

Life Begins With God

moral code. We cannot serve two masters. Nothing short of the complete heart is acceptable to God.

11. LOOK HOMEWARD, CHRISTIAN

BREATH-TAKING moments of suspense, quick action, thrilling adventure-where is the youth who does not love this? A typical American will shout until he is hoarse when his favorite baseball player knocks a home run over the left field fence. Nothing will make Miss America happier than the excitement of a party in her honor. Eighty thousand spectators will stand and cheer when their hero makes a forward pass or an end run.

If the younger generation thrills to the passing moment, how should they react to the grandest spectacle humanity shall ever witness? Men have been dreaming of this event, and have longed to witness its fulfillment. Youth of the present age have the greatest assurance of being present at the climax of world history, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Have you allowed your imagination to dwell upon the authentic descriptions of the return of the Master as recorded in the New Testament? You will find some of the most thrilling scenes that have ever been depicted. Read the words of John: "He is coming on the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even the men who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will lament over Him. So it is to be." [1]

Grasp the picture Jesus created for His disciples as they sat upon the mount overlooking Jerusalem: "For just as the lightning starts in the east and flashes to the west, so the coming of the Son of man will be. Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will lament when they see the Son of man coming on the clouds of the sky, in all His power and splendor." [2]

All nations of the earth will stand in awe of the returning Son of God, for every eye shall see Him. There is no event in the history of the human race that should captivate the minds of men as that of the second advent of Jesus. The New Testament mentions the return 28 times in its 260 chapters. Bible students declare that this supreme hope is the theme of one verse in every twenty five from Matthew to Revelation.

But when we survey the belief of the majority of modern Christians we find that they have failed to take the Galilean at His word; they have refused to accept His promise, "I will come again." Recently a symposium of nine men and women of international fame appeared in a well-known magazine on the topic: "If Christ Should Come Again!" These novelists, scientists, clergymen, and historians attempted to imagine what Jesus would do if He returned to earth today. They presented Him as a reformer, a teacher, a radical, a leader of men, and one said irreverently that Jesus would be a nuisance if He should come again. But not one of these astute thinkers made any pretense of actually believing the Lord would return!

No Christian can deny the promises of the second advent if he accepts the Bible and the teachings of the Master. Either the Son of God will come or He is an impostor. If we cannot accept this pledge given in His own words, how can we accept His other precepts?

What are the simple, direct evidences to be found in the word of God substantiating the hope of the second advent? The Savior said to the disciples, "There are many rooms in My Father's house; if there were not, I would have told you, for I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make it ready, I will come back and take you with Me, so that you may be where I am." [3] There is no word in that promise which contains more than two syllables. It is clear enough for any child to understand; yet many wise men lack faith to believe it.

Imagine that you are in a courtroom where the testimony concerning the return of Jesus Christ is being examined. We have heard the words of the defendant declaring, "I will come again." Are there other witnesses whom we can summon to substantiate the divine promise?

Two angelic beings who stood by the lonely disciples as the Master ascended into the heavens are called to the stand. Listen to their words which have been recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into the sky? This very Jesus who has been caught up from you into heaven will come in just the way that you have seen Him go up to heaven." [4] Men who doubt the Son of God will also doubt the messengers of heaven. But the word of angels should strengthen the Christian's faith, for they affirm that the same Jesus who lived and taught in Palestine will come again.

But as we are pondering their words we see a short, energetic man approach the witness stand. He turns and faces the audience with a countenance marked by courage, perseverance, and sincerity. He has known what it is to be persecuted, shipwrecked, and imprisoned for the love of his Lord. This veteran is Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ, who was converted on the highway leading to Damascus. He begins to speak:

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“For we can assure you, on the Lord’s own authority”, he declares in confidence. “For the Lord Himself, at the summons will come down from heaven, and first those who died in union with Christ will rise; then those of us who are still living will be caught up with them on clouds into the air to meet the Lord, and so we shall be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage one another with this truth.” [5]

How can we forget the words, “Encourage one another with this truth”? Our faith is strong as we measure this man’s confidence. He is willing to die for what he believes is eternal truth. He knows that Jesus Christ is coming again.

An aged warrior for Christianity stands to give his testimony. He is a Galilean fisherman who was once saved from drowning by his Lord. He arose to the defense of the Messiah and attempted to save Him from the betrayer’s mob. Yes, it is Simon Peter. He is a colorful witness as he declares: “They were no fictitious stories that we followed when we informed you of the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His coming, but we had been eyewitnesses of His majesty.” [6] He pauses for a moment as memories rush through his mind. Peter well remembers the transfiguration scene, the feeding of the five thousand hungry people, the resurrection morning, and the day that his Lord ascended into the clouds. Again he speaks:

“First of all, you must understand this, that in the last days mockers will come with their mockeries, going where their passions lead and saying, Where is His promised coming?” [7] Can we not recall some of the ridicule we have heard from our contemporaries? Have not scoffers laughed at the “queer idea” that Jesus Christ will come again?

Peter continues emphatically, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief; on it the heavens will pass away with a roar, the heavenly bodies will burn up and be destroyed, and the earth and all its works will melt away.” [8]

This is a dramatic description of the holocaust that shall envelop the world when the Son of God comes! As we contemplate Peter’s words, a final witness comes forward. He is the apostle John. We hear him repeat the words, “He is coming on the clouds, and every eye will see Him.” Then he raises his voice as he speaks his last recorded words: “He who testifies to all this says, ‘It is true! I am coming very soon!’ Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” [9]

If you could tune in on the direct words of Jesus Christ and hear His promises, would you believe? Could you deny the authentic statements of the men who were inspired by the Spirit of God? We would certainly accept the spoken message; and if we would take their oral testimony, how can we deny the truth in the Bible? The question stands: Will we choose to believe the promises of God or will we accept the skepticism and false teachings of sinners?

Youth has never been bequeathed as many mistakes by the older generation as have been handed down to the sons and daughters of today. One World War did not wreak enough havoc for the century; it was not enough to kill and wound thirty-seven million men in four bloody years. No, we have felt the deadly scourge again; this time in ghastly total war of lightning rapidity.

Young men and young women were cheated of life a quarter of a century ago by the carnage of Flanders Field. What can be said of the hopes of the present generation? There is little consolation in looking toward the world of tomorrow, for each war has grown more suicidal as science has invented new lethal weapons. Our education and culture have failed to guarantee happiness.

If we are realists we must admit that it is necessary for a divine power to intervene to save mankind from destruction at its own hands for we have seen that science can never counteract human depravity and bestiality. In the last quarter of a century man’s inventive genius has proved to be a Frankenstein to destroy its creators. Unless there is a new birth of spiritual and moral power in the lives of men, civilization is doomed.

Love and pity must have mingled in the heart of Jesus Christ as He saw the closing chaotic episodes in this sin cursed earth. “You will hear of wars and rumors of war; do not let yourselves be alarmed,” admonished the Son of God. “They have to come, but that is not the end. For nation will rise in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes here and there. All this is only the beginning of the sufferings.” [10]

War is the prelude to the last act, for the marching armies are trailed by famine, economic collapse, revolution, and pestilence. A blackout of moral, spiritual, and material values is the denouement of any plot concocted by the god Mars.

For a dozen years we have heard of “the lost generation,” the rising millions of men and women in their late teens and early twenties who have no permanent employment. They wanted a place in the business world; they desired love, marriage, and a home; but they have had no promise of security. I have talked with scores of hitchhikers who have thumbed their way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast

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looking for work. "What's the use to look any more?" many have queried.

The natural resources of Mother Earth have been squandered by selfish men who have thought only of their personal gain in the present moment. The soil grows sterile from excessive cultivation; our natural resources of timber have been squandered by reckless logging or by fire; and it is estimated that our oil supply will dwindle dangerously within the next twenty years. Is this a bright prospect of natural resources for the men and women of tomorrow to inherit?

Concerning the destruction of our resources Henry A. Wallace has said: "Thoughtlessly we have destroyed or wounded a considerable part of our common wealth in this country. We have ripped open and to some extent devitalized more than half of all the land in the United States. Entire species of valuable wild life forms have passed out of existence or have been greatly diminished. We have reduced to a crucial point our oil and mineral reserves." [11]

We can agree with the descriptive language of the ancient seer of Israel who said, "The earth shall wear out like a garment, while its inhabitants shall likewise die." [12] The Utopia which Thomas More dreamed about in the sixteenth century has never been achieved. Upon all the efforts of men to create a perfect world we must write "Failure."

"Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre." [13]

On the road of life there is no "Dead End" for youth who look for the return of Jesus Christ. This Man shall be our hope. Above the impasse of modern civilization where a thousand voices whisper doubts, there sound the unfailing words, "I will come again."

Have you seen a freshman at college with a virulent attack of homesickness? Perhaps it is the first time the girl has been away from home and all she can think about is getting back to mother once more. Or it may be the young man who is determined to take the next train that will carry him back to the farm. When a person is genuinely homesick there isn't much you can do to detract his mind from the problem of returning to that home.

How well I remember the first time I went off to a boarding school at the age of fourteen. I was a thousand miles from home, and the first letter I wrote my parents began with these words: "In just thirty-five weeks I can come home." Every week I put that sentence at the beginning of my letter, and every time I lessened the number by one.

When we become homesick for the place that Jesus Christ is preparing, we shall have His return uppermost in our minds. The petty problems, the puzzling trifles of our daily existence will fade into insignificance.

Look homeward, Christian, and a new ambition will drive your life forward in service for your fellow men. The knowledge of a returning Savior has changed the career of many a man or woman who had previously set his goal for this world only. One of the deepest bits of philosophy any youth can learn is the difference between making a living for a day and building a life for eternity.

Look homeward, Christian, and the character is built upon principles that shall endure. There is no shoddy morality in the man who is expecting Jesus Christ to come. "Everyone who possesses this hope in him tries to make himself as pure as He is." [14]

Look homeward, Christian, and the Bible becomes a book for daily study. The Master warned His disciples of unprepared nature by saying, "So you must be on the watch, for you do not know on what day your Master is coming." [15] God's word marks the events that shall close the history of humanity.

Look homeward, Christian, and the fervent prayer of the heart will be, "Thy kingdom come." But with our prayers we will link our lives in the proclamation of the message of salvation. We can assist in answering the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray as we give His gospel to a world that stands in darkness groping for light and security.

Look homeward, Christian, and patience will dominate our lives. The power to endure suffering and disappointment must be an attribute of the child of God who awaits the Master's appearing. No man is waiting for any event until he has every necessary act of preparation completed. If I am leaving on a train, I am not waiting for it until my ticket is purchased, my luggage is checked, and I have nothing to do but climb aboard the cars. When we are in complete readiness for the return of Jesus Christ our patience will be tested. Even as Noah waited for seven days for God to fulfill His word, so the Christian must learn to endure with fortitude, knowing that the promise is sure.

Whenever I hear a pipe organ or symphony orchestra play the largo movement from Dvorak's