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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Eschatology

“Certainty of the Second Coming”

TRANSCRIPT

The subject in the second of our series of studies on prophecy and the church is the Certainty of the Second Coming, and next week, Lord willing, we want to deal with a premillennial calendar of the events of the future. And I would like for you to turn with me in your Bibles to John chapter 14, and I would like for you to listen as we read three verses which are something of a theme for the topic. John 14:1-3. The apostle writes, giving the words of our Lord in the upper room discourse with the eleven,

“Let not your heart be troubled ye believe in God believe also in me.
In my father’s house are many mansions, if 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.”

It’s a striking fact that many of the leading men of our century have expressed the utmost despair in consideration of the world situation. Bertrand Russell, who was, in spite of his unbelief, one of the great minds of the 20th Century, wrote in one of his books a long time ago, “All the labors of believers, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all

the noon day brightness of genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system.” It’s no wonder that in the biography of Bertrand Russell written by his wife that he detailed a long series of accounts of his affairs with women down through the years. A man with that kind of philosophy would probably manifest it in the kind of life that he lived, and so he ate and he drank and he was merry all the days of his life, but now he faces a Great White Throne Judgment.

Will Durant, a philosopher of our century, has said, “It seems impossible any longer to believe in the permanent greatness of man or to give life a meaning that cannot be annulled by death.”

And probably the most popular historian of the 20 Century, H.G. Wells – not too much of a historian by historian standards, but nevertheless a popular historian; probably the envy of a good many historians – wrote in one of his books, “The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded.”

I clipped a clipping out of *Eternity Magazine*. It had to do with Albert Einstein, and in the course of the article, some interesting information was given concerning Einstein. There is no question but that Albert Einstein was one of the great minds of history and his name and fame will be remembered as long as men remember such names of Euclid and Newton. A few days before Einstein died, *Time Magazine* reported that the dean of the St. Louis University Graduate School at the annual convention of the National Catholic Education Association made a strong criticism of the great scientist for sounding off on matters in which he was not famed to speak.

The United States was getting a lot of scientists who started philosophizing at the age of 40 without being trained to do so, the dean said. Einstein, for one, had been speculating about the nature and the existence of God, and the Roman Catholic dean objected to his making an authoritative statement about an absolute. He had no training to talk about the existence of God, he affirmed.

Some years ago Einstein wrote an article concerning religious belief, and in the course of the article he showed that he believed nothing about Christianity, although some Christians have thought that he was attracted to Christianity. And furthermore that he knew very little and believed very little of the Orthodox Jewish faith. He did verify the Bible in one doctrine. In 1935 the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations suggested to Einstein that he should select some great problem that confronted the world and invite some other great figure whom he would name to an exchange of views on the subject, and the question which Einstein elected to pose was, is there any way of delivering mankind from the menace of war? And Einstein chose Professor Sigmund Freud to reply.

And stating the problem Einstein argued that international peace involved the surrender of a certain measure of national sovereignty, and that there was strong psychological factors which caused nations to refuse to make this surrender. He said, and I am quoting, “Evidently man has within him a lust for hatred and destruction.”

Now he probably didn’t know that he was paraphrasing the first verse in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to James, in which James writes these words, “From where come wars and fightings among you? Come they not here, even of your lusts that war in your members.”

A correspondence between Einstein and Freud painted a picture darker and more pessimistic ever painted by any student of Bible prophecy, including the one who is speaking to you tonight. Through sheer logic, out of their unredeemed human nature, these two men Einstein and Freud, brought the reader to the conclusion that war can be ended only if the world sets up a supreme court with force to back its decisions. But as this would mean the surrender of national sovereignty, we are around the circle and back at the beginning. So while the nations rage, the people imagine vain things, and we still are in critical circumstances and there is no hope evidently, for the world.

The hope of the Christian is quite different. His hope gathers around the three great events of Bible prophecy. They are the event of the creation—I say Bible prophecy I mean biblical message—there is the event of the cross and there is the event of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus when he shall set things straight.

Yesterday afternoon I was speaking to Southwestern Orthodontists Association, and I made a statement like that and didn’t realize the pun of setting things straight [laughter], but I want to say that we had a bracing time in the discussion of current affairs in the light of the Bible.

The Bible gathers all of it’s teaching around the creation the cross and the Second Advent, and of course, to understand that central event, the cross, we must also understand one other event the fall of man. So we have in the Bible then the creation, the fall. The cross of the Lord Jesus, in which he lays the foundation for redemption, accomplishes it in the shedding of his precious blood, lays the foundation for the redemption of the whole of this universe which God has created, and ultimately at the Second Advent when he comes, he shall establish his kingdom and in the establishment of his kingdom set straight in history the affairs of men.

But is the Second Advent a certain event? Can we be sure of the second coming of the Lord Jesus? Is it a vain kind of hope that Christians who have read a little bit about the Bible affirm, but they only can rest in and believe? Peter, when he wrote in his second epistle to his readers, said to them, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were witnesses, eyewitnesses of his majesty.” And he refers of course to the great event on the Mt. of Transfiguration when the Lord Jesus was transfigured before Peter James and John, the select three who were told that they would observe our Lord Jesus coming in power and in glory before they would taste death. So those three apostles were given a first hand sense of the certainty of the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now we do not have the privilege that they had. We have however the word of God and we also have the completed revelation. Can we be sure that the Lord Jesus is coming again? That’s the subject I want to speak on in the second in our series on prophecy and the church. And first of all I want to turn to the rational testimony—I’m not really sure that these titles are too accurate, but for the lack of a better word, the rational testimony and capital A in the outline, the logical argument or sin.

Now I want to argue not so much from the statements of Scripture, although I’m going to refer to them, but I want to argue from the fact of sin in the world. And the point I want to argue is simply this. That if we may assume for the purposes of our discussion that God is responsible for the creation in which we live, and if we may assume that the God who created this universe in which we live is a righteous God, is a holy God, is a just God, then we must assume that there is going to be some day coming when he shall right the wrongs that have been accomplished by human sin. The Scriptures affirm this of course. They say such things as, be sure your sin will find you out. They tell us in the second Psalm for example that the nations are raging. The people imagine vain things. They even plot against the Most High. They raise their fists in rebellion against him, but those same Scriptures affirm that he that sitteth in the heavens laughs at their futile attempts to dethrone him, and the time is coming when he shall speak, as we saw last time, but he shall speak in judgment. He is going to straighten out things here upon the earth.

In Romans chapter 2 in verse 6 in the New Testament the Apostle Paul says, concerning God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus, that he will render to every man according to his works. There is going to be a time when all things are going to be set straight, and we are going to discover that God is not only a loving compassionate and affectionate God in heaven, but we are going to discover something that this generation needs to discover, that the God in heaven that is a loving God is also a holy God

righteous God and a just God, and he will in no way diminish his justice in order to express his love and affection.

These attributes of God blend perfectly into the beautiful, perfect character of God. He is just as well as loving. We have thought in the society in which we live that since God is love—that’s a doctrine that anyone is willing to accept—that since God is love his love is so deep and so broad that his love may swallow up to some extent his justice and his holiness. But the world is going to discover that that is not true.

Men sing in evasion, “O the world is getting better growing better everyday, O the world is growing better no matter what they say.” That’s a directive to me, but they’re going to sing a different tune some day. Anne of Austria is reported to have said to Richlieu once, “God does not pay at the end of every day, but at the end he pays,” and sin itself in the universe in which we live argues for the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus in which there is going to be a setting straight of the affairs of this world.

A second argument of a rational testimony, a rational type, is the historical argument—the argument from the teaching of the church fathers. Now I want to say to you just by way of explanation of this argument that in my opinion when we study the Bible we ought to pay a great deal of attention to what the early church fathers have said concerning biblical doctrine. It is customary, and I think unfortunately it is customary for beginning Bible students to take the attitude we have the Bible and since we have discovered the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and we have discovered the gospel and we have often discovered the gospel, contrary to the teaching of the church in which we were raised, we have a tendency to feel that all of professing Christianity, all of what we may call for they lack of a better term, institutional Christianity, must be an error on all points, because they didn’t bring us the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Now that is a sad mistake. It is true that many of us – I know in my case I found the gospel in a sense outside of the church of which I was a member – not wholly in my case, but probably in some of your cases wholly outside the church in which you were

brought up. But we must remember that the Christian church was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it has a lengthy history, and the Holy Spirit has been teaching down through the centuries, not simply in the 20th Century and he has taught down through the centuries in definite ways. And we have committed to us from the earliest members of the Christian church, a body of interpretation of the word of God that is the product of the Spirit’s teaching.

Now we must not think little of what the Holy Spirit has done for 1800 years. It is a form of arrogance to think that he only teaches us and he has not taught others. Now it’s the point of wisdom too to realize that everything must be tested by the Scripture and there are many things that are supposedly the teaching of the Holy Spirit that are not. I am not suggesting in any way we should not test everything by the word of God, but what I am saying is that those individuals who were the earliest members of the body of Christ have the closest access to the teaching of the apostles. What did they think about the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus?

Well, *The Didake*, a teaching document written probably as early as 125 A.D. speaks in this fashion, “Watch over your life but be ready, for ye know not the hour in which your Lord cometh.” So right here in one of the earliest Christian documents, we have an affirmation of faith in the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. This is not something that we have discovered in the 20th Century. It was the belief of the earliest Christians that the Lord Jesus would come, and furthermore, we can tell that he believed that his coming was eminent. That it could occur in their lifetime.

Justin Martyr, the first of the great Christian apologist of the faith, says, “He shall come from heaven with glory.” Justin Martyr believed in the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Areneaus, one of the greatest of the early Christians, one who wrote probably the earliest theological treatise, Areneaus. Barnabas, another outstanding Christian who wrote one of the earliest of the Christian books. Tertullian, a Latin father who lived in North Africa, a lawyer, an outstanding thinker—all three of these men speak from the beginning

from the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. It is evident that the second coming of the Lord Jesus for the earliest Christians was what it is for us today: a blessed hope.

Now lets move over a second to the biblical testimony. I’m sure that you are probably interested more in that than in the testimony of reasoning from the fact of sin in our society and the argument from the fathers. Clarence McCartney said, “If the second coming passages are deleted from the Bible, the Bible becomes an unintelligible book.” I think that is true. If we should not have any passages in our Bible about the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus, we could not understand the biblical revelation. That revelation demands some kind of ultimate winding up of things. And particularly our history, for it is in our history that man has sinned, and it is in our history that we are to see how God straightens out the problem of human sin.

Did you know that the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned over three hundred times in the New Testament? Now there are three hundred and something chapters of the New Testament. In other words, in every chapter proportionately in the New Testament, we have some reference to the second coming of the Lord Jesus. There are some of the epistles who specifically have not just one but more than one reference to the second coming in those epistles.

We have the second coming mentioned three hundred and eighteen times. We have baptism, or we have the doctrine of baptism. mentioned only nineteen times in seven epistles. In other words, the Second Advent should have a great deal more emphasis in our Christian thought and life than the doctrine of water baptism. Yet observe the importance that the churches attach to baptism.

We have entire denominations called Baptist churches. We have large denominations calling themselves, Baptist churches. Now I know what you’re thinking about you’re thinking about the Southern Baptists. There are lots of good brethren in the Southern Baptists. There are lots that are not brethren at all in the Southern Baptists too,

[laughter] and my authority for that is good Southern Baptist preachers who affirm the same thing.

Did you know that there are over 20 different kind of Baptists? So t’s not just that particular denomination. But now how many denominations do you know that are named the Lord’s coming denomination, or the Second Advent denomination? We do have the Seventh Day Adventis,t but then they mixed up the truth with error in their title: The Seventh Day Adventist. And did you know that we have Seventh Day Baptists? We have a denomination of Baptists that call themselves Seventh Day Baptists.

About twenty five years ago I ran across one or two of them. They are believes for the most part in that denomination, but they believe that you ought to worship on Saturday just as the Seventh Day Adventists do. After one of the meetings in New Jersey one of them came up to me and we engaged in conversation, and I finally asked him what church he was a member of, and he said, I’m a Seventh Day Baptist. I said, you mean Adventist don’t you? He said, no Baptist. I said Adventist. [Laughter] No, Baptist. I thought he was dreaming a little. [More laughter] I do things like that, I thought may be he was. No, then he proceeded to to give me a little resume of the history of his particular denomination of believers.

Did you know that the Lord’s Supper is mentioned six times in the New Testament, but it is not in twenty of the twenty-one epistles of the New Testament. Not mentioned, and there are some groups that make a great deal over the Lord’s Supper.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus ought to enlarge in our Christian thinking. I have wondered if the church is not making the same mistake about the second coming that the Jews made about the first coming—not all the Jews, but some of the Jews. They did not make very much of the suffering and the cross and the literality of the first coming texts.

The earliest Christians made a great deal after they learned the truth of the suffering, the cross and the second coming of the Lord Jesus, and it seems to me that

today we may be possibly, possibly erring a little too much by making a whole lot over the first coming and sometimes de-emphasizing the reigning, the crown, the literality of the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

When the Lord Jesus taught those foolish disciples on the Emmaus road, he said, “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written,” and beginning at Moses and the prophets expounded unto them all the Scriptures the things concerning themselves. Evidently, in that case, they had looked at the glory and had forgotten the necessity of the sufferings. It may be that we tend in the Christian church as a whole—I don’t think that’s true of this church—but in the Christian church as a whole we speak entirely too much about the first coming and not proportionately enough about the second coming.

Well let’s come to our testimony and first of all, the testimony of the law, and I think what I would like to do first of all is to ask you to turn with me to Genesis 3:15. We do not think, I do not believe that Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15 as being a second coming text, but I think you will see in just a moment that it does logically involve the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now you know the situation. Adam and Eve have sinned in the Garden of Eden, and now they are receiving from the God of love their judgment. And we read in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; he shall cruse or bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Now you can see that this prophecy prophesies as often I’m sure expounded to you a kind of continuing enmity between Satan and his seed and the Lord Jesus and his seed. And in the light of the individualizing of these two seeds, in that we have mention of head and heel, we have stated here that there is going to be an ultimate confrontation in which the head of the serpent will be crushed—a mortal wound—and the heel of the woman’s seed—ultimately the Lord Jesus—shall be crushed or bruised not a mortal wound.

Now the point of this is simply that at the cross the Lord Jesus will overcome both sin and Satan, who holds men in bondage by sin. But at the same time he will suffer by virtue of the conflict and the victory of the cross.

Now you might think that when the cross took place that all of the aspects of that bruising and crushing had been completed. The Apostle Paul tells us that quite plainly in Romans 16:20. There he says, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” In other words according to the Apostle Paul, the crushing of Satan under the feet is not a completed thing. Now the legal basis of it was accomplished when the blood was shed, but the actual execution of the judgment already pronounced upon him awaits the future when Satan is bound and ultimately cast into the lake of fire. So in the first great promise of the gospel, the *protangelian* of Genesis 3:15, we have a testimony from the law of Moses to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, necessary for the completion of the program of God. So the first promise after the fall of man includes the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

Second, the testimony of the prophets. Let me read just a verse or two out of many hundreds of texts that could be read in our study. Isaiah 9:6-7. Isaiah 9:6-7, “For unto us a child is born unto us a son is given.” Isn’t it interesting that we do not read for unto us a child is given, unto us a son is born; or of course it is the child who is born; it is the son the eternal son who is given. As I mentioned, you remember last year, when we were studying – yes it was last year – when we were studying the doctrine of the atonement, I mentioned that the two characteristic words that the Lord Jesus uses to describe his ministry are the words, I was sent, I came.

Only once does the Lord Jesus ever say that he was born. Did you know that? Well it’s alright to say that, but only once does he ever say that he was born, and do you know, do you remember to whom he said, he was born? He said it to a man who had no theological understanding at all. He said it to Pontius Pilate. He said, “For this cause was I born,” and then in order to not confuse people like me and like you who were such

great theologians, he said, I have a word for you, was this cause was I born and for this purpose came I into the world. That’s the only time he ever said he was born, and it was said to the Roman Curator, Pontius Pilate.

So we read here then, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called, wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Now here is the prophecy of the culmination of the Davidic promises which we studied in past weeks, in which of course we read that the Lord Jesus would come, sit upon the throne of David, and rule in his kingdom over the earth. So here, in Isaiah chapter 9 verses 6-7, we have reference to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus when he shall fulfill the Davidic promises.

In the last book of our English Old Testament in Malachi 4:1-6, we have another testimony to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. I am going to read this chapter. That’s the last book of the Old Testament, the Book of Malachi. You know of course that in the Hebrew Old Testament this is not the last book of the Old Testament. 2 Chronicles is the last book of the Old Testament, but in our English New Testament books are arranged in such a way that this is the last book of the Old Testament. We read in Malachi 4:1,

“For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings and ye shall go forth and grow up like calves of the stall. And ye shall tread

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down the wicked for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this saith the Lord of hosts. Remember the Law of Moses my servant which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and ordinances. Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord (that of course is the Second Advent) And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

So here is an interesting thing. The last promise of the Old Testament is a promise of the second coming.

Let’s turn back to the testimony, third or C, of the writings. Now the writings is a technical term that refers to certain books of the Old Testament as the Jewish readers of the Old Testament have named them. And the Psalms form part of the writings. Lets turn to Psalm 2, and let me read verse 8 and verse 9. Psalm 2:8-9. David in the second Psalm writes,

“Ask of me (now some of you are still turning your pages; I’m sure it must be the elders or deacons, but give them a chance to catch up with the rest of you) ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thy inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Those texts the two texts are fulfilled in the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

Now if you have ay question about it I am going to read from Revelation chapter 19 and verse 15 in which in the description of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus these

texts are cited as being fulfilled then. We read in chapter 19 and verse 15 in the Book of Revelation, “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of all mighty God”—a citation from Isaiah chapter 63 and Psalm 2:8-9 to describe the things the Lord Jesus is going to do when he comes the second time.

Fourth, the testimony of the gospels. Matthew 1:1 begins with the statement in the genealogy, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” The very fact that he is called the son of David here is evidence of the fact that he is looked at as the one who shall sit upon David’s throne and fulfill those promises that were made to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7 and 1 Chronicles chapter 17.

Now turn over to Matthew chapter 24. Mathew chapter 24, and here in the Olivet Discourse we read,

“And Jesus went out and departed from the temple and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple and Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon the other that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately saying, Tell us when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age.”

Now turn to verse 29 through 31 in which one aspect of these questions is plainly answered.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, the Lord says, and the moon shall not give it’s light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken and then shall appear the sign of man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth

mourn and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven
with power and great glory.”

There again the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus testified through the Lord Jesus himself.

Turn with me now to the first chapter of the Book of the Acts. This is, in our outline, capital E, the testimony of the Acts. You know this, I’m sure. In the first chapter of the Book of Acts, we have a statement made in the 9th verse,

“And when he had spoken these things while they beheld, he was taken up
and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly
toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white
apparel who also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into
heaven? This time Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so
come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

The Lord’s first message following the ascension is a message concerning the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

M.R. DeHaan, who died a few years ago, in one of his little pamphlets on the return of the king, comments that a preacher friend of his said to him, “I never preach on the second coming, for I do not consider it a fundamental or important doctrine,” and then Mr. DeHaan went on to say in that gravely voice of his—I’ll imagine when we get to heaven his voice will be considerably improved by virtue of the resurrection body, but I used to love that old voice of his that came over the radio because he spoke so plainly and clearly the doctrines of the word of God—he goes on to say , “what a serious indictment, what a charge to hurl against the blessed person of the Holy Spirit who devotes so much space to it in the Bible and gives it such an important place.”

Now that is a terrible thing to comment like that concerning the divine revelation. These are the words of God and to say in the light of the tremendous testimony of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, I never preach on it, for I do not consider it fundamental or important doctrine, that is almost a blasphemous kind of statement ,charging God with having revealed something in many places in the Scripture that is not fundamental or important.

It reminds me of John Calvin who had an entirely different spirit. Someone said to him one time, should we preach the doctrines of the grace of God in election and predestination? He said of course we should, for otherwise what are we doing but suggesting that God has let slip something that is hurtful to the church. All the truth of the Bible is to be proclaimed, and it’s all to be proclaimed boldly and I think wisely in the measure in which is found in holy Scripture.

Someone came to Mr. Ironside one time who loved to preach on the second coming and asked him why he preached so much on the second coming, and he may have known this friend of DeHaan’s, because he said, “I preach so often on the second coming because my brethren neglect it so, and I feel that I have to give the right proportion for the preaching of the church, so I have to over do it in order to make up for their omission of it.

Now then, the testimony of the epistles. Hebrews chapter 9 is, I think, a very clear testimony. Hebrews chapter 9 verse 28. And here we have the very adjective, second, the numeral second, to specifically say that the Lord Jesus is going to come a second time. The text reads, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation.” He shall come the second time. Now 2nd Peter chapter 3 also speaks of his second coming. You remember Peter defends it, and we looked at that passage at our last meeting in which Peter considers the stoppers who say in the last days where is the promise of the Second Advent.

And finally, the testimony of the Revelation. Revelation chapter 1:4-8. We read in the opening chapter of the Apocalypse,

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace be unto you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince or ruler of the kings of the earth unto him that loveth us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and have made us a kingdom of priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever Amen. behold he cometh with clouds (that can only be a reference to the second coming) and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth will wail because of him. Even so Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending saith the Lord who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty.”

So we have then the last in the last book of the Bible, the promise of the Second Advent right at the beginning.

And will you turn over to the last page of the Bible, verse 20 of the Book of Revelation, and we read, “He who testifies these things saith, surely I come quickly.” now this is not a reference to Pentecost. Pentecost is long past. It is not a reference to the new birth—John had been born again long before this— this can only refer to the second personal visible coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, I come quickly, even so come Lord Jesus. So here we have the last promise of the Lord and the last prayer of the word of God, and they concern the Second Advent.

The first preaching of God implies it. The last text of the Old Testament, the last passage of the Old Testament in our English version, is a testimony to the Second Advent.

The first verse of our English New Testament implies it. The first word the Lord Jesus spoke or that God spoke to the church following the ascension of the Lord is a reference that includes the second coming, and here in the last book of the Bible, the last promise, the last prayer, a reference to the Lord Jesus in his second coming.

If last words are important, then of course, that assumes special importance, for the Holy Spirit has given us the Johanne writings last in the Scriptures, and while we cannot prove the Book of Revelation is the last of the books that have been written, it most likely is, and here then we have God’s last revealed word for the Christian church, and it is the promise of the Second Advent. We do believe last words are important.

Herman Bottink, the great Dutch theologian, when he died he had some interesting last words to say. He said, “My learning does not help me now, neither does my dogmatics. Faith alone saves me.” He brushed aside the secondaries and centered upon the important thing in his last words to express what was most meaningful to him at that time. That’s why we pay so much attention to the last words of our Lord Jesus upon the cross, because they are his last words of the days of his flesh.

Now I want to come finally to the theological testimony to the second coming, and I want to just argue doctrinally, quite briefly, from four standpoints. The second coming is a necessary event because it is necessary for the consummation of individual salvation. The key word is resurrection. Now you know of course that in the New Testament, the resurrection of the church takes place at the time of the rapture of the church. We read for example in Philippians chapter 3 verse 20, “For our citizenship is in heaven from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.” In other words, we receive our resurrection body when the Lord Jesus comes again. I’m not going to make any distinction at the present time between the rapture and the Second Advent. We will of course make the distinction shortly between these great events.

But for our purposes now, the resurrection of the church is associated with the coming of our Lord Jesus. The resurrection of believing Israel is associated also with the coming of our Lord Jesus. Our resurrection is associated with the rapture. Their resurrection is associated with the Advent, but there are simply two phases of the second coming of our Lord Jesus. So our resurrection is tied to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus.

“Our body,” Longfellow wrote of a slave’s body, “is the worn out feather which the soul has broken and flung away, but when the Lord Jesus comes again at the resurrection we shall receive a new and glorious body.” If there is no resurrection for Christians then the thud of the clod upon the coffin signals the end of all. But we believe that through our Lord Jesus Christ’s finished work on the cross that redemption is accomplished, and redemption that includes not only the redemption of our spirit which is ours now ,but the redemption of the body which awaits the resurrection.

That incidentally is why we do not have any healing in the meantime and why there is no ultimate healing or no present healing—there is ultimate healing—there is no present healing in the atonement. The healing that the atonement promises is for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and if you doubt my words every teacher of the word of God who taught the doctrine of healing and divine healers, seventy five years ago is now in the grave. Their own doctrine did not help them. Healing is in the atonement, but it is for a specific time the resurrection.

Now the Second Advent is the time when the resurrection takes place for Israel. The rapture is the time when it takes place for us. Therefore, the word resurrection, a key word, involves of necessity the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. We often sing around the Lord’s table, “Then we shall be there we would be, then we shall be what we should be / things which are not now nor could be, then shall be our own.” That’s a reference to the coming of our Lord.

Second or B, the second coming is the consummation of national salvation, and by national, I mean salvation for Israel. The key word is resurrection and restoration. It says in Romans chapter 11 in verse 26, “And so all Israel shall be saved.” Now he refers to the time when at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, they shall look upon him whom they had pierced, and the nation shall be born again in a day.” There are Jewish individuals who are saved before then, of course. There are Jewish individuals who are saved now; there are Hebrew Christians today. They are called the Israel of God in the present time. They are distinguished of the Gentile Christians as being the Israel of God or the remnant according to the election of grace, but the resurrection of Israel of a nation takes place at the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus when they are also restored to the fulfillment of the promises that God has given to them.

There is an old Jewish lesson about two venerable rabbis who were musing among the ruins of Jerusalem after it’s destruction in 70 A.D. One laments as he views the situation, “Alas, alas this is the end of all. Our beautiful city is no more; the holy temple is laid waste, and our brethren are driven away.” The other is animated with a different kind of hope. He has a brighter outlook, and he replies, cheerfully, “True, but let us learn from the verities of God’s judgment the certainty of his mercies. He has said he would destroy and he we have seen that he has done it, but he has also said I will rebuild Jerusalem and shall we not believe him in this? That promise implies the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

Third, the consummation of international salvation is related to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. Time is almost up. Let me remind you of the text in Acts chapter 15 and verse 14-18 in which in the midst of unfolding some of the purposes of the present age, James says, verse 16 Acts chapter 15, “After this I will return and build again the tabernacle of David (notice I will return and build again the tabernacle of David that has fallen down) that is a reference to Israel’s restoration and set it up that the residue or the remnant of men might seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles, all the Gentiles, upon

whom my name is called saith the Lord who doeth all these things.” So we have in this great passage a prophecy not only of Israel’s restoration, but also of Gentiles salvation through Israel’s restoration. For it is through their salvation and their restoration that we have world wide salvation among the Gentiles. That is good New Testament doctrine upon which the apostles and James the brother of our Lord agree. The key word is restitution.

Finally, the consummation of universal salvation. And that is expressed for us in a passage such as Romans chapter 8 verse 18 through verse 25 when Paul speaks about the whole creation groaning and travaileth together in pain until now. For at the second coming of the Lord Jesus, not only will Israel be saved. Not only will the Gentiles be saved, but the whole of this creation will be refashioned, and we shall have a glorious refashioned earth upon which the Lord Jesus will rule and reign in righteousness and in justice.

Why do men refuse to believe the promises of the word of God? Ultimately of course, because they do not believe Jesus Christ. A liberal once said, if Christ were to return according to the Scriptures, it would spoil everything. Now a man has to be in deep rebellion to make a statement like that, because it seems to me that the brightest hope of the Christian is simply that the Lord Jesus will return again. We can be sure of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. We did not have the privilege of Peter, James and John of being with him in the Mount, but we have testimony—greater testimony that they had—for Peter said, you know, we have the word of promise made more sure. Now we have all of those words of promise some of which it seems even Peter didn’t know about, and they all testify fully, completely, and most convincingly of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. May God help us to have the spirit of the apostle who prayed, “Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.” Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to thee for the great promises that of the word of God. We are grateful for the certainty of the second coming of the Lord Jesus. May it be a bright hope for each one of us we pray, and we seek to with the enablement of the Holy Spirit accomplish thy will, O God, wilt thou use us in the communication of the message of the Lord Jesus that the true church may be completed and Thy purposes reach their wonderful creation. If there should be Lord someone in this audience who has not yet believed, give no rest nor peace until they rest in Christ we pray.

For Jesus sake. Amen.