

# What about the Second Coming?

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Conventional Christian teaching has simplistically reduced the whole subject of the coming of Christ to a first and second advent. No one disagrees as to what the first advent was, of course. He was "conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary" according to the Apostles Creed, and thus the eternal "*Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*" (**Jn. 1:14**). Literally, in the Greek, He "*tabernacled among us*." That is, He lived among us as the fulfillment of that wonderful Old Testament type of Christ, the ancient tabernacle in the wilderness.

As recorded in John's gospel, Jesus, as He approached the time of His suffering and death, told His disciples that though He would be going away, they were not to be troubled in heart because He would---as conventionally translated--- "come again." But that translation is crude and tends to be misleading, because, in the Greek, what He actually said was "...if I will go away, I AM coming again.."

That is, by going away from them in the form that they had come to know Him, He would be coming anew to them----as we shall see further in our study---in much greater intimacy as their very life. He would no longer be merely among them as an external Presence, but would be the Reality of personhood within them.

But most Christians, because of how they've been taught, crudely imagine that He was speaking of a far distant time when He would come back to them, as it were, traveling through space after having been, in some sense, actually absent from them in the meanwhile. And, incredibly, they imagine this in spite of our Lord's assuring promise, "Behold I AM with you always."

Actually, what He was essentially referring to was that, shortly, He would be coming in/as the Spirit of Truth, and would be then forever present with them in a most sublime way. (**John 16:7,13-16**), How sublime?

**To repeat:** In contrast to His Presence merely WITH them, as He had been before His death and resurrection---which was a Presence EXTERNAL to them---He would come to INDWELL them and make them His corporate Body, the living Temple of God, the House of His Father.

With Christ in them, and the Father in Christ, they would be the many individuals-membered bodily- manifestation of God on the earth as Jesus was the single-individual bodily- manifestation. So, as St. John said in his first epistle, "*As He is so are we in this world*" (**I John 4:17**). Jesus, before He died, promised that He would send the Spirit of Truth to them and also said that He would come again. These statements, taken together, refer to one truth for in the sending of the Spirit, Jesus Himself came to them for He said, in

the same context, "I am the way, the TRUTH and the Life..." (**John. 14:6**).

You see, Jesus did come back to them as Truth (Reality) to be subjectively experienced as their very life. That's where Paul's epistles are so important because until He came along the disciples only spoke of receiving the Spirit, whereas Paul explained that, in receiving the Holy Spirit, they had received Christ Himself, saying "The Lord is the Spirit..." (**II Cor. 3:17**), and "he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (**I Cor. 6:17**).

This coming of the Lord again as the glorified New Man (in a body now incorruptible and immortal); this coming culminated on the Day of Pentecost, but was initiated in the upper room when He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." Clearly this was Jesus transmitting Himself to them to be their life---resurrection life. You see, the Greek word translated "coming" means [coming and presence](#).

We could coin the word "[presencing](#)" to convey something of the essential thought. The Greek word, "[parousia](#)," is not about movement from one location to another. It has to do with being near, at hand. How near? There is a hymn that some of us used to sing during a time when this truth was being unveiled to us. It says it so well:

**Oh, Lord, Thou art in me as life, and everything to me.  
Subjective and available, thus I experience Thee.  
Oh, Lord, Thou art the Spirit, so near and dear to me.  
How I admire Thy marvelous availability.**

He has come and is present in Spirit to indwell us; is present in us; is inwardly real to us, and now, in us, as a corporate body, He is present in us, for us, but also present in us, to and for the world. He continues to come by us to others who don't know Him yet until He comes to all the world.

Actually, it can be said that even in the life of one in whom Jesus already lives that He continues to come to them from within by unveiling Himself progressively to that one. The coming of the Lord is a matter not simply of His coming from one cosmic location to another, but a matter of His being revealed and manifested. There are many Christians who are indwelt by Christ but know little of Him as He really is. From within me the Lord has come to me many times and continues to do so to introduce new dimensions of His glorious Presence.

Maybe this will help to make it clearer. The coming of the Lord, whether we're speaking of when He was born of Mary or when He came in the Spirit after His resurrection, is always a matter of God, as eternal Spirit, becoming flesh. That is becoming human. He (God) became a Man in Jesus of Nazareth, but God desired more than just His only-begotten Son to manifest Him on the earth; He wanted a family of many sons, indwelt by His first-begotten Son, so that those many sons, with the Son living in them become what Paul calls, "the one new man" (**Eph. 2:15**).

That one new man is a corporate man. Many, having one life, the life of Christ; for while it is true that they are many, the larger truth is that they are many members; many members of one body, the church, the body of Christ. The Christ of God has multiplied Himself in many and now the many are the Christ as they are finally presented in the New Testament.

You'll find that explicitly stated by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (**I Cor. 12:12**). I really encourage you to read that passage and meditate on the wonder of it.

At the request of a friend who asked me to write an article addressing the popular rapture teaching, I decided to do that, but in the larger context of the coming of the Lord. I looked to the Lord to give me something fresh and seminal on the Lord's coming, and as a result, wrote a five-part series titled, "The Coming of the Lord." That series, in conjunction with this article, I believe could be helpful for my readers to properly, in their understanding, place the subject of the Lord's coming within the economy of God.

We need to be reminded of God's precious promise, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (**Heb. 13:5**), and that He is always particularly present in the Person of His Son. At the heart of the truth of the final restoration of all things is the commitment of Christ to be present in and with His disciples and in them to be present in the world until all things are summed up in Him (**Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:16-17**).

There may be some reading this who are not aware of the fact that where many translations of the Bible speak of "eternal life," the actual Greek is "eonion life," or "aionian life." The essential idea of eonion life is that the eternal Word has entered the aion(s) and now He is not only eternal life, but He has become eonion life. That is, He is, as the Living God, Emmanuel, God with us, without, of course, in the transition, losing His essential eternity.

The eternal, living God, in the Person of Christ, is age-pertaining and age-abiding. It is God-life (Greek: "Zoe") relevant to, and relevantly effective in, the aion(s). He made His abode in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth and now makes His abode in the church which is the body of Christ by His Spirit within the space-time continuum. In us, He is present and committed to the world, not standing afar and aloof from us/it, but "hanging in there" to the glorious end until He, the Eternal One, who was sent by the Father into the aion(s), abides, continues, endures through the ages until death is completely swallowed up in the victory of His resurrection life, a present life.

There has even been a little confusion among some brethren who understand the coming of the Lord in Spirit and who take very seriously the Lord's promise to never leave us. It can be seen in that they say that Jesus was really only gone for 10 days between His final resurrection appearance and the Day of Pentecost.

Even that is not entirely accurate since, before the outpouring of Himself as the power of the Church at Pentecost, as I've already pointed out, He had bestowed Himself upon His disciples as their Life by breathing upon them saying, "*Receive ye the Holy Spirit*" (**John. 20:22**). And even before that, He had told them, "*He, (the Spirit of Truth) is with you and shall be in you*" (**John. 14:17**), so, in fact, though Jesus did leave them in terms of a physical presence, His presence in the Spirit never left them for even an instant from the time that each of them responded to His call to follow Him.

In the matter of His Spirit as breath and His Spirit as a mighty wind, the imagery in the two events is beautiful. One, breathing upon them, indicates the impartation of life, His life to them. The second, that of the sound of a mighty tempest wind indicates the dimension of the power of His life already given to them when He breathed upon them.

In Christ, by His Spirit, we have life, His life, regenerating us, and also His power enduing us, so that the works that He did, we shall do and greater works because He has gone to the Father and continues to impart life to us from the position of all authority and power (**Matt. 28:18; John. 5:20, 14:12**).

As the organized church began to lose the experiential reality of Christ's presence in and among them, substituting for that dynamic presence, the determination to insure unity by conformity to dogma (**II Tim. 3:5**), the idea of the coming/presence of Christ became more and more something to yet occur some day as an eschatological event. Martha, Lazarus' sister, made that mistake when she said that she knew that her brother would arise in the resurrection. To her, resurrection was a day in the future. Jesus pathos-filled answer to her was, "*I AM the resurrection and the life...*" (**John. 11:25**).

There are always prophetic scenarios presented to us that distract us from the reality of His Presence with us now. Anyone, with any mature understanding of the relationship between the Spirit and Christ knows that the essential work of the Spirit, in relationship to the believer, is to impart Christ and all that He is to us.

Even within the best of institutional evangelical Christianity, this is understood. A mentor of mine once said it so succinctly. He said, "[The Father is the Source, the Son is the Course \(coursing to us\) and the Spirit is the Transmission \(impartation\).](#)" So the DISPENSation of God is a matter of God DISPENSing Himself to us. It is a matter of the fulness of God being in Christ; the fulness of Christ being in the Spirit, and the fullness of the Spirit being in the church, the real Church; and ultimately that "[church](#)" being the whole body of humanity.

The New Testament can be summed up in the following little outline:

In the Gospels we see God in Christ,  
in the Book of Acts we see Christ in the Spirit,  
in the epistles we see the Spirit in the church, and  
in the Book of Revelation we see the church in glory ([the glory of God, that is](#)).

Andrew Murray, an evangelical of impeccable credentials, who, from some of his writings, we know, understood reconciliation, wrote a classic book, "[The Spirit of Christ.](#)" ([on-line version](#)) I'm sure it's still in print and I would recommend it to anyone desiring a balanced understanding of the coming of the Lord.

I mean, in this teaching, not to merely be confrontational about conventional teaching, but to emphasize, in the strongest possible way, the certainty of the reality of Christ's Presence in us all corporately and individually. For Him to be present in us, of necessity means that He must have come to us. I desire fervently that fellow believers learn to live with an acute awareness of the full implications of the incarnation as a present dynamic in our lives, so that we're not caught foolishly looking for the arrival of Him, who is ever present with us, in us.

The apostle who is so rich in explicit teaching on ultimate reconciliation, namely our dear brother Paul, was equally as powerful in his assertion of the coming and presence of Christ in the believer. It is so interesting that in what some call the perfection epistles, namely

Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians---and indeed they quite uniquely contain peaks of Pauline thought, that two themes stand out; the real, present presence of Christ in the believer/Church and the summing up of all things in Christ.

I am careful to speak of the coming/presence of Christ as beginning with His incarnation, continuing in Spirit, and still unfolding unto a point of perfect consummation, so that whether a brother or sister in Christ be of a pretorist, historical or futurist persuasion, we will be renewed to that fellowship of the saints that finds its dynamic in His real presence within and among us all.

Everyone that I know of within those schools of thought agrees that, in some sense, Christ is really present in the believer now and in the church now, and yet we all look forward, by some definition, to His coming/presence unfolding in a greater manifestation. That is why I rarely say much about eschatological events or sequences of such events. It is difficult, if not impossible, to draw me into an argument about such. I am profoundly bored by it all.

I am only concerned to hold forth the gospel principle of the Word becoming flesh which is the undergirding principle of restoration of all things. That is, that the propensity of Deity to become flesh is behind God's refusal to lose anyone. He will not lose any because they are all ultimately to become human expressions of His fulness.

The love that motivates God in His determination to save all, is the love that first is determined to come to, and be present in, all humanity. God will have all men to be saved---not merely because He's too nice to do otherwise---but because He so passionately desires to be with us and in union with us that anything else does not compute with God.

I dearly want all to know that He has come, and has remained, and that we, indwelt by His Spirit, have become part and parcel of His coming while acknowledging a future dimension, unfolding and consummation of that coming---however one might conceptualize it. One can fit that into any eschatological framework that is comfortable to their mentality, but one must not deny it.

Stay tuned for future serious, seminal samplings.

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