

Rev. 1:7. the Great Advent

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being ready for the Lord's coming, and the need for the Church and the world to repent and turn to Him.

Scripture: Psalm 96:11-13, Zechariah 12:10, Matthew 13:26, Matthew 17:5, Matthew 26:64, Luke 9:34, Acts 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 1:7, Revelation 14:14

Topics: "The Second Coming of Christ", "Readiness for His Return"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the certainty and urgency of Christ's return as depicted in Revelation 1:7, reminding the Church and the world that Jesus will come as Judge and King. He reflects on the hope that the early Church found in this promise, which sustained them through trials and persecution, contrasting it with the apathy of the modern Church and the world. Simpson warns that while the world may scoff and the Church may forget, the day of reckoning is approaching, and all will see Him, including those who pierced Him. He calls for readiness and vigilance, urging believers to hold fast to their faith and truth in anticipation of His glorious return. The sermon concludes with a passionate plea for the Church to awaken and prepare for the coming of the Lord.

Transcript

"Behold, He comes with clouds--and every eye shall see Him, and those also who pierced Him--and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen."--Revelation 1:7.

The Lord shall come! This is the theme of this last book of Scripture. It was the theme of the Old Testament; for Enoch's prophecy runs through all its books--'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints.' It is the theme of the New Testament; for both the Master and His apostles give out the same solemn utterance--'Behold, He comes;' and the Church in the early ages took up the subject as of profoundest and most pressing interest, 'looking for that blessed hope.'

It was no minor hope to the primitive saints. It cheered them at parting with their Lord, and it comforted them at parting with one another. It upheld them in evil days; it nerved them for warfare; it gave them patience under persecution; it animated them in their work; it kept alive their zeal; it enabled them to look calmly round upon an evil world, and to face its mustering storms; it showed them resurrection and glory, fixing their eye upon scenes beyond the deathbed and the tomb; it ever reminded them of the day of meeting, when Jesus will gather all His own together, and those who have slept in Him shall awake to glory, honor, and immortality.

The aspect in which the advent is here presented to us bears more upon the world than upon the Church. When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he brings before us the advent as it bears upon the Church and her resurrection hope (I Thessalonians 4:16). 'The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven' is the word of consolation and gladness. But here it is a warning to the world, and to the apostate Church, that John proclaims the coming One. He comes as Avenger, and Judge, and King! He comes with the iron rod, to break the nations in pieces. He comes arrayed in righteous majesty, to take vengeance upon those who know not God. He comes to shake terribly the earth. And who shall abide the day of His appearing?

The world scoffs at the message, and believes in no advent except the advent of gold and silver, of commerce and science, of luxury and pleasure. The Church has lost sight of it, and says--My Lord delays His coming; or perhaps, 'I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.' Multitudes of professing Christians cannot bear to hear it preached or spoken of, as if it were an evil doctrine fraught with gloom, and paralyzing all effort.

Yet, though the world may mock and the Church forget, the Lord shall come! He has tarried long. Eighteen centuries have gone by since He said, 'Behold, I come quickly!' He must be night, even at the doors.

Verse 7. Behold, He comes with clouds. How often has that word 'behold' been used in Scripture, to call the attention of a careless Church or world to something great--generally something visible--connected with Messiah and His glory! It is the finger of the Holy Spirit pointing to the open heavens, and His voice saying, 'Look! He comes!' For that event absorbs all others in earth's future. It is the center of the prophetic word. It is the Church's hope. It is the world's dread. Long deferred, it comes at last. The Morning Star rises on a night of storm and gloom. Jesus comes--'the same Jesus' who left us on Olivet, returns as He went. He comes with clouds! The reference is here first to Matthew (ch. 26:64), and then to Daniel (ch. 8:13), for both are here; also to first Thessalonians (ch. 4:17). Sometimes it is 'clouds' (Revelation 1:7); sometimes 'the clouds' (Matthew 13:26); sometimes 'the cloud' (Luke 9:34); sometimes 'a cloud' (Acts 1:9); sometimes a 'bright cloud' (Matthew 17:5); sometimes a 'white cloud' (Revelation 14:14). All these passages point us not merely to the natural clouds of the sky, but to the pillar-cloud--the cloud of the glory which dwelt over and in Israel's tabernacle and temple. 'With' and 'in' such clouds of GLORY--as His clothing, His chariot, His pavilion, He is to come.

And every eye shall see Him. This takes in the whole human race then upon the earth; whether simultaneously, all in one moment is of no consequence. Every eye shall see Him, as every man sees the sun each day. The whole human race beholds the sun, though not all exactly at the same moment. The glory may be universally visible at the same time; but to some parts of the world He Himself shall appear first. Every eye shall see Him! Then let us prepare, by looking to Him now. The seeing Him now will cure and bless us; the seeing Him hereafter will be woe to those who have not looked to Him now as the crucified Jesus.

And those who pierced Him. They are specially singled out. Israel pierced Him; Israel shall then specially behold Him, as Saul on his way to Damascus, whose conversion seems a type of that of his countrymen at last, when He whom they pierced shall appear. Like him, they have for eighteen hundred years been kicking against the goads, and like him they shall be amazed and overwhelmed when they see in the returning Jesus of Nazareth Him who their fathers slew. No doubt we pierce Him and crucify Him afresh by our unbelief; each day is He pierced and crucified by the sons of men; for the piercing is the common act of all who, by reason of unbelief, are in sympathy with the original piercers.

Still it would seem, from Zechariah (12:10), that to Israel the special guilt of piercing belongs, though the actual spear which did it, was in the hand of a Gentile soldier. The 'piercing' was the greatest proof of human hatred--man's determination that the Christ of God should die the death--and in that visible exhibition of the whole world's hatred we have our part; though Israel, as those who should have known and owned and loved their Messiah when He came, may be the guiltiest of all.

And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Not Israel only, but all the tribes of earth, shall beat upon their breasts because of Him. All the inanimate creation rejoices (seas, woods, hills, and floods, Psalm 96); man mourns. For He comes to deliver creation from the bondage of the corruption, but to take vengeance upon His enemies. The joy of creation and the wailing of man are striking contrasts. They 'wail,' or beat their breasts, because--

(1) He comes--Rather would they have Him remain away forever, and themselves left unhindered in their plans; undisturbed in their lusts, and sins, and enjoyment of the creature. His presence extorts the weeping.

(2.) He comes to judge--There shall be no mistake as to that. The trumpet has told them that. He summons to judgment. He will right all the wrong.

(3.) He comes with the iron rod--For His enemies is the rod of iron. The great day of breaking shall overwhelm them; and who shall be able to stand?

A remnant in Israel shall mourn with godly sorrow. The sight of Him whom their fathers pierced shall first strike them to the ground, as it did Saul, and then melt them. So a remnant from the spared Gentiles shall wail and turn. But the vengeance shall be widespread. The nations rejecting Christ shall perish. Christendom shall sink like Babylon in the mighty waters. Destruction from the Lord shall consume them utterly. This is the world's day of rejoicing; that shall be the day of its weeping. Rejecter of the cross, repent and turn! Refuser of the love of God and of the grace of Christ, reconsider your ways, before the Judge descends! This is the acceptable year of the Lord. Avail yourself of the free pardon, and the open door, and the paternal welcome, before it is too late.

Even so, Amen. The first of these words is Greek, Yes, the second is Hebrew--"So be it", both together forming the fullest expression that could be of the certainty and truth of what is stated, and the deep longing of heart for the fulfillment of the prediction. Here all of John's innermost desires are summed up and spoken out. What earnestness, what vehemence, what longing, are expressed in this double Amen! It is the amen of faith, and hope, and joy. It is the amen of a weary, heart-broken exile. It is the amen of a saint left on earth long behind his fellow-saints, and sighing for the promised rest when the great Rest-giver comes. It is the Church's amen; her vehement desire for the day of meeting. It is the sigh of the bride for the dawning of the marriage-day.

The WORLD is not ready for that advent; how shall it meet the Judge? It has neglected the 'accepted time;' and how shall it stand before the neglected One? What excuse shall it give for slighting the love, despising the blood, and turning its back upon the cross? How terribly, to an unready world, will the last trumpet sound! Poor world! Your day of grace is drawing to a close. Your pleasures are nearly done. Your laughter will soon be quenched. Your vanities will soon disappear. Your dreams will before long be scattered by the dreadful awaking--when the 'shout,' and the 'voice of the archangel,' and the 'trumpet of God' shall sound. Be wise in time! Awake, you who sleep!

Is the CHURCH ready for this glorious day? Has she put on her apparel? Has she trimmed and lighted her lamp? Has she filled her lamp with oil? Is she sitting loose from the world? Is she remembering her coming Lord, and seeking to be faithful to Him in His absence? He has entrusted to her His cause, His truth, His honor. Is she alive to her responsibility, and acting accordingly? Is she realizing His nearness and His glory? Is she daily influenced by His sure word of promise, 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me?' Is she laboring and suffering for Him? Or is she self-indulgent, worldly, indolent? As if the Lord were not coming, and as if He were bringing no reward with Him?

Look forwards! Look upwards! Stand apart from a present evil world. Remember that in the last days perilous times shall come. It remains for us, that we let our light shine and keep our garments undefiled. Labor on, O man of faith! Labor on; the toil and the battle will soon be done, and you shall rest from your labors, and your works shall follow you.

Beware of the leaven of the last days; the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees; the leaven of mingled infidelity and superstition; the leaven of atheism and pantheism. "Liberality" is the watchword; but is it the liberality of the Bible of God? Is it the liberality of Him who says in reference to false teaching, "which thing I hate?" (ch. 2:15).

Beware of letting go the truth of God; of either denying, or disgracing, or depreciating it. 'Hold fast that which you have.' The Master is absent; and responsibility in the Master's absence is double responsibility. He trusts us to maintain His truth and to honor His name, until He returns. Let His Churches be faithful to their trust, honoring Him as Prophet, Priest, and King. He may be returning soon. If, on His return, He finds us unfaithful to Himself and to His truth, what shall be our recompense? Behold, He comes! Like a trumpet-voice, let that cry go through the Churches; let it echo through earth. His long absence will soon be ended. Let us be ready--let us watch and be sober.

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