Behold, Christ Comes!

By Joseph A. Seiss

Â“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. Even so, Amen.Â” Revelation 1:7

Â“He cometh.Â” Here is the great fact plainly stated. Christ has not gone to heaven to stay there. He has gone for His ChurchÂ’s benefit; and for His ChurchÂ’s benefit He will return again, not in spirit only, not in the mere removal of men by death, but in His own proper person, as Â“the Son of man.Â”

Few believe this, and still fewer lay it to heart. Many sneer at the very idea, and laugh down the people who are so simple as to believe it.

But it is nevertheless the immutable truth of God, predicted by all His prophets, promised by Christ Himself, confirmed by the testimony of angels, proclaimed by all the apostles, believed by all the early Christians, acknowledged in all the Church creeds, sung of in all the church hymn books, prayed about in all the church liturgies, and entering so essentially into the very substance of Christianity, that without it there is no Christianity except a few maimed and mutilated relics too powerless to be worth the trouble or expense of preservation.

That religion which does not look for a returning Saviour, or locate its highest hopes and triumphs in the judgment scenes for which the Son of man must reappear, is not the religion of the Bible, and is without authority to promise salvation to its devotees. And those addresses to the churches which have no Â“Behold He comethÂ” pervading or underlying them, have not been indicted by Â“the Seven Spirits of God,Â” nor sent by Him whose Revelation is the crown of the inspired Canon.

Murmur at it, dispute it, despise it, mock at it, put it aside, hate it, and hide from it, as men may, it is a great fundamental article of the Gospel, that that same blessed Lord, who ascended from Mount Olivet, and is now at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, shall come from thence to judge the quick and the dead, and to stand again on that very summit from which He went up. This is true, as Christ Himself is true, and Â“he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.Â” Amen.

With Majesty And Glory

Â“He cometh with the clouds.Â” Here is the great characteristic in the manner of His coming. Â“With the clouds,Â” that is, in majesty and glory—Â—with the pomp and splendor of Him Â“who maketh the clouds His chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the windÂ” (Psa. 104:3).

Â“And every eye shall see Him. Â“Here is the publicity of the sublime event. It is not said that all shall see Him at the same time, or in the same scene, or with the same feelings. Other passages teach us that some eyes will see Him while He is yet to others invisible, and that He will be manifested to some at one time and place, and to others at other times and places, and in different acts of the wonderful drama.

But somewhere, at some time, in some stage of His judicial administrations, there never has been and never will be that human being who shall not see Him. To every one that has lived, and to every one who shall live, He will show Himself, and compel every eye to meet His eye. The dead shall be brought to life again, and shall see Him, and the living shall see Him. The good shall see Him, and the wicked shall see Him.

Some shall see Him and shout: Â“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 and rejoice in His salvationÂ” (Isa. 25:9). Others shall see Him and cry to Â“the mountains and rocks: Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?Â” (Rev. 6:16, 17).

Â“And they which pierced Him.Â” Though His manifestation shall be absolutely universal, it has an awful distinction with reference to some. Of all beings who shall then wish to be saved that sight will be those who murdered Him. But they shall not escape it. They must each and all some day confront Him and meet His all-penetrating gaze. From the wretched man who betrayed Him, down to the soldier who pierced His side, and
all who have made common cause with them in wrong, persecuting, wounding and insulting that meek Lamb of God, shall then be compelled to face His judgment seat and to look upon Him whom they have pierced.

Â“And all the tribes of the land shall mourn about Him. Â“Is not this a special word for the Jews? Is it not an allusion to a wail of penitence which shall be elicited from long apostate Israel when they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and doubt of His messiahship no more?

Does it not refer to the fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10, where the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for His only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one is in bitterness for his first born? Oh, the intensity of that bitterness!

Consternation Of Unconverted

Brethren, I do not wonder that worldlings and half-Christians have no love for this doctrine, or that they hate to hear about ChristÂ’s speedy coming. It is the death knell of their gaieties and pleasuresÂ—the turning of their confidence to consternationÂ—the conversion of their songs to shrieks of honor and despair.

There is a day coming, when Â“the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made lowÂ” (Isa. 2:17); when there shall be Â“upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexityÂ” (Luke 21:25); when Â“all the tribes of the earth shall mournÂ” (Matt. 24:30); when men shall Â“go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earthÂ” (Isa. 2:19); Â“into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majestyÂ” (Isa. 2:21); when men Â“shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from themÂ” (Rev. 9:6).

And that day is the day of ChristÂ’s coming, and those dismayed ones are such as love not His appearing. Fear and dread shall fall upon the wicked; trouble and anguish shall make them afraid; and menÂ’s hearts shall fall them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth.

The saints will then have been caught away to their Lord. From the same field, the same shop, the same bed, one shall have been taken and the other left. And on those remaining ones, who had not watched, neither kept their garments, nor made themselves ready, shall the tenors of judgment fall, and not a family or tribe of all that live shall escape.

Â“Even so, Amen.Â” Some take this as the seal and ratification of the solemn truths which have just been uttered. If this be the true meaning, what particular stress is to be laid upon these thingsÂ—how sure to come to passÂ—how unmistakably certain!

Brethren, it does seem to me, when I look at the Scriptures on this subject, that even the best of us are not half awake. May God arouse us by His Spirit, and not permit us to sleep till the thunders and terrors of the great day are upon us!

To Be Eagerly Awaited

But I find another and more natural sense of these wordsÂ—Â“Even so, Amen.Â” I find in them JohnÂ’s acquiescence in all that the great day is to bring, and his prayer, as repeated at the end of the book of Revelation, that the Lord would hasten its coming. Terrible as it will be to the wicked, and the unprepared, and those who refuse the warnings which we give them, it is a precious day to the saints, a day to be coveted, and to be prayed for with all earnestness of desire.

The poor, faint-hearted Christianity of our times can hardly contemplate it without trembling and annoyance. Many who profess and call themselves Christians would rather not hear about it, and would prefer, if they had their choice, that Christ might never come.

It was not so in the days of ChristianityÂ’s pristine vigor. Then the anxious inquiry of disciples was, Â“Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?Â” (Matt. 24:3). Â“Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?Â” (Acts 1:6).

Then Christians wrote to each other in joyous congratulation, that their citizenship was in heaven, whence they looked for the coming of the Saviour; and comforted one another in the assurance that the Lord Himself is to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and as directed by their Lord, lifted up their heads, and looked up with joyful hope at every turn in human affairs which they
could by any means construe into a probable herald of His nearing appearance.

Then the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," had a depth of meaning and lively anticipation which now has well-nigh been lost. Then "the appearing of Jesus Christ" had a power over the soul which made it "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"; and the most earnest and constant call of apostles and their followers was, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly. Even so. Amen."

Nor can the Church ever be her true self, or enter into the true spirit of her faith, or rise to the true sublimity of her hope, where this is not the highest object of her deepest desire. For how, indeed, can we regard ourselves as rightly planted upon the apostolic foundation, if we cannot join the heart and soul in this apostolic prayer—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).