

# The Lord's Coming, as It Will Affect the Assembly

by H.J. Vine

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*The Lord's coming will be a time of great joy for His heart, and He will take us to be with Himself for ever.*

**Scripture:** Acts 1:11, Ephesians 1:13, Philippians 1:23, 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, 2 Peter 3:15, Revelation 3:10, Revelation 19:7, Revelation 21:2

**Topics:** "Second Coming", "Eternal Life"

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## Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing that He Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, and believers will be caught up to meet Him in the air. The joy of the Lord in having His redeemed ones with Him will be beyond measure, fulfilling His sufferings on the cross. Despite uncertainties and fears, believers are encouraged to trust in Christ's perfect love that casts out all fear and eagerly await His coming to take them to be with Him forever.

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## Transcript

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).

The first thing we see from God's Word is that it is the Lord Himself who is coming. It is this same "Jesus" (Acts 1:11). He is coming in like manner as He was seen go into heaven. He is coming in that same body that bears the very marks of His sufferings. He is coming again, as He was here, a Man, only in a body quickened by the Spirit. He is not going to depute another to come for us. "The Lord HIMSELF shall descend from heaven with a shout" (1 Thess. 4). He is the same blessed Jesus who walked on this earth, the same One who died for us, and who was seen and known by His own in resurrection.

What a glad moment it will be for His heart! The glorious answer to His sufferings and His travail for us upon the cross. Think what it will be for Him to have us there, in answer to all those terrible sufferings which He endured upon Calvary's cross! And what will it be for the church, for the assembly, after her journey through this world--after all her testings and trials? What will it be for that loved company to find

herself in a moment in the presence of her Bridegroom--in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ? And as individuals, what will it be for you, dear brother, and for me? What will it be for each one of us to be there in the presence of the Lord--to see the One who loved us and died for us, the One that the Apostle Paul could speak of as "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? But whilst it will be blessed for the assembly, and blessed for each one of us individually, to be caught up to be with Him and like Him for ever, HE HIMSELF is going to have His own deep joy in having us there. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. There will be no regrets in His blessed heart on account of all that He suffered for us. He will never regret having toiled and travailed so much to make us His. He is going to see the assembly, His body, His loved bride there, a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2), and His glad heart will be perfectly satisfied. You and I are going to be satisfied, too, for we are going to see Him. He "shall see" the redeemed! We "shall see" the Redeemer!

There are many Christians who do not believe in the Lord's second coming at all. They trust Him as their Saviour, but they do not believe what Scripture makes known to us, that a moment is coming--we believe coming very quickly--when He will take us to be with Himself for ever. There are others that, whilst they see it in Scripture, fear to face it. There are many children of believing parents, taught in the truth, who are deeply convinced in their souls that the moment is coming when the Lord shall return; they trust in Him as their Saviour, but fear to dwell upon His coming again, not understanding that it is what Scripture speaks of as "the blessed hope,"--the happy hope for each believer's heart. They do not seem to understand that the Lord loves them so perfectly that He will never be satisfied until He has them there with Him. Oh, when our hearts drink in a little more of that love which led Him to go to Calvary's cross, there to bear all the judgment due to us, then all fear will disappear, like the cold before the warm sunshine. Perfect love will cast out all fear. We are told fear has torment, His known love expressed at the cross will drive that away. Divine love would not leave a little bit of dread or torment in the believer's heart. I know there is a reverent fear, but that is a very different thing to slavish fear; and when the love of Christ is known, that sort of fear disappears.

Dear believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, your Saviour came the first time to put your sins away; He is coming the second time to take you away! He is coming the second time to satisfy His love towards you by having you in His blissful presence in glory, never to know another moment of suffering or unhappiness for all eternity!

Some of us who have known the Lord for many years are apt to get a little impatient, and say, "Why does not the Lord come soon?" We would like to "see His face" now. We need to get a little of His own patience into our hearts. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 says, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ" (N.Tr.). He loves us, and yet how patiently He has waited to have us with Him. All the glory is His, and yet how patiently He has waited the Father's time. We are to account the long-suffering of our God as salvation (2 Peter 3:15). We are not to think for a moment that His love has cooled at all towards us. We can say, However long He waits, we know that His love has neither cooled nor weakened; but for a divinely wise reason He still waits there with the Father. He desires that more sinners should be saved and brought in to know Him. For God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

I will just say a word about some difficulties concerning Christ's coming again which are commonly raised. It is said, "Christ comes again when the believer dies." But that is not so. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 tells us that when Christ comes, "the dead in Christ shall rise first." When a believer dies, his spirit is absent from the body and present with the Lord. Instead of Christ coming for him, he departs to be with Christ. It is a very

blessed moment, looked at properly according to God, when the believer's spirit passes to be with Christ; it is "far better" than to remain here (Phil. 1:23).

It is also said, The Lord's second coming is when He comes to the faithful believer, and manifests Himself to him. But that is a spiritual coming, spoken of in John 14:21, and a very precious thing, too, and I would encourage even the youngest here to go in for it. Keep the Lord's words and do His commandments and you will experience it. "If a man love Me, he will keep My commandments." If you do this the Lord will make Himself precious to your heart, and you will get a precious sense of His drawing near to you. But that is not the Lord's coming for the assembly, for the bride. That is individual, and it does not take us off the earth. When He comes, He will come in the air, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4). Our being with the Lord in His home is different to having Him with us in this world.

Another error which used to prevail amongst Nonconformists was that they were going to get the world converted, and when the world was converted, the Lord would come. But if one thing is plainer than another it is that the world is not being converted by the gospel. At the present time the Mohammedans--although they have no evangelical or missionary societies, nor paid representatives as the sects of Christendom--are making more converts than the so-called Christian church is making! We need not be misled by the idea that the world is to be converted through the gospel before the Lord will come, for the Bible tells us that evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse. The blessed Lord will come into the air, just when perhaps things in the world look the blackest outwardly. He will catch us up out of it to be with Him and like Him for ever!

The world is going to be put right before He reigns in kingly glory over it. It will be put right by the judgment of God, not by the preaching of saving grace. When the first mutterings of the thunders of God's judgment are heard men will cry to the rocks to fall on them. They will not cry to God to save their souls. They will blaspheme His holy name, we are told in the book of Revelation. God will sweep the wicked away with judgment; and when the scythe of judgment has swept through the apostate nations, then will be fulfilled the time spoken of in the Psalm, which says, He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

There is another popular error. It is a common idea that Christ's coming will be the time of the general resurrection and the last great judgment: the time when men will have to stand before the white throne to be judged. But if you read Revelation 20 you will see that those who truly believe in Christ have part in the FIRST RESURRECTION; and the general judgment, as it is termed--which is not a general judgment at all--is the judgment of the unregenerate, of the wicked dead, and takes place at least a thousand years after the Lord has taken His own people to be with Him. It is said of the just, they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (v. 6); but of those who are to be judged, they live not till the thousand years are finished (v. 5).

HE IS COMING PERSONALLY. He will come with an assembling shout, a shout of command. Military terms are used for this victory of grace and power. His voice will ring into our ransomed hearts, and there will be instantaneous answer in a rising shout of praise from the dead who are raised and the living who are changed. There will be the providential action of the archangel, and the mighty trump of God. We shall be for ever with the Lord. I think the emphasis is--"For ever WITH THE LORD." It is not that you are just going to heaven for ever, but you are going to be with the Lord for ever. We shall go to the Father's house. That is the affection side, the side that every true heart seems to constantly move towards. Then we see in

Revelation He is going to come back, and He is going to take up the wide earth, and rule it in a way that the greatest and best British monarch never did rule the British Empire. But wherever Jesus is, we are WITH HIM. If it is in the Father's house we shall dwell there with Him. If He comes out in His glory and splendour and majesty, and reigns right royally, we are with Him. Wherever Jesus is, we shall be with Him. Blessed be God, that is just what our hearts long for!

HE WILL COME INTO THE AIR--only to the border of this world's atmosphere--to the outskirts of this particular part of the universe that cast Him out as a malefactor. He will come and call those who belong to Him out of the whole scene before the judgments fall; for He is our Deliverer from the coming wrath. We are not appointed to wrath! Do you think He is going to leave His bride in the tribulation that He Himself is going to send, spoken of as the "great tribulation"? He is not going to leave His bride, His assembly that is so dear to Him amidst the worldwide judgments that will flow from His own opening of the seals of the book (Rev. 5). Never! His own will be kept from the hour of that tribulation, as we are told in Revelation 3:10. God knows the hour--the exact moment when the prophetic clock will strike for this great tribulation, and He says--I will keep thee from the hour. Before ever the hour comes you shall be taken away to be with the Lord; for the force of the reading is, I will keep thee out of the hour. He does this by catching us up to Jesus in the air.

WHEN WILL HE COME? No one knows the day not the hour! Doubtless we see signs all around us telling us that the time is very near! When the Jewish temple is rebuilt (and I have no doubt this will follow quickly after the break up of the Turkish empire), and the abomination of desolation--the image is set up, then the believing remnant of the Jews will count up the exact time, the very number of days, when the Lord will appear, for times and seasons belong to the Jewish believers, not to the assembly. When you have the special instructions relating to us, to the assembly, no times or seasons given--no dates given. They abound in other parts of Scripture. We see them in relation to the Jew, and that there will be a time when they will be able to count up the "1260 days," the "42 months," the "3½ years," the period called "times, time and half a time," all equalling. And see His love and care for these Jewish believers. He says, as it were, regarding that distressful time, I do not want you to be cold and suffering unnecessarily, so "pray that your flight be not in winter--nor on the Sabbath day," to upset the sensitiveness of their Jewish consciences. The Lord cares for His earthly people, and surely He does for the assembly, His heavenly bride.

When will He come for us? Very soon. I am assured of this, beloved brethren, that the time is near. Look at Germany. It was outside of the Roman Empire. It can never have world dominion. The Roman Empire must be revived for this, and now we see things moving quickly. Italy, whose capital is Rome, has broken away from Germany, and has fallen into line with those earthly powers which belong to the old Roman earth. They are combining already, but before the actual revival of the Roman empire takes place we have to go. All this shows the coming of the Lord is very near. If you knew the Lord was coming in twelve months' time you would say, "No more waste time for me! I will fill in every day for the Lord!" But we cannot fix the time. There is not a single prophecy to be fulfilled, so far as the Lord's coming for His assembly is concerned. Let us then be diligent, waiting, watching, and ready for His coming at any moment.

FOR WHOM IS HE COMING? He is coming for the assembly--His body and His bride. The two figures of body and bride are used almost interchangeably by the Spirit. Why did Adam go into that deep sleep? That from himself might be taken that rib, and that he might consequently receive the one who was made from it for him, his bride--Eve. Christ, the Last Adam, went into the deep sleep of death, that through that

death He might have His assembly, which will be consequently presented to Himself as the result of His death. That is the company for which He is coming. Do you belong to it? Are you a member of that body? There is no need to pray for the members of this body to be saved. They are all saved, sealed by the Spirit, and have a living link with the Head, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord nourishes and cherishes the assembly. We may be among the feeblest of the members of His body, but we are every one alike dear to Him. People sometimes say to me, "What church do you belong to?" I say, "Thank God, I belong to the church the Bible speaks of." "But what church is that?" "Well, it is called 'the church,'--'the assembly of God.' It is called 'the body' and 'the bride.' I belong to the assembly Christ is going to take up and present to Himself." Let us beware, brethren, lest we get sectarian in spirit, and try to build up a nice, happy party, or sect, or school, and say, "What a nice assembly we've got." No, let us rather say, "What a precious assembly Christ has got; I belong to no other." I see many dear saints of God here, and I say, "Thank God, you belong to Christ's assembly." Be satisfied with that. When you believed the gospel of your salvation you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:13). The price was paid for us at the cross. What was the price? Christ's own precious blood. The Lord looks down on all His own, and He knows them all, and loves them all. Those who trust in Christ are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise until the time when He will take us to be with Him in the glory for ever. We are to be for the joy of His own heart. Our joy will be full doubtless, but He is going to present us TO HIMSELF without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. He has every right to have us for Himself.

We read in Revelation that when that precious bride, that loved assembly, comes out from heaven she will be arrayed in shining glory, and the mighty hosts will cry, "Hallelujah, the marriage of the Lamb has come." That will be the public celebration of the marriage. But the communion that takes place inside between the assembly and Christ is too deep for words. You do not get that in the book of Revelation. She goes in in wrought gold: she comes out arrayed in fine, bright linen--the righteousnesses of the saints. The coming out is in view in Revelation. She will come out with Christ. The throne will be in her midst. And by the glory which shines from Him she will be used to light up the earth, and make it sing for gladness. The glory of the Lord, and the knowledge of the Lord will then cover the earth. But there is very little said in the Bible about what takes place inside. We know that the heart of the blessed Lord will be fully satisfied. He will have us there with Himself. Then He will bring us out with Himself and fill the universe with glory. She is seen shining with the glory of God, and her radiance like a stone most precious, clear as crystal.

Let us remember that every one redeemed by Christ's blood forms an integral part of that glorious city, the Lamb's wife. May God give us, as we wait for that blessed moment when the Lord will catch the assembly up and take her inside to be with Himself where He is, to be a little more true to Him now, a little more faithful to the One who has loved us, and given Himself for us, and to say "No" a little more firmly to the friendship of that world whose hand is still stained with the blood of our beloved Bridegroom. The friendship of the world is enmity against God. Jesus says, I want all your love. He loved us and gave Himself for us.

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