

THE SECOND COMING/ADVENT

Mt 24:29-31, 36-44; I Thess 4:13-18

I. CHRIST'S SUDDEN, BODILY RETURN—promised throughout NT

- A. Jesus: unexpected (Mt 24:29-31, 36-44); place prepared (Jn 14:3); multiple Jesus texts!
- B. Angels: return “same way” (Acts 1:11)
- C. Peter: “like a thief in the night” (2 Peter 3:11); Pentecost sermon—Acts 2:16-21
- D. John: coming soon (Rev 22:20)
- E. James: “draweth near” (James 5:7-8)
- E. Paul: “the Lord himself shall descend” (I Thess 4:13-18)

II. ENDURING EXPECTATION THROUGHOUT HISTORY

- A. Jewish apocalyptic expectations, literature widespread, influential
- B. Apostolic Fathers (especially in 1st & 2d centuries) notably expectant, premillennial—e.g. Clement of Rome; Ignatius of Antioch
- C. Post-Nicene Fathers (notably Augustine) established amillennial perspective & chiliasm generally dissipates
- D. Yet: Chilastic outbursts occur throughout centuries—cf Norman Cohn: *The Pursuit of the Millennium*
 - 1. Medieval: Spiritual Franciscans & Free Spirit & Waldensians & Cathari *et al*
 - 2. Reformation: Anabaptists & Fifth Monarchy Men especially
 - 3. Modern: John Nelson Darby & Dispensationalism, popularized by Schofield Reference Bible; Seventh Day Adventists; Jehovah’s Witnesses; Hal Lindsey’s *Late Great Planet Earth*; Tim LeHaye’s *Left Behind* series; current revival of interest amidst pandemic & mobs’ iconoclasm
- E. General, traditional, consensual, consensus:
 - 1. As the Second Advent certain, be ever watchful & ready & (Mt 24:42)
 - 2. He will come “from above”—sudden descent from heaven (Rev 1:7-8) assured; an article of faith
 - 3. Date/Time unknowable—only Father knows (Mt 24:44)

III. DIFFERENT VIEWS re WHEN PROBABLE

- A. Some (amillennialists) think Christ could return at any moment (Mt 24:42-44; Lk 12:40; I Peter 4:7; Rev 22:7)
- B. Some (most premillennialists) think demonstrable events are necessary preliminaries:
 - 1. All nations must hear the Gospel (Mk 13:10)
 - 2. Great Tribulation (Mk 13:7)—wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions
 - 3. False Prophets (Mk 13:22) & “signs” & heresies abound
 - 4. Great Apostasy (II Thess 2:3)
 - 5. Heavenly disturbances (Mk 13:24-25)
 - 6. Rebellion & Antichrist, or Man of Lawlessness (Rev 13:1-18; II Thess 2:9-10); Soloviev re grand Humanitarian; long list of hastily identified Antichrists—Nero; Domitian; popes; Hitler; Henry Kissinger
 - 7. Salvation of Israel
- C. Millennium includes (according to Rev 20)
 - 1. Devil bound for 1000 years (v. 2)
 - 2. Nations no longer deceived—for 1000 years (v. 3)
 - 3. Saints quickened to life and reign with Christ for 1000 years (v. 4)
 - 4. Rest of dead don’t come to life until after 1000 years (v. 5)
 - 5. Saints will be priests & kings for 1000 years (v. 6)
 - 6. Satan to be loosed at end of 1000 years & will instigate final rebellion against God (vv. 7-8)

IV. DIVERSE MILLENNIUM PERSPECTIVES

- A. Amillennialism
 - 1. Church Age precedes Second Coming & Eternal Heaven’s establishment
 - 2. Rev 20:1-10 describes present heaven/paradise
 - 3. Advocates: Augustine & Roman Catholic, some Protestants
- B. Postmillennialism (Optimism re humanly-orchestrated Progress)
 - 1. Christ returns after a millennium during which the Church establishes His Kingdom
 - 2. Advocates: Daniel Whitby; liberal theologians, Social Gospel devotees, progressives
- C. Premillennialism (Chiliasm)
 - 1. Christ comes, rules during the 1000 year millennium, wherein Christ establishes His Kingdom, joined by His saints in ruling, prior to Final Judgment
 - 2. Much division of opinion re seven year tribulation: pre? mid? post?
 - 3. Advocates: many in Early Church; modern dispensationalists, esp.; many Evangelicals