



Peace On Earth Ministries
"Proclaiming Peace To The Nations" – Zechariah 9:10

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**JESUS IS COMING AGAIN –
AND HE'S NOT GOING TO BE VERY HAPPY IF WE ARE NOT ONE!**

"In the year 3510, if God's a comin' it oughta be by then."
Zager & Evans, *In the Year 2525*

AN ANCIENT HYMN of the church, found in 1 Timothy 3:16, contained six lines.

*God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.*

And those who believed on Christ believed that just as He was received up in glory, He would return a second time in glory. The angels who beheld His ascension told the disciples: *This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into Heaven (Acts 1:11).*

This belief – that Jesus would return in like manner – became *the blessed hope* of the early Christians: *Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).*

Alexander MaClaren (1826-1910) said, "The primitive church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death or about heaven. The early Christians were looking not for a cleft in the ground called a grave but for a cleavage in the sky called Glory. They were watching not for the undertaker but for the uppertaker."

Martin Luther confessed, “I hope that the day is near at hand when the advent of the great God will appear, for all things everywhere are boiling, burning, moving, falling, sinking, groaning.”

Thomas Campbell (and other early Restoration Movement leaders) believed that the oneness of believers would hasten the advent of Christ’s return. Alexander Campbell’s journal was named *Millennial Harbinger*.

Billy Graham, in his book *World Aflame* (Doubleday, 1965) suggested that there are at least 318 references to the Second Coming of Christ in the Bible. That is about the same number (300) of the prophecies predicting His first coming. Perhaps this is why Paul wrote the Christians in Thessalonica: *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief* (1 Thess 5:4). We have received ample notification.

There are four great certainties in life. The writer of Hebrews names them in Hebrews 9:27,28. The New Testament in Modern English (translated by J. B. Phillips) translates thusly: *And just as surely as it is appointed for all men to **die** once, and after that pass to their **judgment**, so it is certain that **Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many** and after that, to those who look for him, **he will appear a second time**, not this time to deal with sin, but to bring full salvation to those who eagerly await him.*

Over the dome of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. is this inscription: “One God, one law, one element. *And one far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves.*”

I believe that “one far-off divine event” to be the *glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*.

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

We have His word on it. *I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also* (John 14:3).

Jack Cottrell, in his book *The Faith Once for All* (College Press, 2002), suggests there are three main Greek words used in the NT to refer to Christ’s coming.

1. *Epiphaneia* (“appearance” or “appearing”). “In the NT it denotes the appearing of the divine King of kings, whose arrival is heralded by a trumpet (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16.”

2. *Apokalypsis*, (“a revelation, an uncovering, a laying bare”). “...on the day of his return, his true glory and majesty and power will be openly and undeniably revealed to all.”
3. *Parousia* (“coming” – in the sense of arrival – or “presence.” “This word emphasizes the fact that Christ will return in order to be present with us, to be in our midst, personally and visibly, with the consequence that ‘we shall always be with the Lord’ (1 Thess 5:17).

William Cox, in his book *Biblical Studies in Final Things* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977), suggests a fourth word: *hemera* (“day”). He lists 25 passages with nine different expressions such as “the day of the Lord,” “the day of Jesus Christ,” “the day of God,” et al, all referring to the Second Coming of Christ. William E. Paul (*The Sentinel*, 9/2003) points out that though we are living in “the last days” (plural) that when Jesus comes again it will be “the last day” (singular).

There is not a prophecy expert on earth who can pinpoint the day or the date that Jesus will come again. But we can know some things. We can know that Jesus will come:

1. *Personally*. No heavenly ambassador will be sent in His stead. *This same Jesus...will so come* (Acts 1:11). *The Lord Himself will descend* (1 Thess 4:16).
2. *Visibly*. No secret rapture. *He is coming...and every eye will see Him* (Rev 1:7).
3. *Audibly*. *With a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God* (1 Thess 4:16).
4. *Suddenly – unexpectedly*. Like a bolt of lightning (Luke 17:4), like a thief in the night (1 Thess 5:2), in the twinkling of an eye.
5. *Triumphantly*. *When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne in His glory* (Matt 25:31).

Pertinent to this study, *why* is Jesus coming again, and what effect should His coming have on us, His bride, the church? There are at least ten reasons for His return.

1. To keep His word (John 14:3).
2. To raise the dead (John 5:28,29).
3. To transform the saints (1 Thess 4:17).

4. To put all His enemies under His feet (1 Cor 15:24-26).
5. To gather the elect (Matt 24:31).
6. To deliver the kingdom to God (1 Cor 15:24).
7. To judge the world (Matt 25:31-46).
8. To reward the faithful (Matt 16:27).
9. To punish the disobedient (2 Thess 1:8,9).
10. To be glorified in His saints (2 Thess 1:10).

I want to focus on items 5 and 6 in the balance of this paper: Jesus will gather the elect and deliver the kingdom to God.

AND HE'S NOT GOING TO BE VERY HAPPY IF WE'RE NOT ONE

Why did I sub-title this paper the way I did? Here's why. A silly little bumper sticker I saw on a car several years ago. It read: "Jesus is coming again...and He's not going to be very happy!"

That got me to thinking. Why wouldn't Jesus be very happy when He came back? My first thought was, "Well, Jesus Himself said, *When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?* (Luke 18:8)."

Luke 18 starts with the Parable of the Persistent Widow. Christ praised her for her persistent faith. She kept on praying and believing, even when the unjust judge would not hear her case. But finally he relented because of her remarkable persistent faith. So, Jesus said, in effect, "When I come back again, will I find faith like that on the earth? Will I find people praying? Will I find persistence? Will I find faith at all?" The word "find" indicates a search. Jesus will be looking for a people of faith when He returns. To find faith will make Him happy. To *not* find faith will not make Him happy. Those were my first thoughts.

But then, as the car with the somewhat humorous yet provocative bumper sticker pulled away, never to be seen again, my mind kept racing. *What else might not make Jesus very happy when He comes again?* And then I started to think about the church for which Christ bled and died – and that prayer He prayed just 12 hours from the Cross:

*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; **that they all may be one**, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, **that the world may believe** that You sent Me (John 17:20,21).*

That was His dying prayer. That all believers may be one – not unity for unity's sake (as sweet as that is), but for a far greater and higher purpose – that the world may believe.

I do believe...I still believe...I will always believe that Christian unity is absolutely essential to the conversion of the world. And that's why I believe that when Jesus comes back again, looking for His blood-bought bride, and finds her like the Levite's concubine – ravished, dismembered, and scattered throughout Israel – He is not going to be happy at all.

It was religious division that troubled the good heart of Thomas Campbell when he left Scotland and came to America nearly 200 years ago. But his hopes for a better religious climate were quickly dashed. He found in this new land the same bitter, narrow, partisan sectarianism he had experienced in the old country. As a result of this sad experience, Campbell and other like-minded believers formed the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania, on August 17, 1809. It was formed “for the sole purpose of promoting simple, evangelical Christianity.” About a month later Campbell produced a *Declaration and Address* on behalf of the fledgling association. They did not seem themselves as a church but rather as “voluntary advocates for church reformation.”

The “grand design” of Thomas Campbell and the Christian Association was to “reconcile and unite men to God and to each other, in truth and love, to the glory of God.” Religious division was seen as the great barrier to this grand design. Campbell called division among Christians “sad, woeful, lamentable, accursed, a pernicious evil, a horrid evil, fraught with many evils, anti-Christian, anti-Scriptural, anti-natural, a breach of charity, a sad perversion of the Gospel of peace, a corruption of Christ's church, a breach of Zion, a sorry substitute for Christian unity and love, a state of sectarian bondage, a wilderness condition, and a Babel of confusion.” You get the notion that Campbell was down on division!

The clarion call of the *Declaration and Address* was Christian unity. Campbell called for “a permanent Scriptural unity among the friends and lovers of truth and peace, a visible unity in truth and holiness, an entire union of all the churches in faith and practice according to the word of God.” He said that unity was “our duty, a laudable undertaking, a glorious cause, a sacred cause, a desired event, and the Lord's favorite work – the very desire of His soul.” You get the idea that Campbell was up on unity!

Campbell declared that this needed reform effort would be Christ-centered and Bible-based. “Christ alone being the head, the center; his word the rule; and explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it in all things, the terms.” He also said, “Nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of

communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God.”

He also believed that fervent prayer and earnest effort should be expected from all who sought to answer Jesus’ prayer for unity. “Are we not all praying for that happy event, when there shall be but one fold, as there is but one Chief Shepherd? What! Shall we pray for a thing and not strive to obtain it! Not use the necessary means to have it accomplished! Duty then is ours; but events belong to God.”

Perhaps the most poignant words of the *Declaration and Address* are Campbell’s plea to ministers and members alike. “O! that ministers and people would but consider that there are no divisions in the grave, nor in that world which lies beyond it! There our divisions must come to an end! We must all unite there! Would to God that we could find it in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here; so that we might leave a blessing behind us; even a happy and united Church!”

Campbell, and other early Restorers, believed that the unity of believers would lead to the speedy conversion of the Jews, the bringing in of the fullness of the Gentiles, and would hasten the return of Christ.

This belief was reflected in one of our finest church hymns. Professor Tom Lawson, Ozark Christian College, says the anthem of the Restoration Movement should be a hymn published in 1829, “Come, My Christian Friends and Brothers.” Some believe Barton W. Stone to be the compiler of the hymn. Lawson says, “I am moved by the song’s clarion call for unity and the strong connection drawn between working for unity and winning the world to Christ.”

*Come, my Christian friends and brethren,
Bound for Canaan’s happy land,
Come, unite and walk together,
Christ our leader gives command.
Lay aside your party spirit,
Wound your Christian friends no more,
All the name of Christ inherit,
Zion’s peace again restore.*

*We’ll not bind our brother’s conscience,
This to God alone is free,
Nor contend with one another,
But in Christ united be:
Here’s the Word, the grand criterion,
This shall all our doctrine prove,
Christ the centre of our union,*

And the bond is Christian love.

*Here my hand, my heart, my spirit,
Now in fellowship I give,
Now we'll love and peace inherit,
Show the world how Christians live;
We are one in Christ our Savior,
Here is neither bond nor free,
Christ is all in all forever,
In His name we all agree.*

*Now we'll preach and pray together,
Praise, give thanks, and shout and sing;
Now we'll strengthen one another,
And adore our heavenly King;
Now we'll join in sweet communion,
Round the table of our Lord;
Lord, confirm our Christian union,
By Thy Spirit and Thy Word.*

*Now the world will be constrained
To believe in Christ our King;
Thousands, millions be converted,
Round the earth His praises ring;
Blessed day! O joyful hour!
Praise the Lord – His name we bless;
Send Thy kingdom, Lord, with pow'r,
Fill the world with righteousness.*

When Jesus comes again He will be looking for His one, true, pure, singing, praying, preaching, soul-winning bride. Surely He will not be pleased should He find, instead, a splintered, shattered, and shriveled-up sectarian shell.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus declared, *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt 24:30,31).*

When Jesus comes again He is not going to put together a fractured church. The church was supposed to *maintain* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, remember? Instead, He is going to gather together His elect from the four corners of the earth. At this present time the elect – the true bride of Christ – are in a state of dispersion, a *divine* dispersion,

for God has placed His body just where He wants them to be. Jesus is going to gather together His elect – those who have had a heart for God and the unity of His people. No tare will be suddenly changed to wheat. No person who has manifested a divisive spirit will suddenly be changed to an irenic spirit. No congregation that was not inclined to embrace all of God’s people will suddenly be inclined to extend the right hand of fellowship. No fellowship of people who distanced themselves from other believers over matters of opinion will suddenly lay down their differences. It will be too late then. All who have been content to live with division will be forced to live with division somewhere else – for in heaven we will all be one.

When Jesus comes again He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24). Surely we have progressed from fleshly Israel who once had a United Kingdom but then split and limped along as a Divided Kingdom until both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were carried away into captivity. Jesus is coming again to deliver up a *United Kingdom* to God for *every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation* (Matt 12:25.) Everyone born of the water and Spirit is in this kingdom (John 3:5). This kingdom does not consist of material things *for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Rom 14:17). God has *rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins* (Col 1:13,14 NIV). Together we are *fellow workers for the kingdom of God* (Col 4:11). Seniority in the kingdom of God does not imply superiority. I cannot pray, “*Thine is the kingdom*” if I am unwilling to give up my own rights and accept the righteous reign of God within. There is no “independent” kingdom of God, no “centralized” kingdom of God, no “instrumental” kingdom of God, and no “non-instrumental” kingdom of God. There are no “king makers” in the kingdom of God other than God and His Son, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords. *The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever* (Rev 11:15 NIV).

CONCLUSION

Jesus is coming again. We will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. I want to be able to say, “Lord, I did my best to do my part to answer Your dying prayer, ‘That they all may be one...that the world may believe.’ Lord, I made every effort to maintain the unity of Your Spirit in the bond of peace. Lord, in our fractured fellowship, I tried my best to get my brothers to agree with one another so that there would be no divisions among us, and that we might be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

Jesus is coming again. Let's make Him happy when He comes.

Dearly beloved brethren, why should we deem it a thing incredible that the Church of Christ in this highly favored country should resume that original unity, peace and purity which belong to its constitution, and constitutes its glory? – Thomas Campbell

*Here my hand, my heart, my spirit,
Now in fellowship I give,
Now we'll love and peace inherit,
Show the world how Christians live;
We are one in Christ our Savior,
Here is neither bond nor free,
Christ is all in all forever,
In His name we all agree.* – Barton W. Stone

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