

Evangelistic Sermons

(Doctrinal Series)

by

William Edward Biederwolf

Grand Rapids Michigan

CHAPTER FIVE -

SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

"This same Jesus... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go" (Acts 1:11).

This old world of ours has been the stage of many wonderful events, all the way from the hour when GOD first spoke it into existence by the word of His power up to the time of that memorable Christmas night when the heavens suddenly became aglow with the glory of GOD and the angel choir sang above the green fields of Bethlehem the sweet song that Christ had come into the world.

And there have been wonderful events in all succeeding time, but I am going to tell you tonight about an event that is yet future, more wonderful in some respects than the coming of CHRIST just mentioned, and far more wonderful than all these other events put together, and that is the fact of the Second Coming of CHRIST, the fact that the Lord JESUS is coming back again to this earth.

Now if the Bible speaks more emphatically about one thing than any other it is the certainty of the coming again of JESUS CHRIST to this earth. Notice, I say the certainty of His coming, It doesn't say when He is coming. And I suppose more men professing to be wise have showed themselves fools at this point by setting an exact time for this wonderful event than in any other way of Scriptural speculation.

When the Disciples asked Jesus when He would come again, didn't He say, "**Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.**" He said He didn't know Himself. Only GOD knows. "**It is not for you to know,**" He said to the inquiring ones, "**the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.**"

But the Bible does make it plain that He is coming again. Jesus said, "**If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself.**" His coming is mentioned more than 300 times and Paul alone in his Epistles refers to it at least 50 times. And yet it seems as though most present-day ministers put a taboo on the whole subject and let it severely alone; and as a result the church is full of members who know nothing about it, and no wonder they are not concerned about it - this glorious event for which everything has been groaning and waiting, for which all history has been preparing and towards which every divine event from the call of

Abraham to the cross of Calvary and the proclamation of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, has been looking.

Yes, He is certainly coming.

Some say that CHRIST's second coming took place at the destruction of Jerusalem; others say it was at Pentecost; still others say it is a spiritual coming and takes place at regeneration, and others say the second coming means death; and how many times have you gone to a funeral and heard a sermon from this text, "**Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.**"

But all these explanations are the doctrines of men and not the inspired word of GOD. What men think has nothing to do with it, but what GOD says is the thing that counts.

Now there is no use to say that the Bible teaching about the Second Coming is as clear as daylight at every point. If it was, there wouldn't be any difference of opinion at all; and to say that it is, is a species of inexcusable bigotry that humble and fair-minded scholars will not tolerate.

But there are some things about it the Bible doesn't leave any room to dispute about, and I am going to mention these first.

Listen to Paul in First Thessalonians, "**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 precede them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first**" - now listen "**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.**"

Now there are two things there that are as clear as daylight. One is that when the Lord comes the dead in CHRIST, the Christian dead, will be raised up out of their graves; and the other is that with them the living Christians, "**changed... in the twinkling of an eye,**" will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

That's what we mean when we talk about the Rapture. My, what a meeting that will be!

"When the blest who sleep in Jesus at His bidding shall arise;
From the silence of the grave and from the sea:
When from every clime and nation He shall call His people home,
What a gathering of the ransomed that will be."

That meeting in the air is going to mean something mighty fine for the Christian.

1. It will mean, of course, that we are to be a part of the Body of CHRIST and heirs to everything that implies.

This is what GOD is doing now - taking out of the nations out of the Jews and the Gentiles, "**a**

people for His name." CHRIST is not going to come until that number is complete. Nobody knows when it will be. Who knows but that the very next soul converted to JESUS CHRIST may be the last one and then His coming will be at our very door.

The Body of CHRIST is the Church and it is bounded on one side by Pentecost and on the other side by the Second Coming of CHRIST. And if you are a child of GOD you are going to be favored in a way that even Abraham and David and all of the Old Testament saints are not; and if any believe and are saved after He comes, they'll never belong to the Bride of CHRIST or be a member of His glorious household in the sense that you will if you accept Him now.

The one who accepts Him now will be one of the most favored beings in the universe of GOD. And yet some of you don't care. You sit out there wrapped up in your dollars and your pleasures and His coming doesn't interest you.

It's like wearing doughbeads when you might have diamonds.

2. In the next place, that's the time when the Christian is going to get his reward.

This is what Paul meant when he said, "**Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.**"

We are going to be like Him. That's part of the reward. It is said, "**When He shall appear, we shall be like Him.**" The changed body will be glorious enough, but think of a changed soul! Made perfect at last and like the soul of JESUS. The Devils' power will be broken forever and all the hellishness of character, pride, temper, jealousy and the other works of the flesh will be a thing of the past.

And then thank GOD, we'll never leave Him. "**And so shall we ever be with the Lord**": and wherever He is and wherever He goes there we shall be and there we shall go.

And where will He go from that meeting place? Back to Heaven. of course, where He came from. And we will go with Him. You know, I sometimes find myself hankering after a look into Heaven like a south-side Chicago kid hankers after a peep into one of the big league ball games. When the teacher asked Johnny if he could have three eyes instead of two where he would want the third one to be, of course he said, "In the end of my finger, so I could stick it through a knot hole in the fence and see the baseball game"; and when one of the huge batters puts a ball over the fence the kid who gets it first has a free passport through the gate, and that's the glory-world for him.

But to think that some day, when He comes, the gates of that celestial place where awaits for the child of GOD all the beauty and joy and glory that the infinite mind of GOD can conceive and the infinite power of GOD can create will swing open on their jeweled hinges and while the angels and arch-angels shout, "Come in," there shall be no one to say, "You must stay out!"

3. And then that meeting in the air means a reunion of the loved ones. Paul told the Thessalonians to stop worrying over their dead because he said if they are asleep in Jesus, they

will be with you when He comes; for, he said, the dead in Christ shall first rise and together with them you shall go to be with the Lord. I pity from the depths of my heart the man who must stand by the open grave and hear the cold clods go rattling down upon the coffin of his loved ones and have no hope of the First Resurrection.

4. And then this meeting means that some of us may never have to die. Every true child of GOD alive at the Coming of CHRIST will be caught up without dying.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Think of it! This poor, crumbling tabernacle of clay changed in the twinkling of an eye into the likeness of CHRIST's own glorious body!

Look at that bent and withered old man hobbling along, blind possibly and led by a child. Look at that poor, bed-ridden saint worn out by disease and long years of awful pain. Look at that poor, demented and raving lunatic, beating the bars of his prison cage; I know it is hard to understand, but he is a child of GOD, an heir to glory; and lo, suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, when JESUS comes, the palsy is gone, the disease is swallowed up, the mind is touched with the illuminating finger of GOD and wrinkles and pains and aches and mental ravings will be gone forever!

"Oh Joy! Oh delight, should we go without dying,
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying;
Caught up through the clouds with our Lord into glory,
When JESUS receives His own."

When will it be?

I don't know. Will I be among the living? I don't know; I hope so.

The Devil seems to be having his way with a good deal of life today. But that doesn't matter. It's today even as Peter said it would be: "**There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.**"

But don't get an idea that this is going to interfere with the Lord's coming. We are not told that all must first be converted. When the last soul is saved that goes to complete His body, He is going to come. Its just like a man stepping into a pitch dark room and all he has to do is to touch a button and the light will flash and the whole thing is changed. And just that quick can CHRIST break in upon this old world and flood it with the light of eternal glory.

The Bible says, "**Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.**" GOD help us to get ready.

5. And then think what all this will mean for the man who is not a Christian, If only the Christian

is changed and taken up to meet the Lord, what then becomes of the unbeliever who is alive when this wonderful rapture take place? Why, he is left behind, of course.

In Matthew it is said that the return of CHRIST will be as it was in the days of Noah: eating and drinking and not caring a rap about what GOD says: but suddenly the Son of Man comes, and "Then," says Matthew, "**shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.**"

But now we are at a point where opinions differ.

The Bible speaks of a time when universal peace shall reign and righteousness shall prevail. Because of Revelation 20:4 we call it the "Millennium," which is the Latin term for "one thousand years."

Some people think the Millennium is already here.

Because culture and knowledge have been on the increase and discovery has brought us radium and science has brought us the air-ship and wireless telegraphy and because slavery and the saloon and child labor have been abolished and all sorts of reform have been brought about, they think the Millennium is here and that we are living in it now.

Of course this view is hardly worth noticing.

Science never made a saint and all the libraries that Andrew Carnegie's millions ever built never did and never could give a man a clean heart. During the Millennium the Devil is to be bound: that is, he is to be deprived of his power. Well, if the Devil is bound now, I would hate to live in this world when he is loose.

The race has improved in a general way, but it is in a bad fix spiritually. The spirit of the world with its lust has crept into the Church and almost eaten out its heart. Then look at the vice and the divorce and the anarchy and the war. We have just finished the bloodiest war the world has ever known. Crime is holding high carnival; graft and every sort of corruption flourishes like a greenbay tree. And do you mean to tell me that the Millennium is here now because we are all so nice and so good?

Some people think the Millennium is far away in the future, and that the world is going to get better and better until the thousand years, or some period of peace and righteousness is ushered in and at the end of which JESUS will come, all in the grave, both good and bad, will be raised and the end of the world will be here. This is known as the Post-millennium view because it puts the coming of JESUS after the Millennium. It is the evolutionary view, the view of continuous progress and development. It is the natural view for the natural man to take. It is the way man would have done it had it been left for man to bring it about.

This view however is a rather discouraging one when you look at the spiritual condition of the world today. We have been at this business of converting the world for two thousand years and nine-tenths of it is unchristian yet. There isn't a single village in all the world that has yet been converted, and if we have been two thousand years doing the very little we have done, I would

like to ask how many more thousands of years at this rate it is going to take us to convert all the world or even a goodly part of it.

Then again JESUS said that just before His coming the world is to be very wicked; sin and iniquity are to abound and a time of great tribulation is to prevail. He says also that the tares and the wheat are to "**grow together until the harvest** (the end)"; and so we know that the world will be made up of the wicked as well as the good when the end time comes. He also told us to "**watch**" for He is to come in such an hour as we know not. But if He is not to come until after the Millennium, and only after the world or a goodly part of it has been converted, the admonition to "**watch**" has absolutely no significance for you or for me.

Then again Paul says that before JESUS comes there shall be a great "**falling away**." He says that in the last days "**perilous times shall come**" and "**evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse**." We frankly confess that there are a few verses in the Bible which seem to favor the post-millennial view, but by far the larger number of verses seems to be utterly irreconcilable with it.

There is therefore a third view. It is that JESUS will come before the Millennium, and usher it in and reign over the earth during this time. This is called the Premillennial view. There isn't the least particle of doubt but that Paul and John and the Disciples thought that CHRIST might come in their day and that they hoped He would. They never said that they believed He would come in their day, but how could they have thought it even possible that He might so come unless His coming was to be and so is to be before the Millennium.

Listen to Dean Alford, one of the greatest Greek scholars the world has ever known. He says, "The majority both in number and in learning and research adopt the premillennial advent, following as it seems to me, the plain and undeniable sense of the sacred text of the Bible itself."

The entire church up to the middle of the third century believed that JESUS was to come before the Millennium.

Nearly all the missionaries and nearly all the evangelists believe it today, and the vast majority of church leaders from Luther to Wesley and Spurgeon and Speer and Mott have believed it as do and have done the majority of exegetes and commentators on the Word of GOD.

Well, if JESUS is coming before the Millennium, then what? He is coming back with the saints, who were caught up to meet Him in the air, to establish His millennial reign. But before this takes place all hell is going to break loose on earth. It is called the time of "**great Tribulation**," Matthew says. "**Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.**" And Matthew says, "**Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.**" But GOD in His mercy will cut them short.

You know the Jews are fast going back to Palestine and it is during these tribulation years that they are to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. It is during these years that the Anti-Christ will come; some man, some imperial personage, who is to be the incarnation of the sum total of all wickedness. This Anti-Christ is to be supernaturally endowed by the Devil. The Bible says, "**He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the**

sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwelleth on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do."

The Jews will doubtless think him to be their Messiah and will enter into a covenant with him. He will go into the temple and as Paul says, "**He as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**" An image of himself will be set up and whoever refuses to worship the image is put to death. This Anti-Christ midway in the Time of Tribulation will be revealed as the "**Man of Sin,**" and when the Jews turn against him two thirds of them are to be destroyed, but at last the Lord JESUS crashes forth with power and great glory "**taking vengeance on them that know not God,**" and "**Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming,**" and the reign of the Son of GOD shall be established upon the earth.

During this reign of the Lord the Devil is to be bound and the SPIRIT of GOD shall have unhindered sway among the people of the earth. The Jews are then to become missionaries of the Cross, preachers of righteousness, evangelists, and nations shall be born in a day.

So you see there is a twofold coming of the Lord; a coming for His people to gather them all up unto Himself, and at this coming no eye but that of the redeemed shall see Him; but this is not all; He is also to come with His people to judge the wicked nations and to rule the earth; this is His "**coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**" when, as the Bible says, "**every eye shall see Him.**"

Should His coming take place soon, would you go with Him or would you be left behind? And as GOD has warned you, so I say to you again tonight, "**Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.**"

And there are signs that seem to say that the time is almost at hand.

1. Matthew says, "**This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.**"

That has practically been done, and if it hasn't, it soon will be. Missionaries are going everywhere and there is an open door to every nation that was once shut against the Gospel.

2. Paul says, "**This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.**" It may be worse yet, as some are inclined to think, but GOD knows it's bad enough now. Look at the anarchy and nihilism openly boasting to blow into smithereens the present forms of government. Men's hearts fail them for fear of what is about to come upon them. Look at the lawlessness and the social unrest and the nations of the world armed to the teeth and flying at each other's throat, and then tell me the times are not already perilous.

3. And then Paul says the coming of the Lord will not take place, "**except there come a falling away first.**" Well, it's begun. There's a falling away in godliness and a falling away in faith.

People profess godliness but practice godlessness. It says that in the last days, "**Men shall... [have] a form of godliness, but [deny] the power thereof.**" Church members are reading

novels and letting their Bibles mildew. For thousands of them the church is little more than an institution of respectability. They're quoting the Apostle's Creed and traveling the broad way on a gallop in worldliness while they're doing it. The church is soaked with the world.

The people who observe lent have that much in their favor at least over most of the rest of us, but I don't know what many of them would do if they died outside of it. Becoming pious for forty days and refraining from the Devil's devices most assuredly does not give us a warrant for becoming impious for ten months and two weeks and going to the Devil on the same old road we left for lent.

And then GOD pity some of the preachers - putting smoke rooms, dance halls and theaters within the very walls of the house of GOD! I know a church officer who put on a dress and blackened himself up as a Negro woman and with the pastor and other officers pulled off a theatrical stunt in church to raise a little money for church debts.

In a church a short while ago the women and girls sat on the floor with a curtain down at their ankle and the men picked their partners for the oyster supper by the looks of their feet. Then the curtain would go up, and, Good Night!

Up in a certain town in New York the church gave a fair and the Ladies Aid Society had a tent on which this announcement was displayed, "Miss Emily Lawson will sell kisses - Price 25c each," The kisses went like hot cakes and the management had taken in nearly fifty dollars and would have made the organization rich had it not been for one man who said after parting with his quarter, "The only trouble with that girl's kisses is that she needs a shave." This caused the tent to be raided and the alleged Miss Lawson turned out to be a man in disguise. And so the thing that was immoral on the face of it turned out to be a dirty fraud in the bargain. And all this in the name of CHRIST!

I could keep you all night telling you things like that. In the name of GOD where are we coming to?

And then there's a falling away in faith. Paul says, "**Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.**"

It's all here today; Spiritualism, Christian Science, Theosophy, Unitarianism, all alike denying the deity of CHRIST and His atonement and making man his own savior. Never such an espousal of lies as we see today! GOD pity the church when she seems to be afraid of the supernatural. That's why we have such men as Dr. Eliot with his creedless religion of the future. How many infidels and skeptics do you suppose there are in the pulpits of our land today knifing the fundamentals of the Christian faith and hiding behind that devilish and yet euphonious thing they call "Modern Scholarship," which is generally little more than reformed Hinduism with just about enough Christianity in it to keep it above water.

"Except there come a falling away!" If it isn't here, it's coming mighty fast.

4. Then, once more, JESUS said about His coming that when the Jewish nation began to show

signs of revived national life, when the fig tree "**putteth forth leaves**," then, look out! "**Know**," said He, that "**it is nigh, even at the doors.**"

And what is the meaning of all this stir among the Jews? They are going back to Jerusalem. Every morning in every clime and nation, wherever the orthodox Jew is scattered, he lifts his voice and prays for his return to Palestine and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The Zionist movement has been organized with a capital of \$50,000,000.00 to help the Jews back to the land that GOD once gave them. They are pouring back by the thousands and they'll be there when Jesus comes.

These are some of the reasons why it seems to me that the last times are not so very far away.

But no matter, GOD has told us to watch and be ready. "**Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.**"

And John says, "**Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.**"

The church is the Bride of CHRIST and if she really believed the Bridegroom was coming, don't you think she would watch and don't you think she would keep herself pure? Wouldn't you, if you were betrothed and your lover said, "Good bye, I'm going for awhile to get a house ready and I'll come again and take you with me," what would you do? Would you begin to make goo goo eyes at every fellow you meet on the street and soil your good name while he was away? No! a thousand times, No! You'd keep yourself pure. The smile of the other fellow wouldn't have any charm for you.

But you'd lie down at night with sweet thoughts of him; you'd dream of him and your first thought in the morning would be of him. You'd say, "He may come today." And the whistle of every train would send a thrill through your heart.

JESUS is coming again and the question for you to decide is, Are you ready? If you are and you die before He comes it means for you the bursting of the bars of death on the morning of the First Resurrection; and if you are alive it will mean for you that marvelous change in the twinkling of an eye, and together we'll be caught up into the air and live and reign with CHRIST a thousand years.

But what if you are not a Christian? Well, if you are not a Christian and are dead when He comes, it will mean for you a thousand years more in the grave until you hear the trump of GOD and come forth unto the resurrection of damnation, when the world will end and Heaven and hell will begin to end no more forever. And if you are not a Christian and are alive when He comes, GOD only knows what it is to mean "**One shall be taken, and the other left.**"

One of the thrilling episodes of English history was the siege of Lucknow. We are told how a small army of English soldiers were in the garrison when it was surrounded by a band of 30,000 blood-thirsty savages crying for vengeance and filling the air with war-cries and terrifying shrieks. By the aid of some trickery and skillful maneuvering the English managed to slip quietly

away. But one of their number was left behind. When his companions stole away he was busy elsewhere and when he discovered his horrible plight he found himself alone in the garrison with 30,000 ferocious, blood-thirsty savages yelling for the sight of a white man's face and for the taste of a white man's blood. But he too managed to get away, and when he caught up at last with his fleeing companions his hair had turned white with fright and when they asked him for his name, it had gone from his mind and he did not know. He had been left behind. He had been left behind. "**Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.**"

GOD pity you if you are not ready when He comes.

Come, give yourself to CHRIST now. Be on the safe side. Purify yourself by the hope of His coming. Get right with GOD and, "**Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.**"

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

~ end of chapter 5 ~
