

WHEN THE KING COMES BACK

by

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INTRODUCTION

FOR VARIOUS REASONS, books on prophetic subjects are pouring from the presses of England and the United States more frequently than ever before. If one includes all the subjects of biblical prophecy, the Second Advent of CHRIST, the kingdom of GOD, eschatology, and books treating of the future from a somewhat secular standpoint, I believe he will find that a new book in this area now appears every thirty-six hours. In addition to these, there are innumerable periodical articles being published, some of them of great importance. Works on biblical eschatology are being written by four different groups of men.

First of all, there is the group which writes from a standpoint of severe critical scholarship, interested in the more profound theological implications of eschatology, and taking into account the latest theories of both Old and New Testament criticism. This group would include Barth, Brunner, Bultmann, Dibelius, and many others. Whatever the conclusions of these authors might be, their writings are exercising a great influence in the thought of Western Christendom today. Dr. Smith makes no pretense of writing from this viewpoint.

At the other extreme are those who write to defend or expound the fantastic eschatological views of many of our modern cults, such as the Anglo-Israelites, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, and many smaller circles of self-styled students of prophecy. However wide be the contemporary influence of these writers, their books are ephemeral, and the sequence of historical events compel constant revisions and frequent apologies. This type of literature can be ignored.

A third group writing on prophetic subjects is made up of men who, though passing by what might be called the critical problems of biblical investigation, have given their lives to the careful, reverent study of the prophetic Scriptures, and who prayerfully and carefully attempt to set forth what the Word of GOD has to say regarding certain aspects of the future, concerning which, after all, we have no certainty apart from what is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Among these would be Ironside, Haldeman, G. H. Lang, Pantton, etc., etc.

Finally, there is a fourth group, not exactly synonymous with the third, though certain

individuals may be found in both, composed of that small band of outstanding leaders of evangelical Christianity, who, through many years of abundantly fruitful ministry, of nights of prayer, and weeks and months of preaching, through their great passion for missions, and intimate knowledge of world conditions, are able to express mature convictions regarding the significance of the prophetic Scriptures. My beloved friend, the author of this small book now offered to the public, certainly belongs in both of these last-named classifications of writers.

One will read this volume with far greater interest if he has some preliminary knowledge of the author. Dr. Oswald J. Smith, born in 1889, has produced this volume after reaching the age of sixty, and, what is more, after preaching the Gospel with power over a period of forty-six years, beginning when eighteen years of age. He comes to the study of the Word of GOD with full equipment. He not only attended lectures in the Toronto Bible College and other institutes of biblical training in North America, and was graduated from McCormick Theological Seminary.

While many who are gifted in writing and in the interpretation of the Scriptures have never ministered to large congregations, and, I think, need not apologize for this, the author of this book has had a ministry identified with large audiences from the time he was a young man preaching in Chicago, and then in Los Angeles; in fact, it is commonly understood that the church which he served as pastor in Los Angeles - I need not give the name here - near the beginning of our century, has never since experienced the life, and attendance, which it knew under the leadership of this young minister.

Since 1930, he has been the well-known pastor of The Peoples Church, Toronto, Canada. The auditorium accommodates some two thousand people, and there is rarely a Sunday that it is not filled to capacity at both morning and evening services, except during July and August, an unusual phenomenon in our day, especially north of the Mason-Dixon Line (and something not too frequently seen even in the "Bible Belt"). Here in California, I often drive by churches which, though they have two or three thousand members on their respective rolls, have neither a Sunday evening service nor a prayer meeting, from January to December, year after year!

To preach for a quarter of a century to a congregation like Dr. Smith's would be enough for most men in a lifetime, but not for him, who, with a burning passion for the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world, has made nine world tours to visit the mission stations of our globe, and has a church which now gives nearly three hundred thousand dollars annually to missions, and which participates in the support of over three hundred and fifty missionaries. The correspondence alone for this kind of work must be enormous.

Probably no man living in North America today, still active in the Christian ministry, has brought inspiration and vision to as many men and women concerning the missionary obligation resting upon the Church of CHRIST as Dr. Oswald Smith. Some years ago my friend, Dr. Harold J. Ockenga, told me that his own great missionary program became the powerful, dominating factor in their church through the annual visits of Dr. Smith to lead the missionary conferences at Park Street Church in Boston.

In addition to his preaching, his world tours, and his missionary activities, Dr. Smith has had time, energy, and vision for writing twenty books, and over six hundred hymns, poems, and Gospel songs. There is probably no song book, for general use in church and Sunday School, being published today, that does not include one or more of these hymns, some of which will be

used until our Lord returns. I need not go into a discussion of them in this brief prefatory word. How many hundreds of thousands of people have been blessed and inspired by the author's writings, I do not know.

Personally, I shall never forget when, as a pastor in Covington, Virginia, a copy of his book, *The Work GOD Blesses*, fell into my hands. I could not get away from it for months and months after reading it, as also his work, *The Revival We Need*. My only regret is that the deep effect that these books have had upon me has not resulted in a far greater evangelistic ministry during my own lifetime.

It is not my purpose here to try to discover the secret of a life of such abundant ministry. In reading his autobiography, *What Hath GOD Wrought!* however, I came upon one experience after another, from the time he was a young man down to these later years, in which, on his knees before GOD, he would dedicate and rededicate his life. Friends who know Dr. Smith more intimately than I do say that he spends the first part of each day in prayer.

All who know my writings, and especially the prefaces written to various books through the years, are aware that I am not one given to carelessly uttered eulogies, but my amazement at what Dr. Smith has accomplished compels me to write as I have done in this preface.

This is the author's third book on prophecy. It is clear, biblical, inspiring, and most appropriate for an hour such as this. When a servant of GOD has been a lifelong student of the Holy Scriptures, has, for over forty years, engaged in a ministry which has been constantly attended by the presence and power of the HOLY SPIRIT, has been the instrument through whom GOD has brought many into a living relationship with CHRIST, and has sent many out to the four corners of the earth to preach the Gospel, I am not only willing, but compelled at least to listen to what such a man has to say about the prophetic Scriptures. This is doubly true when, as with Dr. Smith, he is riding no hobbies, is presenting no fantastic theories, and is setting no dates.

This volume has two primary and most commendable characteristics: First of all, it centers in the person of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and, secondly, it is saturated with the Word of GOD. Just this week I have read three articles brought together in a well-known theological quarterly, in which three professors in divinity schools in our country, two of them being of international reputation, discuss "CHRIST, the Hope of the World." In not one of these articles is a single verse quoted from the New Testament in which the word "**hope**" appears; nor do any of the authors seem to know anything about, or at least look for, the return of CHRIST.

In all discussions on prophetic themes, the major business of any writer or teacher is to examine what the Word of GOD has to say. This is exactly what Dr. Smith has done in his discussion of the coming King. It is a pleasure and privilege to commend the book in a prefatory word. May the Lord use it to persuade many to follow the Bereans of old, who examined the Scriptures to see if these things be true.

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