

IN SUCH A TIME

THE SON OF MAN COMING AT AN UNEXPECTED TIME

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:42-44).

Following a ministry lasting about three and one-half years, climaxed by His rejection, death, burial, and resurrection, Christ ministered to His disciples for a short period of time before His ascension. He spent forty days teaching His disciples “things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

Then, after instructing them to wait in Jerusalem, explaining the reason, Christ, as the disciples watched, ascended into heaven from the Mt. of Olives (Acts 1:3-9).

Christ, during His earthly ministry, spoke of the day when He would depart (John 14:2, 3). Mark briefly mentions Christ’s departure at the end of his gospel, Luke briefly mentions this at the end of his gospel and at the beginning of Acts, and Paul mentions this in his first epistle to Timothy (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:2, 9; I Tim. 3:16).

Actually, very little is stated in Scripture about Christ’s departure. Only the bare facts are given. *The emphasis is upon His return, not upon His departure.*

His return and things having to do with His return are seen throughout Scripture, beginning with the manner in which Scripture is structured in the opening thirty-four verses of Genesis (Gen. 1:1-2:3).

(Note that Gen. 1:1-2:3 sets forth a skeletal framework upon which all subsequent Scripture rests. The whole panorama of Scripture is set forth after the preceding fashion in these opening thirty-four verses, with the remainder of Scripture providing all the sinews, flesh, and skin to clothe the initial skeletal framework, *i.e.*, the remainder of Scripture simply provides commentary for the opening thirty-four verses [*cf.* Ezek. 37:1ff].

There are six days of redemptive [restorative] work, foreshadowing 6,000 years of redemptive [restorative] work, followed by a seventh day, foreshadowing a seventh 1,000-year period of rest [II Peter 1:16-18; 3:8].

And, subsequent commentary — the sinews, flesh, and skin — call attention not only to Christ’s first coming during the six days [during the 6,000 years] but His second coming at the end of these six days, to reign during the seventh day [during the seventh 1,000-year period].

Thus, everything was set and established in an unchangeable manner, through this septenary structure, at the very beginning of Scripture.)

Christ, calling attention to His soon departure in John chapter fourteen, and Luke’s account of His departure in Acts, both have corresponding statements about His return.

Christ’s promise that He would return in John chapter fourteen can only have to do with *His return for the Church (preceding the Tribulation)*, called into existence shortly afterwards in Acts chapter two.

But the statement concerning His return in Acts chapter one, given by two men who were present, could only have to do with *His return to Israel, with the nations in view (following the Tribulation)*.

In the former, Christ returns to take His disciples to the place where He would be, in the heavens (John 14:3); in the latter, Christ returns with outstretched hands to bless the nation to which He is returning, the nation of Israel here on the earth (*cf.* Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9-11), with blessings then flowing out to

the nations through Israel (Gen. 12:1-3).

And the preceding (returning both before and following the Tribulation) should be viewed as *one return of Christ*, not two returns. Christ’s return has *two aspects to it* — one relative to *the Church* and the other relative to *Israel*, with the nations also in view.

The matter is much like the gospel, the good news. There is *one complete gospel, with different aspects to the good news*, not two gospels.

The initial aspect has to do with *the good news concerning the grace of God, which has to do with the unsaved*, and is foreshadowed by that Divine restorative work seen on day one in Genesis chapter one.

The continuing aspect has to do with *the good news concerning the coming Glory of Christ, which has to do with the saved*, and is foreshadowed by that Divine restorative work seen on days two through six in Genesis chapter one.

And restorative works throughout all six days are with a view to the seventh day seen beginning the second chapter, with the complete six days leading into the seventh, forming, as previously stated, a septenary structure upon which the whole of subsequent Scripture rests.

And there are two inseparably related ways to view this septenary structure:

One way has to do with *six being man’s number and God’s work during the six days having to do with restoring ruined man throughout Man’s Day. And this is with a view to matters being finished preceding a seventh day of rest.*

And the other way has to do with *the time involved in this restorative work. These six days of restorative work foreshadow 6,000 years of restorative work (occurring throughout Man’s 6,000-year Day), with a view to this work being finished preceding a seventh 1,000-year period of rest.*

Any way that the matter is viewed, everything moves toward that *seventh day*. “Six” is an *incomplete number*, one short of *completion*. And all of God’s works must be brought to *completion*, which can only be done with a view to a *seventh day, a seventh 1,000-year period of rest, wherein completion lies.*

Christ's Return for His Church

How close are we to the end of the sixth day, the sixth 1,000-year period? Time can only be fast running out, and we can only be much closer to the end of six days, 6,000 years, than individuals dare to imagine.

Three dispensations of 2,000 years each comprise Man's 6,000-year Day, corresponding to the three divisions of mankind — *Jew, Gentile, and Christian*.

The first dispensation (Gentile), from Adam to Abraham, has run its course. The second dispensation (Jewish), from Abraham to the Messianic Kingdom, has seven years to run (the coming seven-year Tribulation). Time during this dispensation was stopped seven years short of completion, and God began to deal with Christians for a third 2,000-year dispensation, which is almost complete.

Once the present dispensation has run its course, the Church will be removed, God will turn back to Israel and complete the last seven years of the prior dispensation, and Christ's return in possession of the kingdom (with all ensuing events leading into the kingdom) will follow.

1) Condition of the Church in That Day

Conditions in Christendom in that day will be exactly in line with how Scripture stated that they would exist at the end of the present dispensation — Christians, enmeshed in the things of the world, paying little to no attention to the times in which we live, putting that day far from them.

Accordingly, that day will overtake many Christians *unaware*. Numerous Christians will be very much like the people during Noah's day, *eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, with the Flood coming and destroying them all*.

That is to say, most Christians will be going about every day activities, giving little thought to the fact that God is about to once again step into man's affairs and bring about major changes.

God stepped into man's affairs at times in the past, with man totally oblivious to the matter. And God is about to once again step into man's affairs,

with man, once again, totally oblivious to the matter.

Man couldn't do anything about it in the past, aside from suffering the consequences of being unprepared. And man won't be able to do any more about it in the future than in the past; and he, likewise, will suffer the consequences of being unprepared.

2) Two Types of Christians in That Day

When Christ returns for the Church at the end of the present dispensation, all Christians — faithful and unfaithful alike — will be removed to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Many in that day, as previously seen, will be caught *unprepared for that which will have occurred and is about to occur*. And they can only experience the things awaiting unfaithful servants of the Lord, those not having looked for His return and not having conducted their lives accordingly.

Others in that day though will be *prepared for that which will have occurred and is about to occur*. And they will experience the things awaiting faithful servants of the Lord, those having looked for His return and having conducted their lives accordingly.

(For both sides of the preceding picture, note how Paul presented the matter in I Thess. 4:13-5:9.

For comments on this section of Scripture in I Thessalonians, see the author's three pamphlets titled, "The Rapture.")

Christ's Return to Israel, the Nations

Christ's return to the earth at least seven years following His return for and dealings with the Church will occur following Israel's repentance. The severity of particularly the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation will, after 2,600 years of Gentile rule and dominance, bring Israel to the place of repentance. And, true to His many promises, *God will hear, remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and send the Deliverer* (Ex. 2:23-3:12; II Chron. 6:24-27; 7:12-14).

The Deliverer Whom God will send at this time will be the same One Who was present in Israel's midst 2,000 years earlier — the One Whom the Jewish people rejected, spat upon, smote, and crucified (Matt.

26:67; 27:22-25). This is the One Who will appear in Israel's midst in that coming day.

And to better understand exactly what type situation will exist at that time, note two things:

The Jewish people will be placed in *the position of having just crucified their Messiah*.

And not only will the Jewish people be placed in this position, but *every Jew living in that day — no exceptions — will be held personally responsible for Christ's crucifixion*.

On the former, note that God stopped the clock (so to speak) marking off time in the Jewish dispensation at the time of the crucifixion, ushering in a new dispensation fifty-three days later, on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two.

And, with the beginning of the Tribulation, God will re-start the clock (so to speak) marking off time in the Jewish dispensation, completing the last seven years, *placing the Jews alive in that day in the position of having just crucified their Messiah in relation to time in the dispensation*.

On the latter, every Jew alive in that day, regardless of the passing of generations, will be seen by God as directly responsible for "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth," extending all the way back to "the blood of righteous Abel" (Matt. 23:35, 37; cf. Gen. 4:1ff; 45:1-4; Zech. 12:10-14; Matt. 21:33-45; Rev. 1:7, 8).

That foreshadowed by events on the seventh day in Gen. 2:1-3 awaits Israel and the nations (foreshadowed as well by events every time Israel kept the Sabbath [Ex. 31:13-17]). But Israel and the nations must first pass through that which Scripture presents occurring at the end of Man's Day, the Tribulation, Daniel's unfulfilled Seventieth-Week.

The darkest time in man's history (the Tribulation) awaits Israel and the nations, to be followed by *the brightest time in man's history* (the Messianic Era).

And both can only occur in the very near future.

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