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Is it POSSIBLE for
CHRIST to RETURN
... in ...
THIS GENERATION?

A Radio Message
by
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IS IT POSSIBLE FOR CHRIST TO RETURN IN THIS GENERATION?

The question before us this morning is both vital and timely: Is it possible for Christ to return in this generation? In this day of global war and world-wide suffering; in this day of terrorism and cruelty and godlessness and sin; in this day when the forces of evil have crushed Europe and many islands of the sea, when they are battling against the millions of Asia and Africa and the western nations—can Christ return at such a time? God has given us the answer in His infallible Word. We turn to only a few of the many passages concerning the question before us to see what is written by Him who knows the beginning from the end. First we read in Luke 21:25-28 these significant words:

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

The fourteenth chapter of John is perhaps the best loved passage of Scripture by most Christians: and yet many who love it seem to overlook the sure promise of the Lord's return contained in the three opening verses:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

My friends, it was Christ who spoke these words to those who loved Him. He uttered them shortly before He went to the cross to die for the sins of the world. Then He died; He arose; and went back to heaven to prepare a place for His own. I believe that place must be almost ready, and that He will surely return to take us to Himself—perhaps in this generation. We must not set dates for His coming; for He definitely warned us against that error; yet He meant exactly what he said when He told us that He would come again, giving us also many positive signs that would point to His sure return.

We look once more at the sacred record to see how He will come, and there we find the angelic message, which speaks for it-
self. The risen Lord had showed Himself alive after His suffering and death over a period of forty days, but only to those who believed on Him. Then after He had given them the great commission to evangelize the world by the power of the Holy Spirit of promise,

``. . . While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, 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 ye have seen him go into heaven'' (Acts 1:9-11).

And, as a lonely exile on the Isle of Patmos, the beloved disciple saw the glorified Lord Jesus, and comforted every child of God by the divinely inspired promise:

``Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him'' (Rev. 1:7).

The Personal, Bodily Return of Christ to the Earth

My friends, these and many similar quotations from the Word of God can not be spiritualized at all. They must be taken literally. It is impossible to interpret them to mean anything except what the plain reading makes them to mean. Before the first World War, Christian leaders were talking much of how the church would convert the world and usher in a spiritual kingdom. I wonder what those same leaders are thinking today? If they have not accepted the premillennial coming of Christ, to establish His own kingdom in visible power and great glory, as taught plainly in the Scriptures, they are floundering in a confused maze of bewilderment. All their human reasonings and logic fail to answer the question, "Why is the world not getting better and better as we thought it would?" The trouble was with their human reasoning and logic, which perverted the Scriptures, and spiritualized teachings that God means for us to take literally. When He said that the risen Lord Jesus would "come with clouds," and that "every eye" should "see him," God meant exactly that. How else can "they also which pierced him" look upon the nail-pierced hands and the wounded side, if Christ does not return personally, bodily, visibly to the earth?

The apostles were not expecting to see a converted world at the second coming of Christ, as their epistles repeatedly bear testimony. Charles and John Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight L. Moody, all the flaming evangelists who have seen hundreds and thousands born again—these did not preach that the world would get better and better because of the ministry of the church; but, rather, that it would grow worse and worse, as a godless humanity turned a deaf ear to the Gospel of the grace of God. They taught that Jesus Himself will come to convert the world in a moment, and to establish His personal rule over a world that shall have been cleansed by His purifying judgments. This is the clear teaching of the Prophetic Word of God.

Christ will leave the place He now occupies, and return for His church, the born-again bride of the Heavenly Bridegroom, which will meet Him "in the air." After the church is translated, the Antichrist will be revealed, to reign for that short but awful period known in Scripture as "the seventieth week of Daniel." To end "the great tribulation," which that Satan-inspired "Beast" will bring upon the earth, the Lord Jesus will return in power and great glory—bodily, visibly, personally—to establish His kingdom of peace and righteousness. Then He will be recognized by men, angels, and demons as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will rule for a thousand years; and He will come before the thousand years to set up His own kingdom; that is what we mean by saying that His return will be premillennial—before the millennium. Surely man should know by now that no human power can bring in lasting peace! Only God can work that miracle! And yet, even today, we hear well-meaning men announcing from the pulpit and over the radio the purpose of the democracies to make the peace which follows this second World War one which shall end all wars! They are well-meaning, but uninformed concerning prophetic truth. And, being uninformed about what the open Bible teaches, they are also without excuse.

The Teachings of the Apostles Concerning the Return of Christ

Not only did Daniel and other Old Testament prophets plainly teach the literal interpretation of the return of Christ; not only did the Lord Jesus Himself set it forth in no uncertain terms; but the apostles, whom professing Christendom claims to follow for church truth, also linked it with every doctrine they taught and with many exhortations they gave to the children of God. Let us look just here at a few of these:

1. Observance of the Lord's Day and Public Worship. When Paul wanted to exhort Christians to attend to the keeping of the Lord's Day, and the assembling of themselves together in public worship, he did so with an appeal to the imminency of the Lord's return:
2. Faithfulness in Testimony. When Paul exhorted the Hebrew Christians to “go on” with Christ, even in the face of bitter persecution, he put before them the incentive of the Lord’s return saying, in part:

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:36, 37).

3. Reward for Service. Again, Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, urging them to build upon the one foundation, “which is Jesus Christ,” and promising reward for God honoring service in that coming day. Then

“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward” (I Cor. 3:13, 14; cf 3:11-15).

4. Holy Living. When the great apostle wanted to inspire the Thessalonian Christians to holy living, he prayed that their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:23).

5. Comfort for the Bereaved. When Paul sought to comfort those who mourned for their Christian dead, he did so with the assurance of the return of the Lord, saying:

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and 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” (I Thess. 4:16, 17).

What an expression that is—“the dead in Christ”! They are everywhere! But one day the risen Christ shall call them out of the graves; the living saints shall be changed; and the “blessed hope” of the Christian will become a glorious fact! No wonder Paul added the exhortation,

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words”! (I Thess. 4:18).

My dear friends, I do not know of any other such hope, one that brings gladness to the heart of the child of God, when he stands in the death chamber. To know that, perhaps before the funeral is over, the Lord may come and the dead in Christ be raised—that is the “blessed hope” of the church, and that is the assurance that comforted the hearts of the early disciples.

6. Apostasy in the Church. When Paul warned the young minister, Timothy, concerning the apostasy that would characterize professing Christendom near the end of the church age, he did so in view of the coming of the Lord. He foresaw, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that there would be a falling away from the truth, and a turning unto fables; that the nominal church would no longer be a power, but that she would take to herself teachers, “having itching ears.” And Paul’s warning to the young man, Timothy, is for Christians in our own day:

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Tim. 4:1-4).

7. Conflict between Capital and Labor. When James was given to know by the Spirit of God that, toward the end of the age, there would be a conflict between capital and labor, he did so by reminding men of the coming of the Lord. When he saw, by inspiration of God, that the laboring man would seek to take the law into his own hands, that unscrupulous capital would disregard the rights of labor, that Bolshevism and Communism and lawlessness would spread over the earth, he wrote saying:

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord... for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7, 8; cf. 5:1-8).

THE INDIFFERENCE OF PROFESSING CHRISTENDOM TO THE RETURN OF CHRIST

We might quote other apostolic writings which link the doctrine of the second coming of Christ with other church truths; but these will suffice to illustrate the significant place the “blessed hope” holds in all Christian doctrine. Moreover, the very prominence of the Holy Spirit’s message concerning the return of Christ leaves those who ignore this teaching without excuse before God. And the many who not only ignore it, but also oppose it with satanic subtlety, stand condemned by their very opposition to the revealed truth of God. We could go through the New Testament
this morning and find some 382 passages which speak of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet the strange thing is that the church-at-large is as indifferent toward His return as the early disciples were about His going away. They did not understand that He had to die and rise again; neither do millions in professing Christendom know or care that He said He would surely come again. Scoffers in the church mock when we teach that it is possible for Christ to return in this generation. Many "signs of the times" are heralded daily on the pages of our newspapers and over the air; yet the church is asleep, indifferent to the only event in all human history that can and will bring order out of chaos, peace to a war-torn world, righteousness to suffering millions. The very indifference and skepticism of professing Christendom, furthermore, confirm our belief in the inspired record, and cause us to look up, knowing that our "redemption draweth nigh"; for the Holy Spirit told Peter to write, saying:

"There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation . . . The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:3, 4, 9).

I want to tell you, my dear friends, that when the Lord Jesus came to earth more than nineteen hundred years ago, He found His Word so nullified by "the traditions" of the Pharisees that the religious leaders of organized Judaism set their own opinions and philosophies against those of the all-wise, eternal Lord of glory. That is why He said unto them,

"Ye . . . (make) the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:12, 13).

That is the trouble with the professing church today. Instead of going to the Word of God to find out what it says about the return of Christ, many are turning to uninspired books of false teachers; thus error is accepted instead of the truth of the sacred Scriptures. Nicodemus, one of the recognized leaders of his day in spiritual things, heard the Lord asking him some searching questions that might well be asked of many ministers in Protestantism today, men who never mention the Christian's "blessed hope":

"Art thou a master (or teacher) of Israel, and knowest not these things? . . . If I have told you earthly things, and

ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:10, 12).

These words, spoken by our Lord to Nicodemus, need to be sounded in the ears of all who profess to know Christ, yet deny or pervert His own teaching concerning His personal, bodily return to earth to rule. Whether men believe it or not, this old world will wake up one of these mornings to find every Christian gone. Church members, all who are not born again by the precious Blood of Christ, will be left behind; and the prophetic Scriptures teach plainly that there will be many of these. A vast system of false Christendom will be in the world, will link hands with the Antichrist, later to be devoured by him before Christ returns with the true church to set up His glorious kingdom. Church membership has never saved a soul; and only the born again, blood-bought children of God will be translated when He calls Home His bride.

That translation will be literal; for we are to interpret prophecy in the light of fulfilled prophecy. Christ's first coming was in a real body, a physical body; and the Bible tells us that "this same Jesus will so come in like manner" as He went into heaven, bringing with Him "ten thousands of his saints." What right, therefore, has any mere man to say that His second coming will be spiritual, not literal? Our Lord taught His disciples that His coming again would be literal; His disciples taught it; and, by the grace of God, I expect to teach it "till He comes," or till He takes me Home to heaven. One of these days the heavens will open, and the 'same Jesus' who ascended into heaven nearly two thousand years ago will return in His uncreated glory. Moreover, there is more reason for believers to hope for His return in this generation than ever before in all the Christian era. Many "signs of the times" seem to point to the soon realization of "that blessed hope" of the Christian, the translation of the true church; to be followed by the visible, bodily coming of Christ with His bride to rule "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8).

THE TRANSLATION OF THE CHURCH

The very next prophetic event to come to pass, insofar as God has revealed it to us in His Word, is the rapture of the church. And it seems to us that He is waiting only for the completion of His body, even His blood-bought bride, before He calls that bride, Home to heaven. God's purpose for this age is the calling out of "a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). When the last member of the church is added to complete that body, then the Lord will
translate His blood-bought bride, taking her to be with Himself. What an incentive to win souls! What an incentive to serve the Lord, that members may be added to His church! You who are Sunday School teachers, as you stand before your classes, may be leading to Christ the last member that will complete the body of Christ and bring Him back for His own. The very thought should make us ever more zealous in telling the story of the cross and the empty tomb.

The purpose of the church is not to amuse people, but to win souls. The purpose of the church is not to preach on the question of who is to be the next mayor or the next president. The purpose of the church is not even to make this world a lawless world; only the Lord Jesus can and will do that when He comes in glory. Of course, Christians must stand for righteousness and liberty and obedience to government; but the purpose of the church, my dear friends, is to preach the Gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. When that glorious Gospel is preached, men and women, boys and girls are saved, born again by the shed blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. To teach and preach that Gospel is the ministry of the church. And when the last member is added to the bride of Christ, then He will translate the church, call her to meet Him in the air.

But, you ask, when will this meeting in the air take place? I do not know. Some people profess to know. Pastor Russell, the founder of the cult known as Jehovah's Witnesses, set the date at 1874, then changed it to 1914, and still later to 1918. Judge Rutherford, who has been the leader of that sect, since the death of Russell, placed the date at 1945. But not one of these false teachers knows when Christ will come for the church.

Another false cult, whose followers were called Millerites, set the date of Christ's return at 1844. These deluded people gave up their farms, left home and business, put on their ascension robes, got up on the housetops, and sang; but Christ did not come as they said He would. No; He told us expressly that we must not set dates. But let us realize that we are living ever nearer to that wonderful event. Each day brings His coming closer. Does each day see souls brought to a personal knowledge of Him as the only Saviour and Lord because of our faithfulness in witnessing?

I can not tell you when Jesus is coming again; but I do know that He has given us a picture of the condition of the world just prior to His return. And when I read the prophetic description I can not help but feel that the Lord may return in our own generation; for present conditions remarkably fulfill the prophetic picture given in the Word of God concerning the end of the church age.

**Some “Signs of the Times” That Point to the Return of Christ**

Here are a few of the “signs of the times,” set forth in the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures to describe conditions in the church and in the world just prior to our Lord's return in glory:

1. **Apostasy in Professing Christendom.** There never was a time when there were as many schisms and creeds and sects, false systems in professing Christendom, as there are today. They have come in the name of the Lord, calling themselves Christian; yet they deny the Christ who died and rose again for a sinful world.

   - “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (I Tim. 4:1, 2).

   - Paul means by "the latter times" the end of the church age. If departing from "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" is indicative of the nearness of the close of the church age, then surely we must be nearing that day. The Lord Jesus referred to the same profession of faith when He said in the Sermon on the Mount:

   - “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).
And again, in His Olivet Discourse Christ plainly said,

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:4, 5).

These false teachers do not come in the name of the devil; they come in the name of Christ, even as the Lord Jesus and His apostles forewarned. These false cults and sects will continue to the end of the age.

2. "Perilous Times" shall also come upon the world just prior to the return of Christ.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Tim. 3:1-5).

What an indictment! And how aptly this description fits many millions living in the world today! Millions who have enjoyed the by-products of Christianity; millions who have heard the Gospel story; millions whose ancestors fought, bled, and died for the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience! When the Apostle Paul wrote these words, he was not describing the heathen in India and Africa and other pagan countries; he was not even describing the unconverted people submerged in the great cities of America. He was describing the condition of apostate Christendom at the end time. "Having a form of godliness," the inspired writer said, yet many would "deny the power thereof." Who is "the power of God"? He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ! And every church member, every adherent to false cults, every person who denies Christ's eternal deity, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His vicarious atonement on Calvary's Cross, His bodily resurrection, His ascension into heaven, His intercessory work at the "throne of grace," and His bodily, personal, visible return in glory to take the reins of government, even as the Scriptures state such as these may have "a form of godliness," but they deny "the power thereof." They deny the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:24).

Christ had these "perilous times" in mind when He said, in His Olivet Discourse, that the end of the age would be characterized by wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, lawlessness, hatred of the Jew, the waxing cold of the love of many, bitterness, and strife. (See Matt. 24:6-12.) And surely no man in his right mind today would dare deny that these very conditions exist in every nation under heaven. The world is not getting better and better; this all must admit.

3. The Return of the Jews to Palestine. The prophetic Scriptures tell us that at the end of this age the national spirit will be revived in Israel, and that many of her people will return to the land of their fathers. They will go back in unbelief, not accepting Christ as their Messiah, but seeking to make Palestine once more their national home. Jeremiah wrote of that day when he said,

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward" (Jer. 50:5).

Never since the Day of Pentecost was there such a stirring among God's ancient people as there is today. Never in all the Christian era has there been such a zealous group of leaders among Judaism for the restoration of Israel as a nation in her own land as there is today—and as there has been for the past generation. One hundred years ago there were only about 500 Jews in the land of Palestine; today there are approximately a million. The bitter persecutions in Europe, together with the desire of many to rehabilitate the barren wastes, have caused more immigrants to seek entrance into Palestine than authorities could allow to enter there. Jews left Russia, Germany, Austria, even our own country, in such large numbers that the land could not assimilate them so quickly. And the Arabs, seeking domination of the land, bitterly opposed the return of Israel. Therefore, the British Government has restricted immigration of Jews to the land of Palestine; otherwise, it would fast be becoming a veritable homeland for God's ancient people.

That is what it will be when the Lord Jesus reigns in glory over His chosen people, Israel. When He comes with His church to set up His kingdom on earth, many in Israel who shall have returned to the land of their fathers in unbelief will be saved in a day. They will look upon their long-rejected Messiah, and accept Him as their Saviour and Lord. That is what Zechariah said when he wrote, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

"His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives . . . and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn . . . And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those
with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zech. 14:4; 12:10; 13:6).

In that coming day Israel shall be the head of the nations; Christ will be her righteous King, acknowledged by all men in all the world as King of kings and Lord of lords. Through Israel He will reign with His church over a purified earth. Then there will be “peace on earth” in a very literal sense. And for a thousand years this old war-torn, sin-weary world will know the just and righteous rule of the only One who can bring peace to a sin-ridden earth. As we long for that coming day, we take courage when we see many “signs of the times” pointing to the nearness of our Lord’s coming; and let us remember that not least of these signs is the return of His ancient people, Israel, to the land which God gave to Abraham nearly four thousand years ago.

4. Many Running To and Fro. As Daniel looked down the centuries toward the time when the Messiah should rule over His repentant and cleansed people, Israel, he saw another two-fold sign; God said to him,

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan. 12:4).

Let us consider these two signs separately. First, “many shall run to and fro.” When shall all of this happen? “At the time of the end.” Do you know, every time I go to one of our big city depots, I think of Daniel 12:4. I wonder to myself, Where are all these people going? As I get into the crowded traffic of Los Angeles, just when many are going or coming to and from work, I wonder again, Where do all these people live? And where are they going? Some of you remember the old days. When you were leaving for a five-hundred-mile journey, grandpa and grandma and all the other members of the family went to the railway station to see you off; one might think they never expected to see you again. But now, when I go to New York even, no one sees me off. Think how fast our big stream-liners travel! How fast our planes can encircle the earth! Surely we ourselves are fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel concerning “the time of the end”; for many are literally “running to and fro.”

5. Increased Knowledge. Moreover, God said to Daniel that knowledge should increase at “the time of the end.” Within the last twenty-five years, inventions have revolutionized every trade and profession. Just think of all the developments in aviation since the beginning of this present World War! These alone will alter our whole economic system in the years to come.

I remember the time when a man would take a plank, plane it for twenty minutes on one side, then twenty minutes on the other side. He would plane another five minutes, and make a tongue and groove. But now, in the great industrial plants, a man feeds the planks to the machinery; and quickly they come out all planed, grooved, ready for use. Not long ago I was in a lumber yard in Arkansas, and saw a man feeding planks to such a machine. I asked to be allowed to do a little of the feeding, and was told to be careful with my fingers. There I stood, feeding planks to that great machine; and I thought of the words of Daniel, “Knowledge shall be increased.”

Today we do practically everything, one might say, by machine. We can even take our food in concentrated form, called vitamin tablets. I go to the bank, and there I see the clerk balancing my account by machine. Some time ago I was sure a mistake had been made in my account, and that one-hundred dollars too much had been credited to my name. But the man behind the counter said, “My friend, those machines do not make mistakes.” I watched while he pushed this button, then that; and out came my balance, exactly as the bank books had indicated it in the first place. Had it not been for that machine, I might have lost one-hundred dollars. We could go on and on, almost endlessly, thinking of all the intricate devices and machines in the medical profession, in the great foundries, on the farms - in every walk of life in this industrial age; yet we could never learn all there is to know about all the different fields of research in all the varied professions and industries of our country today. Verily knowledge has increased beyond our comprehension, even within our own generation; and it is ever increasing as the months pass into years.

6. The Concentration of Wealth in the Hands of a Few. In the opening words of the fifth chapter of James, we read a remarkable prophecy regarding the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few in “the last days.” It is a warning to unscrupulous men who heap to themselves riches at the expense of their fellows:

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers
who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth (i.e., 'the Lord of hosts'). Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just: and he doth not resist you" (James 5:1-6).

The wealth of the world has been gathered into the hands of the comparatively few to such an extent that the lands and resources are practically at their mercy. The rich form themselves into trusts and syndicates. They control the business and commerce of the world. They establish price schedules. They mold legislation, and often influence the courts. Such wealth in the hands of the unscrupulous threatens the privileges of the individual, and the righteousness and integrity of the whole. Grasping, ever grasping; yet never content, wealthy men who lack principle are a source of corruption, an inspiration to official dishonesty, and a menace to the peace and comfort of society. Deep unrest logically follows such a condition, as James tells us in the portion of his epistle which we have just quoted. And let us remember that, guided by the Holy Spirit, he said that this condition would exist in "the last days."

These are some of the "signs of the times," all of which point to the return of Christ in glory. In the clash of arms of war, in the tramp of armed men, in every bold denial of the Word of God, in the running to and fro of many millions, in ever-increasing knowledge, in the false faiths concerning the Person and work of Christ, in the return of the Jews in unbelief to the land of their fathers, in the vast accumulation of the wealth of the world in the hands of a few, in the breath of pestilence and the pinch of famine, in the uncertain earth and in the frowning sky in all these conditions which prevail today, we read the plain writing of the "perilous times" which the inspired apostle said should come as the age draws toward its close. We know that the Antichrist is at hand, and that the hour is ripe for the moment when the Lord Jesus shall descend to gather His church to Himself, in order to take her out of the way of the terrible judgments, with which He will sweep the earth clean just before He brings her back to reign with Him in glory here. There never was such a concensus of signs as there are in the world today. I believe we can look up and almost see the heavens radiant with the glory of our coming Lord.

Christ taught that He was coming again. The disciples taught it. Many signs point toward that event. Then is it possible for Him to return in this generation? I believe it is. Not only so, but it looks very probable. I am not saying that He will; but I am very definitely hoping that He will come soon if not this year, then next year. We dare not set dates; but His coming for His bride is the "blessed hope" of the church; and His return with His church to reign is the only hope for this sin-cursed world.

WHAT THE TRANSLATION OF THE CHURCH WILL MEAN TO THE WORLD

When the church is translated, the world will not see the Lord. The world will not know that He has descended and caught the church up to meet Him "in the air." The world will miss those who shall have gone. They will doubtless wonder about the mystery of the absence of loved ones and friends. But then the Antichrist will be revealed; and all the world will begin to worship him and to wonder "after the beast" (II Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 13:3). He will pose as a great peacemaker, Satan's counterfeit; and men who shall have rejected the Gospel of the Son of God will be deceived by his cunning. They will be fit instruments in his hands to do Satan's worst; for "strong delusion" will fill their godless minds and hearts. They will rush headlong into the darkest period of this world's history, into "the great tribulation," which will precede the return of Christ in visible power and great glory.

Yes; Christ will call His church to meet Him "in the air." He will not appear to the world when He translates His own, to take them out of that awful "time of Jacob's trouble," which will bring the darkest night to mankind. It will be dark, indeed; but the darkness will just precede the dawn of a glorious new day, when "the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2).

Where was the last place this world saw the Lord Jesus Christ? It was upon the accursed tree. There the unregenerate world last saw the eternal God and only Saviour, hanging, bleeding, suffering, dying the most shameful and painful of deaths. Before He went to Calvary, having been rejected by the nation of Israel, He wept over Jerusalem, saying,

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:38, 39).

The world thrust the Son of God out at the point of a spear. And when He arose in triumph from the grave, none but those
who believed on Him saw Him in His resurrection glory. Pilate did not see Him. The Pharisees and the Sadducees did not see Him. Only His friends and loved ones saw Him before He ascended into heaven, there to await that coming day when He shall call every member of His body Home. The world will see Him again only when He returns in glory to purge the earth of sin, and to take His rightful throne. When He comes for the church, it will be “as a thief in the night.” A thief does not ring a bell, and say, “Here am I.” When I was pastor of a church in Minneapolis, we arose one morning to find all the dresser drawers open, the clothing scattered. “A burglar has been here,” I said. I wondered what in the world that thief had been doing in our house. I knew he could not have been searching for some of my sermons! But before we discovered that he had been there, he had gone. That is the way it will be when Jesus takes the church Home to glory. One of these days the Lord will descend, and no one will see Him but the church. There will be “the trump of God, and the voice of the archangel,” but no one will hear except the church, those whose ears are tuned to hear. This radio, through which I am speaking, sends its sound-waves over the air, but one has to “tune in” to get those sounds. My friend, if you should be living when Christ takes the church to heaven, you will not have your ear tuned to hear His call unless you have been born again by faith in His shed blood. It may be that the redeemed of the Lord will hear just the one word, “Come.” Jesus says, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” Will you, my unsaved friend, let Him tune your ear to listen for His voice in that coming day? The call to His bride may be heard very soon!

The translation of the church will mean the breaking up of homes. The godly wife will be called away, leaving behind the unbelieving husband. The believing husband will leave the ungodly wife. Children who know the Lord will be gone. Then the great tribulation will soon be at hand, unspeakable suffering and woe. What is happening in the world at war today cannot be compared with the horrors of that time of trouble; for our Lord expressly told us that it would be the most terrible tribulation this old world had ever witnessed, or ever should see. No doubt the newspapers will publish extra editions, for all the editors will not go. People will possibly talk of nothing else for a time. But then Satan will have full sway; and men will quickly follow his false Christ.

While believers in the Lord Jesus are in the world, they are the salt of the earth, lights in the world to reflect His glory. It is this body, endued with the power of the Holy Spirit, which holds in check the influence of sin today. If it were not for the church and the ministry of the cross of Christ, the pandemonium would have begun. The church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is the means God is using to hold in check the very powers of hell. But when the Holy Spirit’s influence through the church is taken away, then darkness and cruelty and evil shall prevail.

I believe the human imagination is absolutely incapable of picturing the awful days of the tribulation period. It will be worse than it was before the flood, when only eight souls were saved. It will be worse than it was in Egypt, when the children of Israel were put under cruel taskmasters, and compelled to make brick without straw. It will be worse than persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, when the blood of Israel ran like a river. It will be worse than the destruction of Jerusalem, when men, women, and children were torn in pieces. It will be worse than the reign of Nero, when he took Christians by the multitudes, and forced them to fight with gladiators, or be tortured in unspeakable ways. This cruel monster burned believers in Jesus with pitch, driving his chariot in his drunken revelry between the flaming bodies, even as he cursed their God. It will be worse than the Spanish Inquisition, when the Christians were put to the rack; when their thumbs were twisted in thumbscrews, in order to make them recant. It will be worse than the French Revolution, when Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI were marched with thousands of others to the guillotine.

It will be the most awful time ever known, because it will be the first time the devil will be allowed to exercise such power. Oh, think of it! Those of you who have been hearing the Gospel for years, and yet have not taken a stand for Christ! Your condition is worse than that of the poor fetish worshippers of Africa!

But all this that I have described is not all. There will be signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. Great catastrophes like the one that made of San Francisco a heap of ruins will be repeated, only on a far greater scale. The centers of a boasted civilization with its foundation of blood and tears will crumble to the ground. Intense heat will burn the grass and the trees of the field. Pestilences like bubonic plague will carry off thousands. The sun will be darkened; the moon turned into blood; the stars to the ground. Intense heat will burn the grass and the trees of the field. Pestilences like bubonic plague will carry off thousands. The sun will be darkened; the moon turned into blood; the stars of heaven will not give their light. It will be such a time of trouble as never was, “no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21). But thank God! The Lord Himself will come to end that awful tribulation, and to establish His kingdom of peace and righteousness! 
WHAT THE TRANSLATION OF THE CHURCH WILL MEAN TO THE BELIEVER

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

Is that promise from God's infallible Word not incentive for us to "love His appearing"? Think of meeting that loved one who has gone on before you! Think of walking on the streets of the New Jerusalem with Peter, James, and John! Think of listening to their story of the transfiguration and of the Garden of Gethsemane. I want to hear Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego tell of going through the fiery furnace. I want to tell Daniel what an inspiration his prophecies have been to me as I was pastor of the Church of the Open Door. I want to see Zacchaeus and Paul and Silas; Mary, the mother of our Lord; Moses and Elijah hosts of God's redeemed children! What a gathering that will be, "when the saints come marching in," to quote our colored brethren in Christ!

But the crowning joy of heaven will be one glimpse of the face of our blessed Lord! To look upon that face which was once marred and scarred for our sins; to behold His uncreated glory; to see that face which shines like the sun; to behold Him who is "altogether lovely" "that will be glory for me" and for all the redeemed children of God!

There will be "the marriage supper of the Lamb" and the bestowed rewards for faithful service rendered in the name of Christ. It would seem that these wonderful events will take place in heaven while the great tribulation is running its course upon earth. Then Christ will return with His bride, to end that time of trouble and to establish His millennial kingdom.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST IN GLORY

When Jesus comes in glory, the Jewish nation will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and will be converted in a day. The nations will be judged; the Antichrist and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire; Satan will be bound for a thousand years; and the Lord will reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8). (See Rev. 19:1; 20:6).

The millennium will be the golden age of the world's history. Instead of thorns and thistles, there will grow up the fir tree and the myrtle tree. "The desert shall blossom as the rose." The animal kingdom will be at peace. Men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. There will be no more famine, no more poor and oppressed, no devil loose to cause sin and suffering and woe. I think men will make discoveries which will cause our present civilization to seem insignificant by way of comparison. The Lord will be King, and we shall reign with Him.

We shall reign, but not in these old mortal bodies. Our bodies will be like Christ's, not subject to the laws of gravity. I drop this book from my hand, and it falls to the ground. Why? Because gravitation pulls it down. But our resurrection bodies will be like our Lord's resurrection body. It was of "flesh and bones." It could appear and disappear instantly, a spiritual body, yet very real.

Think of coming back to reign here with Christ in this old world where we have lived and struggled and fought in order to get along! Think of coming back to reign with Him! I do not know where the Lord will let you and me reign, but we shall reign with Him! A man walked down a road nearly one hundred miles when he was a boy, looking for work. When he was tired, he slept in haystacks; but he trudged on. Afterwards he became wealthy, was married, and God gave him a happy family. He put them into their car and drove back slowly over the same road where twenty-five years previously he had walked, a hungry, tired, outcast boy. He said afterwards that he had never before taken a trip that so inspired him. My Christian friend, our coming back to reign with Christ on this earth will be more wonderful than that, more wonderful than we can ever know in this life!

FROM THE REIGN OF CHRIST IN GLORY TO THE ETERNAL STATE

The twentieth chapter of Revelation outlines clearly the chain of events which will follow the reign of Christ on earth. It makes clear that during the rule of the Lord, Satan will be chained in the bottomless pit. Then he will be "loosed out of his prison for a little season." He will go up and down the earth to tempt people. He will find a beautiful world, but he will still seek worship; he will still hate God and His Christ.

It seems to us that the multitudes who will be tempted by his wiles will be those who will have been born during the reign of Christ on earth, who will have given feigned allegiance during that rule of "a rod of iron," yet who will not have been born again by faith in His shed blood. The Bible makes no explanation concerning the reason why Satan will
be “loosed a little season,” or why the multitudes will follow him. But this seems to be a possible reason why God will permit this final rebellion by Satan and his followers. Could it not well be that the all-wise God would show men, angels, and demons that even a perfect environment for a millennium will not change men’s hearts; that they must, in every age, be born again by the shed blood of Calvary’s Lamb?

Whatever the reason in the mind of God, a great host of men will follow Satan, and with him will go up against the Lord to battle. Fire will come down from heaven to consume them, and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire, to be “tormented day and night for ever and ever.” The wicked dead of all ages will be raised, to stand before the great white throne to be judged. They will also be cast into the lake of fire, because their names will not be found in the Lamb’s book of life. There will be a new heaven and a new earth—eternity will have begun!

“Are You Ready?”

“Are you ready?” My friend, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour? Then you will be caught up to meet Him in the air, with all the saints at His coming for the church. If not, let me warn you to “flee from the wrath to come.” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” unregenerated, unfit to stand in His holy presence (Heb. 10:31). Is it not strange that unconverted men and women will prepare for an air raid from the Japs or the Nazis, yet make absolutely no preparation for the return of the Lord? If you do not know Him,

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way” (Psalm 2:12).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).