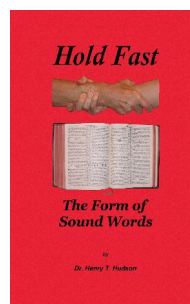


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NOVEMBER 2010 EMAIL LETTER & STUDY

Beloved Friends & Co-Laborers in the Gospel,

Greetings, as always, in the blessed name of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

We had a great trip down stopping for a visit with Ira and Julie Schipper. We were in Bible College with them many moons ago. Julie is a cousin of Shirley's, hence it was extra special. We also attended the reunion of the 281st MP company in Clearwater, FL. Amazing, I served with these guys in Italy some sixty years ago. I was I/C Antivice Squad, and now, by their request, I am their Chaplain! Go figure! Many of them married Italian ladies and it was a particular joy to share the gospel with them. We also visited with June Menge, a rare saint indeed, and with members of the Nokomis Bible Church Fellowship, Nokomis, FL. Some three years ago we served as their Pastor for six months.

We have settled in for the winter here in Foley, Alabama. This is our home away from home. Usually, we rent a condo on the beach, but while expecting prices to be lower, because of the oil spill, lo and behold the rentals are higher. Less people, but higher prices. I have a sneaky suspicion that owners are holding out for bigger claim checks from BP. We have met many people, including restaurant owners and workers, who expect whopping reimbursement for lost income. Anyway, the Lord brought a very conscientious real estate person to us who found an ideal reasonable-rent condo, be it 10 miles from the beach, and we are delighted to be settled in for the winter. Over the years, the Lord has brought us into contact with many dear Christian friends down here, and there are many open doors for ministry.

One project every winter is the writing of a book. This year I am working on the theme: *NEW LIFE: "IN CHRIST."* Can you believe, Paul used this phrase no less than 164 times in his epistles? I wanted to include chapters from my studies in my mailings, as I have done in the past, but they are all too long. It is not easy, reading long chapters on a computer screen. Hence, I have substituted a shorter study dealing with a question that has come up a number of times in recent correspondence. I will have a follow up in the next mailing. Would that all Christians could distinguish between pious fancies and solid biblical facts. Anyway, put it to the Berean test, and let me have your scrupulous review and response. You will notice at the heading of this letter, that I have inserted a promo of my recent book that reminds Christians that we do have the solid "sound words" of Holy Scripture. The book is available at half price directly from our email or snail address (\$10.00 with \$2,50 P. & H.).

My son Bruce has created our own publishing (WBP Whitest Blue Publishing, www.whitestblue.com) hence our books can now be much cheaper. It is a blessing to have his expertise. He is our WebMaster. I still scratch my head and get frustrated with my computer, but he is there with the answers.

Forest Park Bible Church in Mobile, Alabama is still in need of a Pastor. They are a dear group of people and would appreciate your prayers. Grace Bible Church, also in Mobile, has found a Pastor, and he seems like a good man. Our beloved friend, Norman Gidney CBE, will be with us on February 10-12 and will be ministering at the Christian Businessmen's Luncheon at the Hank Aaron's Stadium. On the weekend he will be preaching in two local churches. Mark your calendars if you will be in the area.

Continued blessings. Yours, because His, Henry and Shirley. John 3:30

FINDING THE FACTS ABOUT THE FUTURE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

by
Henry T. Hudson

What were those words from Bernard Baruch that caught my attention many years ago? They were something to the effect, "Every man has a right to his opinion, but no man has the right to be wrong in his facts." Being somewhat left-brained, I cannot help but wonder about the question of interpretation? Do not the facts need interpretation? There are the revealed facts of Holy Scripture, but do they not need interpretation? Herein lies the rub. For me personally, I try to follow the simple literal "face-value" principle of interpretation. In other words, I allow accepted literary rules to prevail, while at the same time I try to eliminate the many fanciful human traditions that are always knocking at the door and which insidiously seek to infiltrate and influence textual considerations. What then are the facts with regard to the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?

First, Jesus himself declared, "*I will come again . . .*" (Jn. 14:3). At his ascension, the heavenly spokesmen told the disciples of Jesus: "*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*" (Acts 1:11). Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews, wrote, "*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" (Heb. 9:28). These are just a few of the many verses in the New Testament that state in unambiguous terms that Jesus Christ will come again. If there is a reader who objects and who responds, "No! These words need interpretation!" What is he implying? What on earth could he mean by such a response? Is he saying that my acceptance of this stated fact is questionable? Is he challenging the meaning of words that are as clear as the noon day sun? If a friend tells me he is leaving but he is coming back, and he would be grateful if I would take care of certain things before he returns, the only interpretation needed, if it can be called an interpretation, is to act on what he has said. The words and meaning are not subject to some mystical interpretation. Their face value meaning is very clear. However, as might be readily understood, other factors lie behind this puzzling response. It is apparently conditioned by previous biases that have been planted in the mind and which continue to influence the thinking processes on the subject.

Nevertheless, the first fact in this consideration remains valid, which is, that the doctrine of the Second Coming is clearly taught in Holy Scripture. It can be found umpteen times, and apparently was prominent in the preaching and teaching of the apostles. Curiously, most modern day pulpit preaching is focused on the First Coming of Christ, but in the early church it can be said, without fear of contradiction, that much of the preaching was on the Second Coming. Scholars such as H. A. A. Kennedy and Karl Barth have pointed out that early Christianity was "possessed by an overpowering eschatological (doctrine of the last things) enthusiasm." (*The Theology of the New Testament*, p. 109).

I was a pastor for many years and was always surprised when new members would tell me that they had never heard a sermon on the Second Coming of Christ. I don't think that such is the case in Christian circles today. Where is the Christian who has not heard of "The Left Behind" series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins? Over sixty million have been published and distributed. They are novels supposedly based on the teaching of Holy Scripture. However, here is a case where opinions and facts are at odds. For one thing, the series teach that there will be a second chance for salvation following the coming of Christ.

Factually speaking, this is a doctrine of which Scripture knows nothing. Yet, paradoxically, many evangelical Christians have embraced the prophetic teaching of these novels. More than once, in discussing biblical prophecy, I have been advised by sincere Christian people that, "If only I would read, 'The Left Behind' books I would discover the truth!" I kid you not. The conviction among many Christians is that they contain the final word on the subject. Little does the average work-a-day Christian realize that the main thesis of these books has little or no Scripture to support their main plot. The theory behind the plot was introduced into Christian thinking little more than 150 years ago. It was promoted and given respect under the influence of John Nelson Darby. Recall the words of Baruck, "Every man is entitled to his opinion, but no one has the right to be wrong about his facts."

THE FACTS

The first fact concerning the Second Coming of Christ is that it is clearly revealed in Holy Scripture. Every Christian I know agrees that such is taught therein. However, if I challenge the thesis of this publicational sensation, I am almost inevitably sent to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. There, in the most straightforwardness of terms, the facts state that the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of God, and that both dead and living believers will be caught up to meet him in the air and that they will forever be with him. In fact, every chapter in both the first and second letters to the Thessalonian Christians underscore the doctrine that Jesus Christ will at some time in the future return. In the second chapter of Second Thessalonians, Paul wrote: "*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him*" Then in unmistakable terms he stated that two things would precede Christ's coming. In the fifth chapter of the first epistle he spoke of the future coming of the Lord Jesus as being like the coming of a thief in the night. The context makes it clear that this aspect of his coming refers to unbelievers who are totally unimpressed by the fact that Jesus is coming again. The image of Christ coming as a thief can be found in a number of references (Mat.24:43, 44; Lk. 12:39; 21:34-36; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15).

But let it be repeated that the "unexpectedness" is with reference to those unprepared for his coming. The parable of "The Ten Virgins" in Matthew 25 focuses on this same fact. Five were wise and five were foolish (Cf. Mat. 25:1-13). Five were prepared and five were not. Also, let it be noted that there was no second chance for those unprepared. Sudden destruction will fall upon them, "*And they shall not escape.*" (Cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:3; 2 Thess, 1:5-10). As for believers, "*God hath not appointed*" them "*to wrath, but to obtain salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This salvation will be brought about by their being caught up to meet the Lord in the air and then it continues with the fulfillment of the promise that they would be forever with him. These are the stated facts. Jesus Christ will return. It will mean salvation for those who are ready, and destruction for those who are not.

Another passage that sooner or later comes to the forefront in any discussion of the predicted return of the Lord Jesus Christ is what has been called "The Olivet Discourse." It is found in the Gospels. The respected passages give a panorama of the main events that take place before Christ

returns. One thing that is repeated among these events is the fact that in the future there will be many false teachers and consequent widespread deception. Such being the case, a distortion of the facts can be anticipated. The disciples had asked the Lord Jesus when would the temple be destroyed, and what would be the sign of his coming even of the end (the *sunteleia*, consummation) of the age (Mat. 24:3)? His first words were: “*Take heed that no man deceive you.*” (Mat. 24:4). In what followed, the Lord listed a series of time-consuming events, one of which was a particular prediction that had been made by Daniel in the Old Testament. It focused on what might be called the “epitome of apostasy,” and also on great tribulation directed mainly against believers. So severe is the persecution that, “*except those days should be shortened (cut short) there should be no flesh saved.*” (Mat. 24:9, 22. Cf. also Dan. 7:21, 22; Mk. 13:13, 20; Lk. 21:11-19). There was clearly a time limit on this apostasy and persecution. Earlier in this discourse the Lord had said, “*But he that shall endure to the end (i.e. the end of the age, thus the end of this time of tribulation) the same shall be saved.*” (Mat. 24:13). However, amazingly, before the end of the age, yea, even in spite of the tribulation, the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world (Mat. 24:14). Then, stated clearly, the Lord Jesus declared that after this tribulation, he would return “*in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*” There would be the great sound of a trumpet and there would be the gathering of all believers from one end of heaven to the other (Mat. 24:27-31)

With regard to this gathering, the Lord spoke of how two would be in the field and one would be taken and the other left; how two would be grinding at the mill and one would be taken and the other left (Mat. 24:40, 41). What is noteworthy here is that the word “taken” is a translation of the Greek word *paralambano*. The word carries the thought of being ‘taken or received alongside of.’ (Cf. what was noted in Jn. 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2:1. Cf. Also LXX Jer. 32:7; 49:1, 2; Dan. 5:31; 7:18). In the parables of Matthew 13, there is an emphasis upon wheat and tares and upon there being a separation between them at the end (*sunteleia*) of the age. In all these passages there is no indication of anyone getting a second chance of salvation after the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If I were to look at one other reference, it would be what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. In this passage Paul declared that at the sounding of the last trumpet believers would be raised from the dead. He went on to say that when this happens, the prophecy of Isaiah 25:8 would be fulfilled. The context, both of this passage in Paul, and in Isaiah, are connected with the coming of the kingdom of God. The broader context of Isaiah is concerned with the day of the Lord in which the Lord alone will be exalted (Isa. 2:12, 17). It will be a day of judgment for some and a day of salvation for others. Not only will the resurrection of the saints of God take place at that time, but they will also enter into their inheritance in the kingdom of God. The words of Isaiah harmonize with what has been noted thus far. Not only will that day be characterized by the sounding of a great trumpet, but it will be, as already mentioned, a day of separation between the saints of God, and those who are destined for punishment.

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity” Isaiah 26:20,21

FILTERING THE FACTS

One of the most important conclusions from the preceding facts is that Scripture does not teach a second chance following the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, there are second chances here and now, and even third chances before his coming, but not after his coming. In fact, as Paul wrote in Hebrews 2:3, “*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation”* The answer is that it is impossible. As was noted in 1 Thessalonians 5:3 for those not ready and prepared for his coming, “*they*

shall not escape.” And as was also noted, when he does come again there will be a division. On the one side those who go into everlasting punishment and on the other side those who go into everlasting life (Mat. 25:46; Jn. 3:36). Opinions are one thing, but facts are something else. Is it not much wiser to stand with the facts?

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