

The Lord Himself Shall Descend

by John Nelson Darby

The Lord's coming is a central theme in Scripture, bringing glory, joy, and resurrection to those who believe in Him.

Scripture: Matthew 3:17, Luke 2:14, John 17:9

Topics: "The Second Coming of Christ", "Living in Hope"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of the Lord's coming, highlighting that before Christ's arrival, there was little mention of heaven in scripture. He explains how Christ's presence brought a heavenly testimony and how believers should focus on heavenly things rather than earthly distractions. Darby reassures that the Lord Himself will descend from heaven, bringing hope and resurrection to His people, and encourages believers to live in anticipation of this glorious event. He stresses the importance of faith, love, and hope in the sight of God, and the need for believers to remain blameless until the Lord's return.

Transcript

The coming of the Lord, beloved brethren, is the subject of which I wish to speak to you a little.

Till the Lord came into the world there was very little about heaven in the scriptures. But when He came to earth, immediately there was a testimony from heaven to the shepherds, that now there was glory to God in heaven, and on earth good-will to men. And the first word of testimony to Him was from heaven - God's voice saying "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then we find Him, in John 17, conversing with His Father in heaven about His heavenly people, and pouring out His heart about them; and afterwards, when He had gone up again into heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father, the glory could shine down out of heaven, because God wanted the glory of His beloved Son to be seen. This glory it was which came out literally when Stephen was martyred; he saw the Son of man occupied with himself, and got into conversation with Him. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we get wonderful things, because this Man is in heaven. All the different things in that epistle are put out by the Holy Ghost to feed our souls with heavenly things. If my citizenship is in heaven, what would you expect? That there would be more of the things of this earth in my mind - more of the things of this earth in my heart; or, more of the things of heaven in my mind - more of the things of heaven in my heart? Oh! surely more of the things of heaven in my mind, and more of the things of heaven in my heart!

And I have, so to say, the best of my portion now. You and I have not come to the Father's house yet, but we have got the Father's heart. And which is it best for us to have - the Father's house, or the Father's heart? Surely the Father's heart! It will eventuate in our getting into the Father's house, and then we shall surely know the Father's heart better; but it will be the same subject, the same song, then as now.

But now as to this coming of the Lord. I would take the Epistle to the Thessalonians, which shews out this truth. There is there, so to say, a lamp shining down, putting all circumstances in the light of it, throwing its light on all things down here.

There are two verses I would refer to in the first chapter, and, on entering on it, I would just say that the first epistle is the coming of the Lord for His own people; the second is His coming to the world.

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." Those three words - faith, love, and hope, and those other words, intensified by what is with them, work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope, tell us pretty plainly where these Thessalonians were, and what characterises the place where you and I ought to be.

It is the "work of faith." Knowing "the substance" that there is before God, our faith can work down here. When we get home it will be rest, but down here it must be work.

Then again it is "labour of love." Here, in these Thessalonians, there was labour connected with their love. They had much to go through. Times were hard. But then, again, there was hope connected with it, and "patience of hope" too. It could not be worn out. It had to endure, and it did endure.

But there is another thing that you and I will do well to take notice of, and that is, that all this was "in the sight of God and our Father." I have not only faith and hope and love, but I am wearing them before God. He looks down not only to see what is shining from me, but looks to see that these three things are shining out in His presence. The poor Ephesians lost their first love. (Rev. 2.) There was plenty of labour, but when God looked in upon their hearts, there was no love in them. This work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, must be all in the sight of God and our Father.

And then he says, "We need not to speak anything, for they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Their faith bore witness to what Paul's work among them had been, and thus bearing witness, they were waiting for God's Son from heaven. If the heart does not get the assurance that He who is coming is the Deliverer from the wrath to come, that coming could not be borne. But you know we are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time," and, being thus kept by God for a certain salvation, we can patiently await it, and not only await it, but await a certain Person, even "Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come."

And that, beloved brethren, is the brightness of the hope to me. As to myself, I may not have everything as right as I could wish in my desires; I may not have everything set to rights in my house. Ay, but there is another set of thoughts altogether! He says, "Surely I come quickly!" And He must come! He is the One whose coming is the plan of God. The purpose of God is that He should come down, and that, so coming, He should put all God's enemies under His feet, and bring in a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and He will be true to His God and Father. He will accomplish all that God has

given Him to do.

No wonder, if we look at our walk in the light of His coming, that we should judge it unworthy of Him, and I would not wish it otherwise. But I wish the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, rising up from the Father's right hand, were always before our minds. I believe it would soon make our walk consistent. I believe it would set both affections, heart, and thoughts in order.

But is it not a bright hope? He will come forth; and in His coming forth He will claim the church, as He says in John 14: - "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." He has not fulfilled this promise to Peter yet. Peter is with the Lord, but he has not yet been taken to the Father's house, and will not be until we all go to be with Him there. Now is there nothing lovely in that? Nothing in this thought of going to be in that Father's house? Nothing wonderful about the heart of that Son, who, though He has been sitting eighteen hundred years at the right hand of God, is still thinking of coming for His people here? Is there nothing emphatically lovely in it?

He will come upon the cloud of glory. He will come to take His people home. There is Himself to see. We have never seen Him yet. We cannot do without Him, and He will not do without us! We shall see Him for ourselves! We shall hear Him for ourselves! In all things we shall be like Him in the glory.

In the first chapter it was a difficult night they were passing through. Ay, but, says Paul, when you get out of the wood, then you will see it all. And now, in the second chapter, he takes up the difficulties through which he had to pass, and whilst he looks at them, he does not see any of them apart from the Lord Himself.

He says, I have suffered torture in trying to get to you, and you have suffered dreadful things in my absence from you, but when we are once at home in the glory, there will be no difficulty in my getting at you then! All these difficulties, which have been permitted to keep me away from you, will be no more, and in that day you will be my glory and joy - the Lord's too. This is a truth, and a blessed truth, but we shall have it with Him. Not one portion of the glory or the grace but will have flowed through Him; and I shall say Oh! I know the One who has done it all, the Effectuator of all this glory. One labours in one direction, and another in another, but, whatever the results all that is really subordinate. It is Jehovah's Fellow who has done it. He is the worker of it all. And what a joy it will be to Him to see the little circles around each labourer. Here, in one corner, Paul, surrounded with his dear Thessalonians, his joy and crown; and there, in another, some other labourer, with his around him; and in them Christ will see all that His own grace had wrought.

I do not believe we think enough of that communion in the glory which will be the counterpart of our communion here in the wilderness. All the details and difficulties of the wilderness journey will have their blessed counterpart in the glory. Our crown of rejoicing is Christ. Ay, but, says Paul, are not even you this to me? In the day when all these difficulties will be done away, my glory and joy will be what God has wrought in you by me!

What a heart has Christ! No heart so unselfish as His! He loves to give away all He can give away. He might have converted everyone Himself, just as He called Saul of Tarsus from the glory, but He would not. He loves to work by others.

And is there no work to do? Are there no eyes to be wiped? Are there no broken hearts to be bound up among the saints? Is there nothing of this sort to be done among His people? Well, then, go in for it! Bring out this patience of Christ, for in that day that will be a blessed counterpart of all labour amongst the saints.

In the next chapter he brings out another thing. The Lord is here bringing all His people out from heaven with Him. "To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." "With all his saints." It is what we call the Epiphany - the manifestation of Christ. It is after 2 Corinthians 4 - after the bema of Christ. We have met Him, gone with Him to the Father's house, and now He brings us out again. He comes forth with all His saints.

I do not suppose that the apostle could have let out his heart more simply than he does in these words. Christ has His retired place to take the church into - the Father's house; but divine love will bring us forth with Him in manifested glory; and the desire of the apostle is that there may not be a single thing in us now that may in any way mar the time when He will bring us out with Himself. Is there nothing peculiar in the expression, "He shall come to be admired in all them that believe"? He will be admired in His saints! Is there, then, no separation - no separation between Christ and His saints? None! There is none as to His blood-shedding. He gave His life a ransom for them, and there will be none in His place in heaven. When He goes into His Father's house, He comes to seek His people first. No separation between Him and the church. He comes with all His saints! Oh, what a heart Christ has!

And what a mind God has! He has chosen One around whom He can safely wind all His plans. If you want to wind anything round a thing, you must consider the weight of what you want to wind before you can decide whether you may safely do it. You would not wind a coil of rope round a feeble twig. And thus God could not, so to say, have any centre but His Son. All His saints are wound round Him, and He will bring them out with Him in the glory.

And what if I am suffering down here? Surely there is power in this part of the hope to encourage the heart now. What if I am borne down now by difficulties? I shall come forth with Him, and shall be displayed as the one who is, with Him, to teach the world to rejoice, and who will keep evil in check. I shall come forth with Him.

Now, in chapter 4, there are some things that are very remarkable, brought up in connection with His coming.

The first thing is covetousness, or, as he calls it here, "the lust of concupiscence." It is the heart that is not satisfied with God and His portion - that is snatching at things round about it down here. It is just the power of the wicked spirit upon the heart that is separated to Christ, and that yet tries to satisfy itself with things down here; and that finds, like the young man in the parable, who tried to feed as the swine did, that he cannot satisfy himself in any way with the husks. He will only just find himself in the pitiable plight of trying what swine's food will do for him. He will find the husks are only fit for a swine's belly, and are no food for his.

And then he introduces mourning. What will be a satisfying portion? I have none down here. I have to wait, not only for happy association, but for the Person whose innate power will shew itself forth in the midst of the difficulties in which He will find His church when He comes. Paul says to them, God will bring with Him those very friends and relations of yours, you Thessalonians, who you think have lost their chance of

being with Him in the glory. And these words tell upon every heart since, that is in like circumstances.

I have this thought, beloved friends, and I think it rather deepens upon me. It is, that that which shines forth from Christ is what gives the power of looking upward.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 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."

There is everything to rouse the attention in the way that the subject is introduced: Himself, the Lord, shall descend from heaven. When? Does it say? No! It is not made known when. But, oh! to think of that One without whom nothing that has been created was made - that One into whose hands everything has been committed by God - to think of that Man about to descend again from heaven!

It is a wonderful thing, the stupidity of the mind of man! To think of people trying to make out that the death of saints is the coming of the Lord! If I die to-night, I go to the Lord; the Lord does not descend from heaven. When Stephen was dying he looked up, and saw the Lord waiting for him in heaven; he did not see the Lord descend from heaven.

But the Lord will descend. He will come off that throne at the appointed time. He will come down out of that glory upon the cloud. He will descend out of heaven.

There is everything to arrest the soul in the way it is put, and to cause it to inquire; and then, besides, it is so guardedly put - "the Lord Himself." There is only one Lord.

And then see the glory! Ay, and the grace too! It is with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

I never read those clauses without certain thoughts waking up in my mind in one way or another. His voice was heard on earth before this. He was heard to pray by His disciples. In that hour when He asked them to watch with Him, His voice went up in prayer to His Father, and He was heard in that He feared. But He did not take upon Him then the regulating of anything. He let His Father do everything in His own way. What do you take your sword, and smite the servant's ear off, in that way, for, Peter? He laid His hand on it at once, and healed it. He would not be delivered, because He had to give His life for the sheep.

Of course, on the other hand, He did regulate, in a hidden way, as when He let Saul of Tarsus be at the death of Stephen, and when He spoke to Saul out of the glory. In a quiet way He spoke and regulated them, but He will speak in quite a different way in the day that is coming. The "shout" spoken of here is a regulating sound, such as a call to men to present arms; and its tones will be heard as announcing that the time is come. Ay, and the tones of that voice will be gladsome too! Himself will leave the throne! Himself will call His people! He is the One who regulates it all! He is the perfect servant. He does not leave the Father's throne a moment too soon, but when He does, it will be with a regulating shout.

And then there is "the voice of the archangel." The Lord takes it up. The time is come; and what angel in heaven would not gladly render up his place to the Lord!

And then there is "the trump of God." God takes it up. From the throne of His Father He is coming forth, the regulating introduction of blessing.

Then, besides this (no new thing to us here), there are two things that He brings in. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Now we are already associated with Him in resurrection-life in the heavenly places. He has given us to know that, but He is going to give us another exhibition of it.

Do you ever think how Christ is keeping the bodies of the dead? Do you never say, Oh, what a heart He has! How tenderly He is caring for them! How He knows that the dust of Stephen is there, and the dust of Paul here, and how He has His eye on every bit of it! And He is ready to bring it all forth when the moment comes. It is Himself that does it. He does not say, I will let any mighty power put the finishing stroke to it. No, it is Himself. He says, the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Oh! what a part of the hope is this to one who has had to battle with death - to one who has had to part with loved ones, and to lay them in the grave! It is "absent from the body, present with the Lord." Oh, death! I will be thy plagues, He says. He is coming to avenge the controversy, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. He is coming to make the display of His own glory as the resurrection. The Lord coming, and the dust giving up the dead that belong to Christ everywhere! Ah, yes! it is that which He is putting forward here!

Would you like to see the resurrection accomplished - every corner of this earth opening up to let out the dust that is sleeping in it? There is love supreme to the weakest and feeblest whose bodies are sleeping in the dust.

And then there is "the life!" There are you and I. If He appeared this very evening, He would so let the stream of life flow into us that there would be nothing but immortality left in us.

One often hears that text in Hebrews wrongly quoted. People say, "It is appointed unto all men once to die." It is "men," not "all men." If the Lord were to come to-night, we should not have to lay aside the body at all.

And then he shews what a comfort, too, it is. What is? The resurrection and the life? No! but the Lord who will be that!

Now, in the last chapter, he enters a little into the state of the world when Christ will do this. They have no idea of the Lord's coming. They are of the night; we are not of the night. His people are waiting for Him, but He shews us that the people of the world are not of that class.

And then He gives this as the desire of His own spirit, and the desire of the Holy Ghost also. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here it is a very strong word, and a very simple word, and a very blessed word. The thoughts of the Spirit of God and the thoughts of the apostle were not that I should be brought to know the things of heaven, of God, and of Christ, and then mar my walk by intercourse with the things of Sodom and Gomorrah. But this was His thought: "May your spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

He does not speak of taking the law of sin and death out of my members. He does not say that He sets me in a place where I shall have no more conflict. He does not speak of taking me out of the wilderness. But He does speak of this grace which shall preserve me blameless. He does talk of God finding us blameless in that day.

As to his own walk, he was fully persuaded that Christ would be magnified in his body, whether by life or death. And when he thus said that he was positive that Christ would be magnified, he did not get the idea of being blameworthy in his own particular walk. No! This word is to strengthen the hearts of the children of God. It is He who has called them, and He will do it.

Is God going to keep you blameless? Then mind, you are invincible! Mind, you are to overcome! Mind, you are not to flag! You will overcome, because He will keep you blameless. I see God putting Himself forward, saying, I am the Person who will keep you blameless unto that day.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/the-lord-himself-shall-descend/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net