and the transfigured saints shall come to be seen and be acknowledged: and then there shall be fulfilled the promises which God has given from the beginning of the world. When he comes, Israel will say, "It is Jehovah, and it is His first Advent." The Church will say, "It is Jesus, and it is His second Advent." Israel will say, "He has come to take possession of the throne of David, and Jerusalem will be glorified and will be His nation." And the Church will say, "He is glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe, and we, whom He has redeemed with His blood, shall reign with Him on the earth."

This is what all the Apostles taught, and taught constantly. Scarcely are the Thessalonians converted from idolatry, before the Apostles teach them to wait for the coming of God's Son from Heaven. There is no summary given in the Apostolic Epistles, of what we believe, that does not bring in "the blessed hope the Glorious Appearing (notice the expression) of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Purposely the expression is the Jehovah, who will appear unto Israel. It is Jesus who appears with the Church--the same thing--"the great God and Our Saviour Jesus Christ." And the angel explained it to the disciples: "This same Jesus shall so come." It is the next thing which is to happen.<sup>8</sup>

Again,

"Therefore, in the New Testament, both in the gospels and in the epistles, the coming of the Lord Jesus is connected with the national restoration and blessing of Israel; or in other words, the coming of Jehovah; and so until we come to the blessed book of the Revelation. There we have all summed up in this book of the Kingdom, and this book of the Church. There we see the unity of the whole record which God has given to us. He will come again. Jehovah means the Coming One, and now He is called Jesus, who was, and is, and is to come; and of whom the Church says, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."<sup>9</sup>

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8 Adolph Saphir, *The Divine Unity of Scripture*, pp. 174-5.

9 *Ibid.*, pg. 179.