

**“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”
(Rev 22:12)**

✠ Lecture II: The Second Coming & the Events that Precede It ✠

The first coming or advent of Lord Jesus Christ consists of the period starting from His Holy Nativity and ending by His Holy Ascension to heaven. Nevertheless, Lord Jesus Christ is Omnipresent; He is present in all places at all times:

- “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Mt 18:20)
- “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20)

Moreover, we have His Sacramental presence in the Church through the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist where His Holy Body and Precious Blood are offered as real food and drink to the believers in all places throughout the ages. There was also another “presence” for our Lord Jesus Christ when His kingdom was presented with power (Mk 9:1; Lk 9:27):

- “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” (Mt 16:28)

This coming of Lord Jesus Christ was manifest on two events, which took place in the first century, due to which His Kingdom was presented with power through the preaching of the Holy Gospel:

1. The Destruction of Jerusalem:

On the year 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple according to the words of our Lord; “Your house is left to you desolate.” (Mt 23:38; Lk 13:35) The punishment of the city of Jerusalem by destruction is considered a “coming” of Lord Jesus Christ for Judgment to the city that rejected Him:

- “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” (Mt 10:23)
- “This generation will by no means pass away till all things take place.” (Lk 21:32)

Notice that Lord Jesus Christ spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in conjunction with His Second and Final coming for Judgment (Mt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21). Thus the events of the destruction of the city may be considered as symbolic to the Second Coming.

2. The Pouring of the Holy Spirit:

Joel the Prophet prophesied about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the last days, “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.” (Joel 2:31) – Thus, the fulfillment of our Lord’s promise to receive the Holy Spirit was a kind of judgment to the world who rejected Him by distinguishing the believers and rewarding them by the gift of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Church Fathers have considered the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost a “coming” or “presence” of Lord Jesus Christ Himself with power.

St. Athanasius comments on the words of our Lord “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8) by saying, ‘what is this power except the Son Himself – “Christ the power of God” (1 Cor 1:24)’ [Against the Arians 3:48] Hence, the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise is accomplished by His “coming” through the Holy Spirit, “to be strengthened with might [power] through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell [come] in your hearts through faith” (Eph 3:16,17) – For Lord Jesus Christ is the power that we put on in baptism, “as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal 3:27) Interestingly, the Coptic Church considers Pentecost as a feast pertaining to Lord Jesus Christ.

✚ The Time of the Second Coming:

Lord Jesus Christ emphasized the element of surprise associated with His Second Coming and that the date will remain unknown:

- “You also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Mt 24:44)
- “Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.” (Mk 13:32)
- “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming – in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning – lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.” (Mk 13:35-37)
- “Behold, I am coming as a thief.” (Rev 16:15)
- “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.” (Acts 1:7)
- “That day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” (Mt 24:36)
- “That day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, **nor the Son**, but only the Father.” (Mk 13:32) – Review lecture VIII of CHRISTOLOGY “*Things Hard to understand...*”

✚ The Events that Precede the Second Coming:

It is noteworthy at this point to say that while reading about these events we should keep in mind the above verses that emphasize the element of surprise associated with the Second Coming, also we need to keep in mind that some of these events may have already taken place and they may be repeated again. Likewise, some events may have taken place symbolically or may be repeated as such.

1. The Times of Restoration of All Things:

These times extend from the Ascension of Lord Jesus Christ till His Second Coming as St. Peter said, “whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21) – However, these times of restoration have started also since the days of St. John the Baptist as Lord Jesus Christ said, “Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him.” (Mt 17:11,12) – This is the “time of reformation” (Heb 9:10) that extends until the Second Coming.

2. The Conversion of the Jews:

St. Paul said, “the blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved ...” (Rom 11:25,26) – The return of the Jews by forming their own state is also consistent with the words of the Lord, “They will ... be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Lk 21:24)

3. General Events (Mt 24:3-28; Mk 13:3-23; Lk 21:5-24):

- The Beginning of Sorrows:
 - a) False Christs
 - b) Wars and rumors of wars
 - c) Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes
- The spread of the Gospel to all the world
- The great tribulation:
 - a) False Christs, false prophets
 - b) The love of many will grow cold
 - d) The general falling away
 - e) The Antichrist

St. John said, “It is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists [heretics] have come, by which we know that it is the last hour... he is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:18)

4. The Antichrist:

- “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (2 Thess 2:3,4)
- The Holy Book of Revelation speaks of a “beast” coming out of the earth (Rev 13:11) with number 666 being the number of his name (Rev 13:18) – for every alphabet has a numerical value and thus by adding the values of the name of this man it will add up to 666.
- It has been speculated that this man would be from the tribe of Dan because it was said “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider shall fall backward. I have waited for your salvation, O lord!” (Gen 49:17,18) – Moreover, the name of Dan was omitted from the list of the tribes of Israel mentioned in the Holy Book of Revelation (Rev 7:4-8)

For more about the Antichrist, consult:

- M. Rist, “Antichrist”. In *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Abington U.S.A. 1962, Twelfth Printing 1981, vol. I, pp. 140-143.
- W. Bousset, “Antichrist”, in *ERE*, vol. I, pp.578-581.

Q1: I heard that the rapture would be before the great tribulation. Is this true?

A1: No it is not true.

→ The rapture as explained in Lecture I above, will take place after the great tribulation, on Judgment Day. However, some Protestant sects teach that the believers are going to be removed from the earth prior to the great tribulation. This teaching is false for the following reasons:

- Lord Jesus Christ said about the tribulation, “unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” (Mt 24:22) – It is obvious that the elect will be present on earth during the tribulation and that it will be shorten for their sake.
- The Holy Book of Revelation said about the Antichrist, “It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.” (Rev 13:7) – The presence of saints during the time of the Antichrist that is the great tribulation proves that there is no such thing as pre-tribulation rapture for believers.
- St. Paul said, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...” (1 Cor 15:51,52) – It is quite obvious that the last trumpet is after the great tribulation and consequently the rapture is also after the great tribulation, on the Last Day.
- The pre-tribulation rapture for the saints is inconsistent with the words of Lord Jesus Christ in the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, “Let both [good & evil] grow together until the harvest [Last Day], and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” (Mt 13:30) – obviously the saints and the evil will remain together in the world until the Judgment Day and since the great tribulation precedes the judgment, then the pre-tribulation rapture is radically wrong.

Q2: What is the meaning then of this verse, “Two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.” (Mt 24:40,41)

A2: Our Lord spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews in conjunction with His words about the Last Day. Now the above verses pertain to the exile of the Jews because on the Last Day no one will be left behind. Our Lord also said in the same chapter, “Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.” (Mt 24:20) yet we know that no one will flee on the Last Day however it is conceivable that some can flee exile.

* This lecture is adapted from *‘The Salvation that We Are awaiting – Book III’* by Fr. Shenouda Maher.