**“The Promise of His Coming,” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 3, 11.**

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That there was once upon this earth a man called Jesus of Nazareth, scarcely anyone will now deny. Whatever conflicting views different ones may hold concerning his nature and office, all agree on this one fact. That he was taken, “and by wicked hands crucified and slain,” is quite generally conceded. All, however, are not aware that the admission of these facts is virtually an admission of the inspiration of the Bible, but so it is. Those very things, which no human wisdom could foresee, were recorded by holy prophets hundreds of years before they occurred. This fact shows that those prophets were inspired, or, as Peter declares, they “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.1}

But this much being true, we must admit further that that which they wrote of the mission of Jesus was also true. Paul sums it up in brief when he says that “to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts 10:43. Christ is, then, as all Christians agree, the “only begotten Son of God;” he is “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;” he is the divine Word that, having been with God in the beginning, was made flesh and dwelt upon the earth. John 1. The incidents of his life, his subjection to his parents, his baptism, his temptation in the wilderness, his wonderful teachings, his marvelous miracles showing at once his tenderness and his power, his betrayal and crucifixion, and finally his triumphant resurrection and ascension to heaven,-these are familiar to hundreds of thousands. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.2}

Aside from his wonderful sacrifice, which demands the unending love of all creatures, the character of Jesus as a man was most lovable. His disciples who had been with him night and day for more than three years, had learned to love him devotedly, both for what he was and what he promised them. On him all their hopes centered. Their feelings were well expressed by Peter, who, when they were asked if they would leave Jesus, said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” We can imagine, then, to some extent, their grief when Jesus said to them: “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.” John 13:33. It was the blasting of all their hopes; their hearts were filled with anguish. Jesus, whom they loved, was to go away, and even though they should lay down their lives for him, he would not take them along. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.3}

But the compassionate Saviour would not leave his children in torturing suspense. Noticing their despondent looks, he said: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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.” John 14:1-3. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.4}

“Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” What can these words mean, but that the words which he was about to utter were the words of God himself, true and unchangeable? Whatever this promise means, then, it will as surely be fulfilled as that God is a God of truth. We can rely upon it implicitly. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.5}

And now as to the meaning of the promise. How could it be made more clear? The gist of it is contained in these simple words: “I will come again.” He was here then, a real being. The word “again,” meaning “once more,” implies a repetition of the same thing. That is, that he would come in the same form in which he then was,-glorified, of course, as we shall see,-but a real, tangible being,-Jesus of Nazareth. There is a great deal contained in the three verses which we have quoted, but at present we are concerned only with the simple fact that Christ has pledged his word to come again. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.6}

The time which Jesus spent on this earth, from his birth in Bethlehem until his ascension from the Mount of Olives, is known as the first advent, or coming of Christ. There is no question but that he had been upon the earth many times before, but that was his first appearance in connection with the great plan of salvation. And so, although he has since been on earth continuously, by his representative, the Holy Spirit, his second coming must be limited to that one mentioned in the promise, “I will come *again*.” This promise cannot be fulfilled by anything except by his personal presence in glory. It will be his second coming in connection with the great plan of salvation-this time to complete the work by taking his people to himself. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.7}

That we are not mistaken in saying that Christ in comforting his disciples, gave promise of a second coming, is proved by the words of Paul, in Hebrews 9:27, 28: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” This places the matter beyond dispute. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.8}

This text also settles another much mooted question, that of a future probation. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment.” How long after death the Judgment takes place must be determined by other texts. The general truth is stated that men die but once, and that after that their future fate is determined by the Judgment. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” That is, since men have but one life,-one probation,-which ends with their death, so Christ was only once offered. His offering had reference only to men in this present life. If man was to have two or more probations, then it would be necessary for two or more offerings to be made in his behalf; but there was only one offering. At his advent, Christ was offered “to bear the sins of many.” The Lord “laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:6. “In his own body” he bore our sins on the tree. 1 Peter 2:24. In order to save us from sin, he was made to be sin (2 Corinthians 5:21); the innocent One was counted as guilty in order that the guilty might be accounted innocent. The benefits of this sacrifice are now free to all who will accept it, while Jesus is pleading its merits before the Father. But when he comes “the second time,” he will be “without sin;” he will then no longer act as substitute for sinners; no longer will he assume any responsibility in their behalf. The sins of the righteous will have been blotted out, and those of the impenitent rolled back upon their own heads. There can then be no more probation for them unless Christ should again take upon himself their sins and make another sacrifice; for there is no salvation in any other. Acts 4:12. And since Christ makes but one offering, it follows that their sins remain upon them, to sink them into perdition. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.9}

In the texts already quoted, there is sufficient proof that the promised coming is not at the death of the saints, neither the conversion of sinners. He appears “to them that look for him;” to those who “love his appearing.” And this coming is not death, for it is only the “second” coming; if death were that coming, then there would be many millions of comings, for not an instant of time passes in which men do not die. He said that he would come “again;” now we submit that this can with no propriety be applied to death, unless his first coming was death, and they were all dead when he was speaking for “again” signifies repetition. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.10}

But we have an inspired comment on this point in the last chapter of John. Christ had just signified to Peter by what death he should glorify God, when that disciple, turning about, saw John following, and asked, “What shall this man do?” “Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.” Verse 22. Now if the coming of Christ is at the death of his saints, these words of Christ are equivalent to this: “If I will that he live until he dies, what is that to thee?” But such a substitution makes utter nonsense of the passage. Then when Christ spoke of his coming, he had no reference whatever to death. This will be still more evident as we consider texts that describe the manner of his coming. {BEST November 1888, p. 170.11}