

An Attempt To Listen To God

Prophecy
The Coming Of The Lord

By

Rowan Jennings

Introduction

One day, when I was just a little lad, I was in my Grandma Jennings bedroom. She had a picture above her bed of the dawn breaking above a calm harbor and a few little sailboats. Across it was written: "His coming is as certain as the dawn". As a child I had no idea it was a verse from the Bible (Hos. 6:3), and now at almost 69 years of age, that picture and wording has never left me.

In this paper our consideration **will not be considering the pros and cons of a pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, or post tribulation teachings. It will be taken up with the truths common to all three perspectives:** "Jesus is coming again", and the blessedness of that coming. To prevent any misunderstanding, I believe in a pre-tribulation rapture and not in a mid or post single resurrection of the dead.

The first meditation is that this is an unconditional promise of the covenant the Lord has made with His own (as I say we are not concerned in this paper whether that is "His own, the church"; or "His own, Israel") simply the fact that it is an unconditional promise. This is made even more glorious that Jesus Himself shall come. If I were to go to the White House or Buckingham Palace, none of the "nobles" would come to the gate much less the door to usher me in. A servant would be sent to bring me to meet the President or Queen. Not so with the Lord. He himself will come so close to earth, to where I am, and then bring me to and with Himself.

This precious promise was soon attacked by the evil one in the early days of the church. By the time John wrote his epistles and gospel, the deity and humanity of the Lord was being denied consequently, they were written. When Peter wrote his second epistle there was the denial of the coming of the Lord, consequently, second Peter was written.

When the Lord said: "I will come again" (Jn. 14:3), this was given as an unconditional promise or covenant, and no power celestial or infernal can prevent it. What a comfort this is in this sad world of woe. Thank God this is not a vain hope, but a blessed assurance.

When Will He Come?

One of the wonderful blessings God has given to humanity is the intrigue of curiosity. Because of it, discoveries have been made as problems were faced and solutions sought. However, man also wants to know more than that which God tells him. For instance, who are the twenty-four elders in Revelation five, or who wrote Hebrews? God does not tell us for it is not necessary to know, and in accepting such, a greater blessing is received. Such things are closed doors and no matter how we try, we cannot open them. One of the matters man wants to know is: "When is the Lord coming again?" The fact that God does not tell us is irrelevant, man wants to find out and has set multiple dates when he thinks it will happen. A priest predicted it would happen in 500 AD, then it was to happen in 1033, 1524-1526, 1809, 1836, 1881, 1997, 1981, 1981; Harold Camping in May 2012! The Jehovahs Witnesses hold the title for the longest running dates. They predicted 1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975, and 1984. How foolish this all is when the Lord distinctly said: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mk. 13:32).

What Are The Evidences That The Lord Will Come Again?

The evidences for the Lord's soon return can be presented from two avenues:

- a) From earthly circumstances and
- b) The words of men and divine persons.

Peter informs us that the scriptures were written by "holy men of God" who were "moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21). But, we have a greater witness than the "holy men" who were "moved by the Holy Ghost", for we have the words of the Lord Himself. At least eight times this truth is repeated, they are:

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Who Said It?	When It Was Said / What Was Said?	The Emphasis / Reference
The Good Samaritan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In the parable ▶ “When I come again, I will repay thee” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lk. 10:35
The Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Before Calvary ▶ “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” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The emphasis is on our reception ▶ Jn. 14:2-3
The Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ On resurrection before His ascension ▶ “If he tarry till I come what is that to thee”? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The emphasis is on readiness, whither I die or the Lord comes. ▶ Jn. 21:22
The Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ From glory ▶ “Behold, I come quickly” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The emphasis is on our responsibility to hold fast the truth given ▶ Rev. 3:11
The Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ From glory ▶ “Behold I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The emphasis is on our responsibility, that is today of he in the truth of the book ▶ Rev. 22:7
The Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ From glory ▶ “Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The emphasis is on His sovereignty in assessing and giving rewards ▶ Rev. 22:12
The Lord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ From glory ▶ “Surely I come quickly” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The emphasis is on our response. ▶ Rev. 22:20
Angels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ When the Lord ascended ▶ “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Acts 1:11. The emphasis is on how He will come
The Holy Spirit by the apostles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Paul ▶ Peter ▶ Jude ▶ John ▶ James ▶ Hebrews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ After the Lord went back to Heaven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 Thess. 4:15 ▶ 2 Pet. 3:10 ▶ Jude 1:14 ▶ John 14:3 ▶ Jam. 5:8 ▶ Heb. 10:37

When Will He Come?

Since childhood I heard it taught that the Lord will come when the last individual is saved, although no scripture was ever given to support it. Neither have I ever been able to find anyone that can show me such. I am not saying there is none, but somehow it does not seem right to me to preach a message of truth if there is no scripture to support that which is being said. On the other hand, I do find a principle in the scriptures that God never pours out judgment immediately after all His own are delivered. For instance, the Lord told Noah: "Come thou and all thy house into the ark . . . For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth" (Gen. 7:1, 4). Noah and his family went into the ark and we read: "it came to pass AFTER seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth" (Gen. 7:10). The teaching is clear, the judgment did not fall immediately after Noah and his family went into the ark! Did God not know none of the others would repent? Of course He did! God is not some ogre who cannot wait to pour out judgment. From the words of Paul to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:10-12), I understand that the Lord will not come until there is not a single soul on the face of the earth who has heard the Gospel, understood it, and wants it. Not just heard the gospel, but understood it (Matt. 13:13; 15:10; Mk. 4:12; 7:14). This is not teaching a second chance for those who have heard, understood, and rejected it. Such is a lie from the pit. The scriptures are clear: "That they all might be damned that believed not the truth" (2 Thess. 2:12). It is teaching that there has been a point of time when after hearing and understanding, the individual made a deliberate decision of rejecting God's offer of salvation. There will be no such a thing as a person close to salvation and then God slamming the door on them because the time is up. There are untold millions who have never heard or heard and never understood, who will have opportunity for salvation.

How Will He Come?

The angels told very distinctly how He will come. It is possible to read many things into this such as:

- a) "He will come silently". The passage in Acts says nothing about any silence.
- b) "He comes again to Olivet". Again, the angels said nothing about that.

These things may be true but lets not misuse the Scriptures to teach our thoughts. Zechariah plainly states His feet shall stand "In that day upon the mount of Olives" (Zech. 14:4), and the context is the Day of the Lord. It is a false exegesis to take the words of Zechariah and use them in Acts 1:11 and apply its truths to teach a certain doctrine.

The words of the angels are "shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven"(Acts 1:11) therefore the question is not "Where did he leave from" or "Who saw Him leave" but "How did he leave"? What we can say is:

- a) He left visually, for they saw Him ascend.
 - i) The scriptures teach that when the Lord returns it will be visual because "when He shall appear we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn. 3:2), and "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" (Rev. 1:7). I am not confusing the coming of the Lord but pointing out that whither to the earth or air, He will be seen! Whither He will be seen by the world when he comes to the air is something the scriptures are silent about, therefore, we cannot make statements either way. When Saul was on the Damascus Road he saw a great light, he heard a voice, but it seems none of those with him understood what was happening (Acts 9:7). When God spoke from Heaven, the Lord knew what was being said but the people were unsure of what it was, for they only heard the sound (Jn. 12:28-29).
- b) He left blessing so He will come blessing.
 - i) There may be some who will automatically say that when He comes in blessing it indicates His coming for us! This then begs the question: "When the Lord comes to Israel, will He not be coming in blessing for them?" (Matt. 23:39; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27). If one believes in the full restoration of Israel and the millennium, surely that is blessing.

- c) He left with power.
- i) Irrespective whether speaking of His coming to the air or earth (if I see a difference) certain facts are clear: He comes with resurrecting power (1 Thess. 4:16) and with victorious power to overcome death and the Beast with His associates (Rev. 19:11-21).

The Words Used To Describe His Coming

There are six words used relative to the coming of the Lord. They are “harpazo”, “erchomai”, “parousia”, “rhoumai”, “apokalupis”, and “epiphaneia”. It must be understood that the three principal words, “parousia, apokalupis and epiphaneia” do not have an exclusive technical meaning referring to the coming of the Lord to the air or the earth! It is contrary to the scriptures to say, “Parousia refers exclusively to His coming to the air” and “Epiphaneia referees exclusively to His coming to the earth”. We must not go beyond the scriptures and add a thought to bolster our point of view. Indeed, all three words are used of the two comings, that is if one accepts a pre-tribulation rapture.

a) Parousia

- i) This word is used in 24 verses and means arrival, to be near, to be present, as opposed to being absent. It was the technical word used for the arrival or visit of a king or emperor, although it is not used in that sense in the New Testament. Its emphasis is on the actual coming of the person so that they are near.
- ii) It is translated:

Coming	Matt. 24:3, 39; 1 Cor. 15:23
Presence	2 Cor. 10:10
“Parousia” indicates the coming of and arrival of one in order to be present. It is used of the Lord on the mount of transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:16); the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:9); the day of God (2 Pet. 3:12); and of Paul and his fellow-workers (1 Cor. 16:17)	

- iii) It is used of:

The Lawless One	2 Thess. 2:9
The day of God	2 Pet. 3:12
The coming of the Lord to the air (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:15) and His coming to the earth (Matt. 24:3, 27, 39; 1 Thess. 3:13)	

b) Apokalupis

- i) This word is used in 18 verses.
- ii) It is translated:

Lighten	Lk. 2:32
Revelation	Rom. 2:5
Manifestation	Rom. 8:19
His coming	1 Cor. 1:7

Revelations	2 Cor. 12:1
Appearing	1 Pet. 1:7
Revealed	1 Pet. 4:13
<p>This word is used by Simeon when he spoke of our Lord as a “light to lighten the Gentiles” (Lk. 2:32); the coming of the Lord (at the rapture, 1 Cor. 1:7); and of His coming in judgment (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).</p> <p>Its associated word is used when our Lord said: “There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed” (Lk. 12:2). It is used of the manifestation of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3), of the glory of which we are partakers (1 Pet. 5:1).</p>	

c) Epiphaneia

Brightness	2 Thess. 2:8
Appearing	1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13
<p>It refers to the Lord’s coming to the air (1 Tim. 6:14); His coming to the earth at Bethlehem (2 Tim. 1:10).</p>	

d) Harpazo

i) This word is used in 13 verses. It is translated as:

Catcheth away	Jn. 10:12
Pluck	Jn. 10:29
Caught away	Acts 8:39 (No opposition to the purpose of God)
Caught up	1 Thess. 4:17
<p>There is only one reference to the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17). It indicates to take by force as is seen in its first mention: “The violent take it by force” (Matt. 11:12). There is nearly always in it the thought of opposition to the purposes and work of God.</p>	

e) Erchomai

- i) This word is used in 604 verses and has a great variety of applications.
- ii) It is translated as:

Son of man cometh	Matt. 24:44, 46, 48
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Before the Lord come	1 Cor. 4:5
He shall come	1 Cor. 11:26
Till he come	2 Thess. 1:10
He that shall come	Heb. 10:37
It is used of the coming of the Lord to the earth (Matt. 24:44, 46, 48) and to the air (Jn. 14:3; 1 Cor. 4:5). It seems to simply indicate a fact that someone has come (Matt. 2:2).	

- f) Rhoumai
- i) This word is used in 16 verses
 - ii) It is translated:

Deliverer	Rom. 11:26
Delivered	Rom. 15:31; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Pet. 2:7
Deliver	Matt. 6:13
There is only one reference to the coming of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:10). It always has the idea of deliverance. Indeed, it is a title of the Lord in Rom. 11:26.	

Is It In Stages?

I have heard much speaking and read much material on the fact that the coming of the Lord is in two stages. I must assume that there's some scriptural basis for this, but yet I have never been able to find it. In arguing (at the moment for a pre-tribulation rapture), my suggestion is there are not two stages but two distinct comings. To say that the Lord came to Bethlehem and then to Jerusalem as king was one coming in two stages is stretching the truth enormously. If we believe that the church is distinct from Israel, and the "rapture" is His coming for the church, and his "appearing" is for Israel, that indicates two distinct comings. We cannot have a true exegesis of prophecy if we constantly say the church and Israel are separate, and then unite them when it suits our thoughts. It is an "either" "or" situation. Either they are separate and all connected with them is separate and distinct, or they are united. We cannot have both. Besides this, there is a period of at least seven years between them (if we accept the rapture as being pre-tribulation).

Practical

When the Lord comes

- a) We shall have had the last opportunity for serving Him on this earth.
- b) We shall have had the last opportunity to work with Him in our training.
- c) We shall have had the last opportunity to intercede for the unsaved.
- d) We shall have had the last opportunity to seek the restoration of the wayward.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia