***Promise #2: I Am Coming Soon***

**COVID Promises: Revelation 22 August 16, 2020**

***He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*
Revelation 22:20**

**I am coming soon, #1: The River of Life**

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

6 The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”

7 “Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.”

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. 9 But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”

10 Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. 11 Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.”

Revelation 22:1-11

 1) “Coming soon” means that Eden is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) “Coming soon” means that the curse is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 3) “the time is near” means that good and evil are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**I am coming soon, #2: Who is left outside?**

12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

Revelation 22

 1) Robes identify the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) “Outside” means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 8:5-12, 22:1-14, 25:14-30)

 3) Major issue: If God is so loving, why doesn’t he just forgive sin and forget evil?

From Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of judgment*: Judgment protects the idea of the triumph of God and of good. It is unthinkable that the present conflict between good and evil should last throughout eternity. Judgment means that evil will be disposed of authoritatively, decisively, finally. Judgment means that in the end God’s will will be perfectly done.

From C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*: There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened.

**Two very different kinds of “Come!”**

17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17 (see Spurgeon’s “The Two Comes” sermon and J. C. Ryle’s tract “Come”)

 1) The “Your kingdom come” kind (Matthew 6:10, Revelation 6)

 2) The “Come to Jesus” kind (Matthew 11:25-30)

**I am coming soon, #3: Living into the promise of his coming**

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

Revelation 22:20-21

1) Judgment is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ -- it should change the way we look at the unsaved

There is a Midrash that tells of God rebuking His angels for rejoicing as the Egyptians were drowning, saying, “Are these not my children also?” We now pour ten drops of wine to symbolize the ten plagues upon Egypt. A full cup of wine is the symbol of complete joy. Though we celebrate our freedom, our cup cannot be filled because our freedom did not come without a cost. Each drop of wine that we pour out of our cups diminishes our joy.

Hebrew Haggadah

 2) The answer to “why not yet” is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3

 3) Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ; Stay \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ; Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ !

42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Matthew 24:42-44

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

2 Peter 3 (see also J. C. Ryle’s “Are You Ready?” tract)

**Resources for further study**

J. C. Ryles’ tract “Come” at [*https://www.monergism.com/come*](https://www.monergism.com/come)

Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (Eerdmans, 1960). The above quote is on page 72.

VernPoythress’ “Return of the King” study <https://frame-poythress.org/ebooks/the-returning-king/>

Kim Riddlebarger’s “Behold, I am Coming Soon” and “To Him Who Loves Us” messages at [*http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/downloadable-sermons-on-the-bo/*](http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/downloadable-sermons-on-the-bo/)

Riddelbarger also has a helpful essay (even if it’s too hard on other views) on “Thy Kingdom Come” at [*https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/thykingdom.html*](https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/thykingdom.html)

Spurgeon’s “The Two Comes” at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-two-comes/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-two-comes/%23flipbook/)

Deffinbaugh’s “The Hope of Heaven” at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/8-hope-heaven-final-word-heaven-revelation-21-22*](https://bible.org/seriespage/8-hope-heaven-final-word-heaven-revelation-21-22)

I appreciate Grant Osborne’s commentary on Revelation 6 in *BECNT: Revelation* (Baker, 2002) and William Hendricksen’s *More Than Conquerors* (Baker Book House, 1939, 1967).

Doug’s go-to sources for Revelation are Darrell Johnson’s *Discipleship on the Edge* (Regent College Publiching, 2004), Eugene Peterson’s *Reversed Thunder* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1988) and Robert Mounce’s *NICNT: The Book of Revelation* (Eerdmans, 1977).

**Summary of Biblical Theology from the ESV Study Bible**



**If God is Love, Then Why Won’t Everyone be Saved?
Justice and Love Displayed at the Cross of Christ**

[Todd Pruitt](https://credomag.com/article_author/todd-pruitt/) · December 2, 2019 · *Credo*, Volume 9, Issue 4
*https://credomag.com/article/if-god-is-love-then-why-wont-everyone-be-saved/*

In 2011 Evangelical mega-star Rob Bell published his (infamous?) book *Love Wins*. In some ways this was Bell’s farewell to the evangelicalism of his early ministry. In the book, Bell advances a brand of universalism typically referred to as inclusivism or Christian inclusivism. The idea is that because God is love everyone, in the end, will be saved by Jesus regardless of what they have done or believed (though Bell does seem to hold out the possibility that some may be so unwilling to let God love them that they remain in some sense separated from God). In short, everyone will be saved, Bell claims, because love wins.

The idea is beguiling. After all, who relishes the idea of sinners being sentenced to eternal punishment? But we know from God’s Word that hell will be populated by impenitent sinners. We know that God does not acquit the guilty lest he be emptied of his righteousness. Jesus himself warned against the coming judgment more than anyone in the New Testament. Indeed, the Scriptures are filled with warnings for sinners to repent and be saved from the wrath to come. But still many professing Christians either struggle with or completely deny the Bible’s teaching concerning the judgment to come (Deut. 9:7; 2 Kings 23:26; 2 Chron. 12:7; 28:11; Ezra 10:14; Ps. 2:12; 21:9; 56:7; 78:38; 90:11; Isa. 13:13; Jer. 29:12; 30:23; Ez. 7:8; Micah 5:15; Matt. 3:7; 5:22; 5:29; 10:28; 23:33; Lk. 12:5; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 3:5; 9:22; Eph. 2:3; 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 3:11; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 6:16; 11:18; 19:15).

It must also be acknowledged that even those Christians who have been well taught – those Christians who have sat under a faithful preaching ministry which upholds both the love and justice of God – are not unaccustomed to moments of inner conflict. We think about the many unbelievers we know who are good and decent people and wonder if it is really in the interest of justice for them to be excluded from life in the new creation.

The thought crosses our mind: “My father was not a Christian but he was a fine man. He loved my mother and his children. He was honest and hard working. He helped people whenever he could. He behaved better than some Christians I know! Would God really exclude him from salvation?” We know what the Bible says, but still we wonder.

**God is Love**

What a marvelous truth it is that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He is neither cruel nor capricious. Because God is simple and not composed of various parts, we know that he does not merely do loving things but that he is love in his very essence. It is impossible for God to be or do anything that is in conflict with love.

God provides a far better definition of love than do parents, a spouse, the entertainment industry, or our own sentiments. So we must have our notions of love shaped by the character of God rather than expect God to conform to our ideas of what love must do in all circumstances. There are times when what love truly is and does (i.e. God’s love) will conflict with what we believe love ought to do. Given that we are both finite and sinful we should expect this sort of gulf between the truth and our expectations.

It is also important to know that as the perfect Creator and Lord of all things, it is appropriate, indeed necessary, for God to love himself. Since God is love then he certainly loves the most pure, perfect, and lovely Being. This is a challenge for us to grasp because our love for self is inherently corrupted by sinful impulses. Because we are monads, our love for self will inevitably become sinfully selfish. But God is triune. His love for himself is a love between Persons and is therefore always being given and directed toward the Other. The indivisible God lives in eternal love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Unlike us, God’s love for himself cannot ever be anything other than the perfect love between Persons. Because God is simple and not composed of various parts, we know that he does not merely do loving things but that he is love in his very essence. It is impossible for God to be or do anything that is in conflict with love.

God loves himself in all of the purity and perfections of Father, Son, and Spirit. That means that God loves justice for he is just. He loves righteousness and holiness for he is righteous and holy. For God to turn his back on that which demands justice would require that he diminish his love for his own perfections. For God to wave away that which justice requires would mean that he must diminish his eternal love for himself. To ignore sin; to fail to be just would require that God’s love be diminished for he would fail to love what makes him truly lovely.

We must be careful to not collapse God into a single attribute. Nor can we pit one attribute against any other as though God is at war with himself. God is not conflicted. His attributes are not contradictory forces which must be balanced against one another. God is love; gloriously so. But he is also just. God is merciful and kind. He is also righteous and holy.

The love of God persists each moment of each day as he continues to draw people to himself from around the world. Only God knows the true number of those who will be saved in the end. But the final population of the saved will be immense. God promised to Abraham a vast legacy of spiritual descendants: *And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness*. (Gen. 15:5-6)

Those who will come to faith in Jesus Christ – those related to Abraham by faith – will be numbered like the stars in the sky. This is so because God is love.

**Sin is worse than we think (and so are we)**

We will never be able to properly navigate the question about God’s love and the reality of hell apart from a right understanding of sin. As much as we try to avoid the truth, we are not born good or even morally neutral. The Psalmist confesses that he was sinner from conception (Ps. 51:5). We are born with a prejudice against God and his mercy. What child has ever had to be taught to sin?

Everyone knows that something is deeply wrong. Even if we deny that the problem is within us we cannot deny the groaning in our souls. It is a groaning for redemption (Rom. 8:18ff). And the reason why the human soul groans for redemption is because we all, without exception, know that we ourselves have gone terribly wrong. What we fail to recognize however is that a price must be paid to save us from all this death and decay. Redemption for sinners is costly.

From her essay, “The Grotesque in Southern Fiction,” Flannery O’Connor appeals to our innate awareness of our need for redemption:

There is something in us, as storytellers and as listeners to stories, that demands the redemptive act, that demands that what falls at least be offered the chance to be restored. The reader of today looks for this motion, and rightly so, but what he has forgotten is the cost of it. His sense of evil is diluted or lacking altogether, and so he has forgotten the price of restoration. When he reads a novel, he wants either his sense tormented or his spirits raised. He wants to be transported, instantly, either to mock damnation or a mock innocence.[[1]](https://credomag.com/article/if-god-is-love-then-why-wont-everyone-be-saved/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1)

It is difficult for sinners to reckon with their sin. A right assessment of our problem requires that we rid ourselves of the defensive reflex to appeal to our imagined goodness. We indulge in euphemisms replacing the word “sin” with “mistakes.” We acknowledge being “imperfect” as though anyone expects us to be perfect in the first place. In these ways we seek to blunt the moral catastrophe of our sin. Such efforts then place the onus on God to prove how he could not save such basically decent folk like us.

**Why won’t everyone be saved?**

Back to Rob Bell for a moment. When *Love Wins* was released, Sally Quinn of *The Washington Post* interviewed Bell and inquired about the controversy surrounding the book. At one point in the conversation Bell said:

If, billions and billions and billions of people, God is going to torture them in hell forever – people who never heard about Jesus are going to suffer in eternal agony because they didn’t believe in the Jesus they never heard of – then at that point we will have far bigger problems than a book from a pastor in Grand Rapids.

Bell is implying that there is something deficient or lacking in God’s love unless he saves everyone. Indeed, apart from some sort of universal salvation then God is a torturer which, Bell says, presents us with a far greater problem than the skeptical questions of a simple pastor from Michigan. But however convincing Bell’s moral calculus may be to some, he actually misrepresents quite grossly what the Bible actually says.

Men and women do not go to hell because they have failed to believe in the Jesus of whom they have never heard. People go to hell because they are sinners; because they are enemies of God. [Men and women do not go to hell because they have failed to believe in the Jesus of whom they have never heard. People go to hell because they are sinners; because they are enemies of God.](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcredomag.com%2F%3Fp%3D35838&text=Men%20and%20women%20do%20not%20go%20to%20hell%20because%20they%20have%20failed%20to%20believe%20in%20the%20Jesus%20of%20whom%20they%20have%20never%20heard.%20People%20go%20to%20hell%20because%20they%20are%20sinners%3B%20because%20they%20are%20enemies%20of%20God.&via=credomagazine&related=credomagazine)  “For the wages of sin is death…” Paul writes (Rom. 6:23). We are all, without exception, born spiritually lifeless and at enmity with God (Eph. 2:1-3). We are guilty of mutiny against God whether we ever hear about Jesus or not.

The Apostle Paul makes this very case as he builds his gospel superstructure in the Book of Romans. He begins by presenting the problem of human rebellion against God. He writes:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Rom. 1:18-25)

God has revealed enough about himself in his works of creation as to render all people accountable to him. Before the bar of God’s perfect justice, no one will ever be able to plead ignorance. People do not go to hell because they fail to jump through a hoop that no one told them about. People go to hell because they refuse the truth which God has made plain to them and instead prefer a lie and end up worshipping anything other than God.

***Since* God is Love…**

There is something highly presumptive about the various types of Universalisms (including Christian inclusivism). The presumption is that in some way God is obligated – either by a force within himself or outside himself – to grant salvation to everyone. The idea is that a salvation limited to those who believe upon Christ is a violation of God’s justice and/or love. More often than not, this position is arrived at not through careful exegesis of the Scriptures but by an imposition of human sentiment upon God.

Typically, the question concerning a seeming inconsistency between God’s love and his justice begins with the words, “*If* God is love…?” The question begins from a position of agnosticism. It assumes at the very least the possibility that God may indeed not be love; that he may be cruel. This places God in the dock, so to speak, with the agnostic prosecutor demanding he justify himself.

But God must never be approached in this way. *The clay does not make demands of the Potter. The creature does not cross-examine the Creator* (Rom. 9:19-24). This is not to say that we cannot come before the Lord with questions, dismay, and even believing complaints as do the Psalmists. However, like Job, once our questions and griefs cross the line into the territory of accusation, we have gone too far.

The question, “If God is love why won’t everyone be saved?” betrays a basic misunderstanding both of man and of God. If we properly understood the sinfulness of sin and the holiness of God, we would not be conflicted over the fact that salvation is not universal. Rather, we would marvel over the fact that God saves anyone at all.

And *since* God is love he provided a way for sinners to be reconciled to him. *Since* God is love he sent his dearly loved Son to die in the place of sinners so that justice would be satisfied and the way to salvation opened. *Since* God is love he chose to overcome the stubborn hearts of untold billions of people from across the face of the earth and replace them with hearts of flesh. *Since* God is love a vast multitude of sinners from every nation, people and tribe will be saved. [If we properly understood the sinfulness of sin and the holiness of God, we would not be conflicted over the fact that salvation is not universal. Rather, we would marvel over the fact that God saves anyone at all.](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcredomag.com%2F%3Fp%3D35838&text=If%20we%20properly%20understood%20the%20sinfulness%20of%20sin%20and%20the%20holiness%20of%20God%2C%20we%20would%20not%20be%20conflicted%20over%20the%20fact%20that%20salvation%20is%20not%20universal.%20Rather%2C%20we%20would%20marvel%20over%20the%20fact%20that%20God%20saves%20anyone%20at%20all.&via=credomagazine&related=credomagazine)

**The moral and merciful perfection of God**

At the heart of the effort to conceive some form of universal salvation is the lack of appreciation for the holiness of God. So enamored are we with sentimental ideas about God and his love that we fail to stand in fearful wonder of his blazing holiness.

God’s holiness carries with it the idea of his moral perfection. He is unstained by any sin. He is purity *par excellence*. When the prophet Isaiah beheld the Lord in the temple he did not seek to be near the Divine. In that terrifying moment the prophet did not see anything in the vision of the Almighty which was similar to himself. At that moment he beheld the great distance between his sinful self and the holy, holy, holy God. The only words the prophet could muster were those of grieving repentance: *“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”* (Isa. 6:5)

What is the sinner to do about such a seemingly hopeless predicament? God’s holiness demands that sinners be punished. God’s holiness requires that justice be done. For God to casually dismiss the rightful charges against sinners would require that he “de-god” himself. It would mean that God be emptied of his justice, holiness, and righteousness. It would require God to compromise his impeccable goodness with the filthy rags of human sin. Such a solution to the problem of human sin is inconceivable and, indeed, undesirable.

So the pressing question is not how can a loving God not save everyone. The question that must be answered is how can a just and holy God save any sinner? The true wonder is not that many will not be saved but that so many will be saved.

This solution for the salvation of sinners – the message announced in the gospel – displays the moral perfection of God. What was accomplished in the dying and rising of Jesus was actual atonement. Sins were atoned for on the cross. Sinners were forgiven when Jesus was offered as a propitiation. The Apostle Paul tells us that the dying of Christ vindicated the righteousness of God. Through thousands of years of patience with sinners, God was open to the charge of injustice; the accusation that he had overlooked sin. But the cross is God’s vindication for it demonstrates that God is indeed just. He will not acquit the guilty. He will not turn a blind eye to evil.

God’s solution for the salvation of untold multitudes of sinners throughout the ages was to provide the very thing he demanded. In God’s moral universe, sin requires a sacrifice. God supplied the sacrifice. Indeed, in the Person the Lord Jesus, God became the sacrifice.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26).

In the end, the question of the consistency of God’s love and the reality that the impenitent will face final judgment is answered by the perfection of his justice. We can be assured that all things will be right. God’s love for his people, his love for justice, and his love for all that is good leaves us with the hope that all of his judgments are right and true. While interceding for wicked Sodom, Abraham confesses his confidence in God’s commitment to do what is right: *Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”* (Gen. 18:25)

The late Leon Morris concluded his fine book *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* with these words:

The doctrine of final judgment enshrines many important truths. It stresses man’s accountability and the certainty that justice will finally triumph over all the wrong which are part and parcel of life here and now. The former gives a dignity to the humblest action, the latter brings calmness and assurance to those in the thick in the battle. This doctrine gives meaning to life. The Greek idea of history as a cyclic process shut men up to a treadmill in which they might strive mightily, but neither gods no men could advance. The Christian view of judgment means that history moves to a goal. O.C. Quick refers to ‘God’s completing act in a fellowship of redeemed souls in a universe which is at once a new world and the perfection of the old.’ Judgment protects the idea of the triumph of God and of good. It is unthinkable that the present conflict between good and evil should last throughout eternity. Judgment means that evil will be disposed of authoritatively, decisively, finally. Judgment means that in the end God’s will will be perfectly done.[[2]](https://credomag.com/article/if-god-is-love-then-why-wont-everyone-be-saved/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2)

**Endnotes**

[[1]](https://credomag.com/article/if-god-is-love-then-why-wont-everyone-be-saved/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref1) Flannery O’Connor, *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970) p. 48

[[2]](https://credomag.com/article/if-god-is-love-then-why-wont-everyone-be-saved/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftnref2) Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960) p. 72.

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**ARE YOU READY?
J. C. Ryle**

*https://www.biblebb.com/files/ryle/are\_you\_ready.htm*

I ASK you a plain question at the beginning of a new year: *Are you ready?*

It is a solemn thing to part company with the old year. It is a still more solemn thing to begin a new one. It is like entering a dark passage: we know not what we may meet before the end. All before us is uncertain: we know not what a day may bring forth, much less what may happen in a year. Reader, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *sickness?* You cannot expect to be always well. You have a body fearfully and wonderfully made: it is awful to think how many diseases may assail it.

"Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!"

Pain and weakness are a hard trial. They can bow down the strong man and make him like a child. They can weary the temper and exhaust the patience, and make men cry in the morning, "Would God it were evening," and in the evening, "Would God it were morning." All this may come to pass this very year. Your reason may be shattered,-your senses may be weakened, your nerves may be unstrung: the very grasshopper may become a burden. Reader, if sickness comes upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *affliction?* "Man," says the Scripture, "is born to sorrow." This witness is true. Your property may be taken from you, your riches may make themselves wings and flee away, your friends may fail you, your children may disappoint you, your servants may deceive you; your character may be assailed, your conduct may be misrepresented: troubles, annoyances, vexations, anxieties, may surround you on every side, like a host of armed men; wave upon wave may burst over your head; you may feel worn and worried, and crushed to the dust. Reader, if affliction comes upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *bereavements?* No doubt there are those in the world that you love. There are those whose names are graven on your heart, and round whom your affections are entwined: there are those who are the light of your eyes, and the very sunshine of your existence. But they are all mortal: any one of them may die this year. Before the daisies blossom again, any one of them may be lying in the tomb. Your Rachel may be buried,-your Joseph may be taken from you,-your dearest idol may be broken: bitter tears and deep mourning may be your portion. Before December you may feel terribly alone. Reader, if bereavement comes upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for *death?* It must come some day: it may come this year. You cannot live always. This very year may be your last. You have no freehold in this world,-you have not so much as a lease: you are nothing better than a tenant at God's will. Your last sickness may come upon you, and give you notice to quit,-the doctor may visit you, and exhaust his skill over your case,-your friends may sit by your bedside, and look graver and graver every day: you may feel your own strength gradually wasting, and find something saying within, "I shall not come down from this bed, but die." You may see the world slipping from beneath your feet, and all your schemes and plans suddenly stopped short. You may feel yourself drawing near to the coffin, and the grave, and the worm, and an unseen world, and eternity, and God. Reader, if death should come upon you, *are you ready?*

Are you ready for the *Second Coming of Christ?* He will come again to this world one day. As surely as He came the first time, 1800 years ago, so surely will He come the second time. He will come to reward all His saints, who have believed in Him and confessed Him upon earth. He will come to punish all His enemies,-the careless, the ungodly, the impenitent, and the unbelieving. He will come very suddenly, at an hour when no man thinketh: as a thief in the night. He will come in terrible majesty, in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels. A flaming fire shall go before Him. The dead shall be raised,-the judgment shall be set,-the books shall be opened! Some shall be exalted into heaven: many, very many, shall be cast down to hell. The time for repentance shall be past. Many shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" but find the door of mercy closed forever. After this there will be no change. Reader, if Christ should come the second time this year, *are you ready?*

O reader, these are solemn questions! They ought to make you examine yourself. They ought to make you think. It would be a terrible thing to be taken by surprise. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But shall I leave you here? I will not do so. Shall I raise searchings of heart, and not set before you the way of life? I will not do so. Hear me for a few moments, while I try to show you the man that is ready.

He that is ready has *a ready Saviour.* He has Jesus ever ready to help him. He lives the life of faith in the Son of God. He has found out his own sinfulness, and fled to Christ for peace. He has committed his soul and all its concerns to Christ's keeping. If he has bitter cups of affliction to drink, he knows they are mixed by the hand that was nailed to the cross for his sins. If he is called to die, he knows that the grave is the place where the Lord lay. If those whom he loves are taken away, he remembers that Jesus is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and a husband who never dies. If the Lord should come again, he knows that he has nothing to fear. The Judge of all will be that very Jesus who has washed his sins away. Happy is that man who can say, with Hezekiah, "The Lord was ready to save me" (Isaiah xxxviii. 20).

He that is ready has *a ready heart.* He has been born again, and renewed in the spirit of his mind. The Holy Ghost has shown him the true value of all here below, and taught him to set his affections on things above. The Holy Ghost has shown him his own deserts, and made him feel that he ought to be thankful for everything; and satisfied with any condition. If affliction comes upon him, his heart whispers, "There must be a needs be. I deserve correction. It is meant to teach me some useful lesson." If bereavement comes upon him, his heart reminds him that the Lord gave and the Lord must take away, whenever He sees fit. If death draws near, his heart says, "My times are in Thy hand: as Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, and where Thou wilt." If the Lord should come, his heart would cry, "This is the day I have long prayed for: the kingdom of God is come at last." Blessed is he who has a ready heart.

He that is ready has a *home ready for him in heaven.* The Lord Jesus Christ has told him that He is gone "to prepare a place" for him. A house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, awaits him. He is not yet come to his full inheritance: his best things are yet to come. He can bear sickness, for yet a little time he shall have a glorious body. He can bear losses and crosses, for his choicest treasures are far beyond the reach of harm. He can bear disappointments, for the springs of his greatest happiness can never be made dry. He can think calmly of death: it will open a door for him from the lower house to the upper chamber,-even the presence of the King. He is immortal till his work is done. He can look forward to the coming of the Lord without alarm. He knows that they who are ready will enter in with Him to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Happy is that man whose lodging is prepared for him in the kingdom of Christ.

Reader, do you know anything of the things I have just spoken of? Do you know anything of a ready Saviour, a ready heart, and a ready home in heaven? Examine yourself honestly. How does the matter stand?

Oh, be merciful to your own soul! Have compassion on that immortal part of you. Do not neglect its interest, for the sake of mere worldly objects. Business, pleasure, money, politics, will soon be done with forever. Do not refuse to consider the question I ask you,-ARE YOU READY? ARE YOU READY?

Reader, if you are not ready, I beseech you to *make ready without delay.* I tell you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all things are ready on God's part for your salvation. The Father is ready to receive you,-the Lord Jesus is ready to wash your sins away,-the Spirit is ready to renew and sanctify you,-angels are ready to rejoice over you,-saints are ready to hold out the right hand to you. Oh, why not make ready this very year?

Reader, if you have reason to hope you are ready, I advise you *to make sure.* Walk more closely with God,-get nearer to Christ,-seek to exchange hope for assurance. Seek to feel the witness of the Spirit more closely and distinctly every year. Lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you. Press towards the mark more earnestly. Fight a better fight, and war a better warfare every year you live. Pray more,-read more,-mortify self more,-love the brethren more. Oh that you may endeavour so to grow in grace every year, that your last things may be far more than your first, and the end of your Christian course far better than the beginning!

# The Two “Comes”Spurgeon at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-two-comes/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-two-comes/#flipbook/)

##### “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”— Revelation xxii. 17.

OUR text stands at the end of the Book even as this day stands at the end of the year: and it is full of gospel even as we would make our closing Sabbath discourse. It would seem as if the Holy Spirit were loath to put down the pen while so many remained unbelieving, notwithstanding the testimony of the inspired word, and therefore ere he closes the canon of Holy Scripture and guards it against all addition or mutilation with most solemn words, he gives one more full, free, earnest, gracious invitation to thirsty souls to come to Christ and drink. So on this last page of the year I would fain write another gospel invitation that those who have not hitherto believed our report may, even on this last day of the feast, incline their ear and accept the message of salvation. Ere yet the midnight bell proclaims the birth of a new year, may you be born to God: at any rate once more shall the truth by which men are regenerated be lovingly brought under your attention. I ask those of you who have the Master’s ear to put up this request to him just now, that if the arrows have missed the mark on the previous fifty-two Sabbaths they may strike the target this time, being directed by the divine Spirit. Pray also that if some have kept the door of their hearts fast closed against the Lord Jesus till now, he may himself come in the preaching of the Word this morning, and put in his hand by the hole of the door, that their hearts may be moved for him. In answer to that prayer we shall be sure to get a blessing. Let us expect it and act upon the expectation, and we shall see men flying to Jesus as a cloud, and as doves to their windows.

     Are not the words of our text the words of the Lord Jesus? Can they be regarded as the words of John? I think not, for they follow so closely upon the undoubted language of Jesus in the former verse. Thus runs the passage: — “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” We can hardly, I think, divide the paragraph, and we must, it seems to me, regard our text as the words of the risen Jesus, that morning star whose cheering beams foretel the glorious day. The lover of men’s souls had not quite done speaking to sinners; there was a little more to say, and here he says it. The divine Redeemer, leaning from his throne whereon he sits as the reward of his accomplished work, and bending over sinners with the same love which led him to die for them says, "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

     Looking at the words, therefore, in that golden light as coming from the dear lips of the Well-beloved, let us notice first, the heavenward cry of prayer— “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” These voices go upward to Christ. Then, secondly, let us hear the earthward cry of invitation— “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”; that cry goes outward and downward towards needy and sorrowing spirits. Then, thirdly, we shall pause awhile to notice the relation between these two cries; for the coming of Christ is connected with the coming of sinners: and then, as best we can, we shall observe and expect the response to the two cries; both from him who sitteth in the heavens and from souls thirsting here below. O divine Spirit, bless thou the Word.

     I. First, then, our text begins with THE HEAVENWARD CRY OF PRAYER, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” I think it will be evident, if you read carefully, that this cannot be interpreted as being only the voice of the Spirit and the bride to the sinner. Surely the sense requires us to regard this cry of “come” as addressed to our Lord Jesus, who in a previous verse had been saying, “Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.” We may see the second included in it, but it will never do to exclude the first. We shall not have dealt honestly with the words before us unless we regard them first as spoken upwards towards our Lord, whose coming is our great hope.

     The matter of this cry is first to be noticed—it is the coming of Christ. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” This is and always has been the universal cry of the church of Jesus Christ. There is no one common theory about the exact meaning of that coming, but there is one common desire for it, in some form or other. Some of us are expecting the bodily coming, because the angel said when the cloud concealed the rising Christ, “This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” We therefore look for his descent upon the earth in person, to be here literally among us. Some expect that when he comes it will be to reign upon the earth, making all things new and bringing to his people a glorious period of a thousand years, in which there shall be perpetual Sabbath rest. Others think that when he cometh he will come to judge the world, and that the day of his appearing is rather to be regarded as the end of all things and the conclusion of this dispensation than as the commencement of the age of gold. There are some who think the millennium all a dream, and the coming of Christ in person to be a mere fancy, but they believe that he will come spiritually, and they are looking for a time when the gospel shall spread very wonderfully, and there will be an extraordinary power about the ministrations of the word, so that nations shall run unto him and be converted to his truth. Now it would be very interesting to take up these various statements and speculations, but we do not want to do so, because after all, in whatever way men look at it, all the true people of God still desire the coming of Christ, and so long as he draws near they are content. They may have more or less light about the manner of it, but still the coming of Christ has been ever since the time when he departed the great wish and desire, yea and the agonizing prayer of the church of God. “Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus,” is the cry of the whole host of the Lord’s elect. It is true that some have not always desired this coming from motives of the most commendable kind, and many become more than ever earnest in this prayer when they have been in a state of disappointment and sorrow, but still that which they desire is a right thing, and a promised blessing to be given in its time. I suppose the file of sorrow will always give a keener edge to the desire of Christ’s coming. Luther on one occasion, when much discouraged, said, “May the Lord come at once! Let him cut the whole matter short with the day of judgment; for there is no amendment to be expected.” When we get into this state of mind the desire, though right in appearance, may not be quite as pure as we think. Desires and prayers which grow out of unbelief and petulance can hardly be of the very best order. Perhaps when we more patiently wait and quietly hope, we may not be quite so feverishly anxious for the speedy coming, and yet our state of mind may be more sober and more truly watchful and acceptable than when we showed more apparent eagerness. Waiting must sit side by side with desiring: patience must blend with hope. The Lord’s “quickly” may not be my “quickly”; and if so, let him do what seemeth him good. It may be a better thing after all for our Lord to tarry a little longer, that so by a more lengthened conflict he may the better manifest the patience of the saints and the power of the eternal Spirit. It may be the Lord may linger yet a while, and if so, while the church desires his speedy advent she will not quarrel with her Master, nor dictate to him, nor even wish, to know the times and the seasons. “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,” is her heart’s inmost wish, but as for the details of his coming she leaves them in his hands.

     Having noted the matter of the cry, let us next observe the persons crying. The Spirit is first mentioned— “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” And why does the Holy Ghost desire the coming of the Lord Jesus? At present the Spirit is, so to speak, the vicegerent of this dispensation upon earth. Our Lord Jesus is gone into the heavens, for it was expedient for him to go, but the Comforter whom the Father hath sent in his name hath taken his place as our teacher, and abides on earth continually as the witness to the truth, and the worker for it in the minds of men. But the Spirit of God is daily grieved during this season of longsuffering and conflict. How much he is provoked all the world over it is not possible for us to know! The forty years in the wilderness must have become as nothing compared with nineteen centuries of rebellious generations. The ungodly vex him, they reject his testimony, and resist his operations. And, alas, the saints grieve him too. You and I have, I fear, grieved him often during the past year; and so he desireth the end of this evil estate, and saith to our Lord Jesus, “Come.” Beside, the Spirit’s great object and desire is to glorify Christ, even as our Lord saith, “He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shew them unto you.” Now, as the coming of Christ will be the full manifestation of the Redeemer’s glory, the Spirit therefore desireth that he may come and take to himself his great power, and reign. The Holy Spirit seals us “unto the day of redemption,” having ever an eye to that great event; his work tendeth towards its completion in the day of the appearing of the sons of God. He “is the earnest of our inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession.” Therefore doth the Spirit have sympathy in the groanings of his saints for the glorious appearing, and it is in this connection especially that he is described as helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. In this sense the Spirit saith “Come”; indeed, all such cries of “Come” in this world are of his prompting.

     Our text next tells us that, “the bride saith, Come.” We all know that the bride is the church, but perhaps we have not noticed the peculiarity of her name. It is not “The Spirit and the church say, Come,” but “the Spirit and the bride,” for she saith “Come” always more fervently when she realizes her near and dear relationship to her Lord, and all that it involves. Now, a bride is one whose marriage is near, either as having just happened or as close at hand. She is far more than merely espoused— either she is married or about to be, although the actual marriage feast may not have been eaten. So is the church very nearly arrived at the grand hour, when it shall be said “the marriage of the Lamb is come and his bride hath made herself ready”; and because of that she is full of joy at the prospect of hearing the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.” Who marvelleth that it is so? It would be unnatural if there were no desire on the part of the church to see her beloved Lord and Head. Is it not as it should be when the bride saith “Come”?

     I wish to call your attention to the fact that while I have made two of the persons mentioned in the text for the purpose of discoursing upon them in due order, yet they are not divided in the passage before us. It does not say the Spirit saith “come” and the bride saith “come,” but “the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” That is to say, the Spirit of God speaketh by the church when he crieth “Come,” and the church, crieth unto Christ for his coming because she is moved thereto of the Holy Spirit. True prayer is always a joint work; the Holy Spirit within us writes acceptable desires upon our hearts and then we present them. The Holy Ghost does not plead apart from our desiring and believing: we must ourselves desire and will and plead and agonize because the Spirit of God worketh in us so to will and to do. We plead with God because we are prompted and guided by his Holy Spirit. Our pleadings, which go up to heaven for the advent of Jesus, are the Holy Ghost crying in the hearts of the blood-bought. The church herself prays in the Holy Ghost, instantly crying day and night for the fulfilment of the greatest of all the covenant promises.

“Come, Lord, and tarry not;
Bring the long-look’d-for day;
Oh, why these years of waiting here,
These ages of delay?

“Come, for thy saints still wait;
Daily ascends their sigh;
The Spirit and the bride say, Come;
Dost thou not hear the cry?”

     The next clause of the text indicates that each separate believer should breathe the same desire, “Let him that heareth say, Come.” Brethren, this will be the index of your belonging to the bride, the token of your sharing in the one Spirit, and being joined unto the one body, if you unite with the Spirit and the bride in saying, “Come.” For no ungodly man truly desireth Christ’s coming; but on the contrary he desireth to get away from him, and forget his very existence. To delight in drawing near unto the Lord Jesus Christ is an evidence of our election and calling; to wish more and more fully to know him and to dwell more near to him is the token of our having been reconciled unto God by his death, and of our having a new nature implanted in us: to long to see him manifested in fulness of glory is the ensign of a true soldier of the cross. Do you feel this? Do you desire to be better acquainted with the Lord Jesus? You have heard the gospel, do you say as the church doth, “Come, Lord Jesus”? Alas, to many the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light, and they cannot desire it, for it will be a day of terror and confusion unto them; but unto such as have heard and believed in the precious name of the Son of God it will be joy and peace, and therefore the cry of their heart is, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

     This utterance of “Come” by him that heareth it is the mark of his joyful consent to the fact that Christ shall come. It is well, my friend, if when thou hearest that Christ will come thou sayest, “Let him come.” If he come to reign, let him, for blessed be his name, who should reign but he? If he descend to judge the earth, let him come, for we shall be justified at his bar. His ends and objects in coming cannot but be fraught with infinite benefit to us and glory to our God, and therefore we would not delay his chariot wheels by so much as an hour.

“Hasten, Lord! the promised hour;
Come in glory and in power;
Still thy foes are unsubdued;
Nature sighs to be renew’d.
Time has nearly reached its sum,
All things with thy bride say ‘Come;’
Jesus, whom all worlds adore,
Come and reign for evermore!”

The saying of “come” by each true hearer is the sign that his heart responds to the doctrine which he has been taught. We have received it by revelation that Christ is to come, and our soul saith, “Even so. Come Lord Jesus; it is our happiness that it should be so.”

     Thus have we mentioned the persons by whom this cry is uttered, and now let ns add a word upon the tense in which the cry ' is put. It is in the present tense. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” The Spirit and the bride are anxious that Christ should come at once, and he that knoweth Christ and loveth him desireth also that he should not tarry. Look, my brethren, is it not time as far as our poor judgments go that Jesus should come? See how iniquity abounds! Behold our very streets, how foul they are with sin! See how errors are multiplied: do they not swarm even in the church of God itself? Have not heresies come down like birds of prey upon the sacrifice, to pollute even the altars of the Most High? See at this present time how sceptics defy the living God, how they hiss out from between their teeth the question, “Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were?” Behold how Antichrist also stalks boldly through the land. Superstitions which your fathers could not bear are set up among yon yet again, and the graven images, crosses, crucifixes and sacraments, gods many and lords many, of old Rome have come back to England again, and they are worshipped in her national church. In England, stained with the blood of martyrs, once again the mark of the beast is to be seen on the foreheads of those whom she feeds to teach her people! Is it not time that the Lord should come? O hoary systems of superstition, what else can shake ye from your thrones! O gods that have long ruled over superstitious minds, who else can hurl you to the moles and to the bats? Ye know him who made you quiver on your thrones on that night when he was born in Bethlehem’s manger, and ye may well tremble, for when he cometh it will be with an iron rod to dash you into shivers. “Even so,” we cry, “come, Lord Jesus: come quickly. Amen.”

     II. Now, secondly, let us listen to THE EARTHWARD CRY OF INVITATION TO MEN. I must confess I cannot quite tell you how it is that the sense in my text glides away from the coming of Christ to the earth into the coming of sinners to Christ, but it does. Like colours which blend, or strains of music which melt into each other, so the first sense slides into the second. This almost insensible transition seems to me to have been occasioned by the memory of the fact that the coming of Christ is not desirable to all mankind. There are the unbelievers who have not obeyed him, and when they hear the Spirit and the bride say come, straightway they begin to tremble, and they say within themselves, “What if he should come! Alas, we rejected him, and his coming will be our destruction.” I think I hear some such sinners weeping and wailing at the very thought of the Lord’s coming, for they know that they also who have pierced him must behold him and weep because of him. It seems almost cruel on the part of the bride and the Spirit to be saying come, when that coming must be for the overthrow of all the adversaries of the Lord: and so Jesus himself seems gently to turn aside the prayer of his people while he pleads with the needy ones. He lets the prayer flow towards himself, but yet directs its flow towards poor sinners also. He himself seems to say, “Ye bid me come, but I, as, the Saviour of men, look at your brothers and your sisters who are yet in the far country, the other sheep which are not yet of the fold, whom also I must bring in, and in answer to your cry to me to come I speak to those wandering ones, and say, ‘Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’” Is not that the way in which the sense glides from its first direction?

     Now, from whom does this cry arise?

     It first comes from Jesus. It is he who says, “Let him that is athirst come.” The passage so stands, as I have already said, that we cannot but believe this verse to have been the utterance of Him who is the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. He out of heaven cries to the unconverted, “Let him that is athirst come.” Will they refuse him that speaketh? Shall Jesus himself invite them, and will they turn a deaf ear?

     But next, it is the call of the Spirit of God. The Spirit says, “Come.” This Book which he has written, on every page says to men, “Come! Come to Jesus.” This is the cry of the Spirit in the preaching of the word. What mean sermons and discourses but “Come sinner, come?” And those secret motions of power upon the conscience, those times when the heart grows calm even amid dissipation, and thought is forced upon the mind, those are the movements of the Spirit of God by which he is showing man his danger and revealing to him his refuge, and so is saying, “Come.” All over the world wherever there is a Bible and a preacher the Spirit is saying “Come.”

     And this is the speech of the church too in conjunction with the Spirit, for the Spirit speaks with the bride and the bride speaks by the Spirit. The church is always saying “Come.” This is indeed the meaning of her Sabbath gatherings, of her testimony in the pulpit, of her teaching in the schools, of her prayers and her exhortations. Everywhere, poor wandering hearts, the church of God is saying to you, “Come”; or if she does not do so she is not acting in her true character as the bride of Christ. For this purpose is there a church in the world at all; if it were not for this our Lord might take his people home as soon as they have believed, but they are kept here to be a seed to keep the truth alive in the world, and their daily earnest cry to you is “Come, coma to Jesus.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

     The next giver of the invitation is spoken of as “him that heareth.” If you have had an ear to hear, and have heard the gospel to your own salvation, the very next thing you have to do is to say to those around you, “Come.” Go and speak to anybody that you meet, to everybody that you meet, according as opportunity and occasion shall be given you, and say what all the church saith and what the Spirit is saying— namely, “Come.” Give your Master’s invitation, distribute the testimony of his loving will, and bid poor sinners come to Jesus. Your children and your servants, — bid them come; your neighbours and your friends, —bid them come; the strangers and the far-off ones, — bid them come; the harlot and the thief, — bid such come; those that are in the highways and the hedges, those who are far-off from God by abominable works— say also unto all these “Come.” Because you have heard the message and proved its truth, go you and call in others to the feast of love. Oh, if there were more of these individual proclaimed what blessings would descend upon London! I do not know how many believers in Christ there are present in this house, but I do know that there are five thousand of us associated in church fellowship at this Tabernacle; and if the whole of these five thousand would but begin to bear witness for Christ with all their might, there would be salt enough even within this one house to season all London, with God’s blessing upon our efforts. My brothers and sisters, let us not be slow to address ourselves to those to whom the Spirit of God within us, and the voice of Jesus from above, and the cry of the whole church is addressed. Let each individual member take up the note of invitation till all around the trembling sinner hears the encouraging cry of “Come.”

     Now, notice the remarkably encouraging character of this “Come” which is given by the Spirit and the bride. One part of it is directed to the thirsty: “Let him that is athirst come.” By thirst is meant necessity, and an appetite for its supply. Dost thou feel thyself guilty, and dost thou desire pardon? — thou art a thirsty one. Art thou disquieted and filled with unrest, and dost thou long to be pacified in heart? — thou art a thirsty one. Is there a something, thou knowest not perhaps what it is, for which thou art sighing, and crying, and pining? — thou art a thirsty one, and to thee is the invitation most positively and distinctly given, “Let him that is athirst come.”

     But how much I rejoice that the second half of the invitation does not contain even an apparent limit, as this first sentence has been thought to do! I regard the thirst here mentioned as by no means requiring of any man that he should have gone through a process of horror on account of guilt, or should have been overwhelmed with conviction, and driven to despair of salvation. I believe that any desire and any longing will come under the description, of “thirst”; but since some have stumbled at it, and have said again and again, “I feel I do not thirst enough,” see how sweetly the second clause of our text puts it— “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Whether thou be thirsty or not, yet hast thou a will to drink? hast thou a will to be saved? a will to be cleansed from sin? a will to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus? Dost thou will to have eternal life? Then thus saith the Spirit to thee, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

     Now, notice three vast doors through which the hugest and most elephantine sinner that ever made the earth shake beneath the weight of his guilt may go. Here are the three doors. “Whosoever”— “will” — “freely” “Whosoever,” there is the first door. “Whosoever” — then what man dare have the impudence to say that he is shut out? If you say that you cannot come in under “whosoever” I ask you how you dare narrow a word which is in itself so broad, so infinite. “Whosoever” — that must mean every man that ever lived, or ever shall live, while yet he is here and wills to come. Well, then, the word “will.” There is nothing about past character, nor present character; nothing about knowledge, or feeling, nor anything else but the will: “Whosoever will.” Speak of the gate standing ajar! This looks to me like taking the door right off the hinges and carrying it away. “Whosoever will.” There is no hindrance whatever in your way. And then “freely.” God’s gifts are given without any expectation or recompense, or any requirements and conditions— “Let him take the water of life freely.” Thou hast not to bring thy good feelings, or good desires, or good works, but come and take freely what God gives you for nothing. You are not even to bring repentance and faith in order to obtain grace, but you are to come and accept repentance and faith as the gifts of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit. What broad gates of mercy these are! How wide the entrance which love has prepared for coming souls! “Whosoever!” “Will!” “Freely!”

     Observe how the invitation sums up the work the sinner is called upon to do. First, he is bidden to come. “Whosoever will, let him come.” Now, to come to Christ means simply for the soul to draw near to him by trusting him. You are not asked to bring a load with you, nor to work for Christ in order to salvation, but just to come to him. Nothing is said about the style of coming, come running or creeping, come boldly or timidly, for if you do but come to Jesus, he will in no wise cast you out. A simple reliance upon the Lord Jesus is the one essential for eternal life.

     Then the next direction is “take.” “Whosoever will, let him take.” That is all. That word “take” is a grand word to express the gospel. The world’s gospel is “bring”: Christ’s gospel is “take.” Nature’s gospel is “make”: just change the letter and you have the gospel of grace which is “take.” There is the water, dear friends, you have not to dig a well to find it, you have only to take it. There is the bread of heaven, you have not to grind the flour or bake the loaf, you have only to take it. There is a garment woven from the top throughout, and without seam; you have not to add a fringe to it, you have only to take it. The way of salvation may be summed up in the four letters of the word “take.” Do you desire Christ? take him. Do you want pardon? take it. Do you need a new heart? take it. Do you want peace on earth? take it. Do you want heaven hereafter? take it— that is all. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

     And there is one other word which I love to dwell on, and it comes twice over “let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take.” It is graciously said, let him. It seems to me as if the Lord Jesus Christ saw a poor soul standing thirsty at the flowing crystal fountain of his love, and the devil standing there whispered to him, “You see the sacred stream, but it flows for others. It is what you need, but you must not have it, it is not for you.” Listen, there is a voice from beyond the clouds which cries aloud, “Let him take it!” Stand back devil, let the willing one come! He is putting down his lip to drink—he understands it now—but there comes rushing upon him a host of his old sins like so many winged harpies, and they scream out to him, “Go back, you must not draw nigh, this fountain is not for you: this pure crystal stream must not be defiled by such leprous lips as yours.” Again there comes from the throne of love this blessed password, “Let him come and let him take.” It is as when a man is in court and is called for, to go into the witness-box. He is standing in the crowd, and his name is called: what happens? As soon as he hears his name he begins to push through the throng to reach his place. “What are you at?” says one. “I am called,” says he. “Stand back; why do you push so?” says another. “I am called by the judge,” says he. A big policeman demands, “Why are you making such confusion in court?” “But,” says the man, “I am called. My name was called out, and I must come.” If he cannot come, if it is not possible for him to get through the throng, one of the authorities calls out, “Make way for that man— he is summoned by the court. Officers, clear a passage and let him come.” Now the Lord Jesus calls the thirsty-one and he says, “Whosoever will, let him come!” Make way doubts, make way sins, make way fears, make way devils, make way all of you for Jesus Christ the great king and judge of all has said, “Let him come!” Who shall hinder when Jesus permits? He who is divinely called shall surely come to Jesus. Come he shall, whoever may stand in his way. This morning I feel as if I could come to Jesus over again, and I will do so. Do you not feel the same, my beloved brethren? Well then, dear brother or sister, after you have so done turn round and proclaim this precious gospel invitation to all around you, and say to them “Come and take the water of life freely.”

     III.— The third point is THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE TWO COMINGS. Is there any relation between the coming of Christ from heaven to earth, and the coming of poor sinful creatures to Christ and trusting him?

     There is this relation, first, they are both suggested in this passage, by the closing of the scriptural canon. John is about to write by the voice of the Lord that none are to add to or take from the completed Book of God. The church says, “If there are no more prophets to proclaim the mind of God, no more apostles to write with infallible authority, and no more instructors to give forth new revelations, or bring new promises, then it only remaineth that the Lord should come. “Then,” says she, “Come, Lord Jesus.” And here are the sinners standing round, and they hear that no other gospel is to be expected, no more revelations are to be added to those which are in this book, there will be no other atonement, no other way of salvation, therefore it is their wisdom to come at once to Jesus. It is because the Book was about to receive its finis that the Spirit and the bride unitedly cried to the sinners to come at once. No fresh gospel is to be expected, therefore let them come at once. Why should they tarry any longer? The oxen and fatlings are killed, come to the supper! All things are ready, there is nothing more to be done, or to be revealed; upon us the ends of the earth have come. “It is finished” hath rung through earth and heaven, therefore—

“Come and welcome, sinner come!”

     I think I perceive another connection, namely, that those people who in very truth love Christ enough to cry to him continually to come are sure to love sinners also, and to say to them also, “Come.” Not but what there are some who talk a great deal about Christ's coming, and yet manifest but small care for other men’s souls. Well, it is talk; the profession of looking for the second advent is nothing but talk when it does not lead people to cry to perishing men, “Come to Christ.” He who loves Christ as he should loves sinners also; and that man who loves Christ so very much that he is quite wrapped up in himself, and forgets the dying millions around him, and stands star-gazing into heaven, expecting to see a sudden glory, to take himself away, does not understand what he saith: for if he loved his Lord he would set to work for him, and would show that he expected the King to come by endeavouring to extend his kingdom.

     There is this connection also, that before Christ comes a certain number of his elect must be ingathered. He shall not come until an appointed company shall have been brought to eternal life by the preaching of the Word. Oh then, brethren, it is ours to labour that the wanderers may come home, for so we are, as far as lieth in us, hastening the time when our Beloved himself shall come.

     Once more, there is a sort of coming of Christ which, though it be not the first meaning here, may be included in it, for it touches the centre of the sinner’s coming to Christ. Because, brethren, when we cry, “Come, Lord Jesus,” if he shall answer us by giving us of his Spirit more fully, so that he comes to us spiritually, then penitent souls will assuredly be brought to his feet. We know this, that wherever the Lord himself is in a meeting, hearts are sure to be broken and repentance is certain to be manifested. Wherever Jesus Christ is in power there must be a revival, for dead souls must come to life in him. The great thing we want above all others is a grip of that glorious promise, “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,” and as we in this sense obtain the coming of the Lord, we shall see sinners come and take of the water of life.

     IV. Well then, lastly, WHAT ARE THE RESPONSES? We sent up a cry to heaven, and said, " Come.” The response is, “Behold, I come quickly.” That is eminently satisfactory. You may have to wait awhile, but the cry is heard, and if the Lord should not come in your lifetime, the same preparation of heart which made you look for his coming will be blessedly useful to you if he sends his messenger to take you home by death. The same waiting and watching will answer in either case, so you need not be under any distress about which of the two shall happen. Christ will descend to earth as surely as he ascended to heaven, and when he cometh there will be victory to the right and to the true, and his saints shall reign with him.

     And now concerning this other cry of “Come.” We ask sinners to come. We have asked them in a fourfold voice: Jesus, the Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth, they have all said, “Come.” Will they come? Brethren and sisters, it is a question which I cannot answer. You must not ask me, for I do not know; but you had better ask the persons themselves: they are of age, ask them. Take care that you do ask them before they get out of the Tabernacle this morning. They know, and therefore they can tell you whether they mean to come or not. This I will say to them, —my dear friends, I do not trust that this last day of the year may be to you a day of mercy. The Jews had a feast of ingatherings at the end of the year, and I earnestly pray that we may have an ingathering of precious souls to Christ ere the year quite runs out: that would be a grand finish to this year of grace, and a sweet encouragement for the future.

     But suppose you do not come. Well, you have been invited. If a Christmas feast is provided for the poor, and a number of beggars are standing shivering outside in the sleet and snow, and will not come in though earnestly bidden, we say "Well, you have been invited: what more do you want?” Remember, also, that you have been invited very earnestly. The Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth, and Jesus himself, — they have all said to yon “Come.” I am as the man that heareth, and I have said, “Come.” I do not know how to say it more earnestly than I have said it. Oh, how would my soul delight if every one here did come to Christ at this moment! I would ask no greater joy out of heaven to crown this year with. You are invited, and yon are earnestly invited, what more do you want? It you never come, you will have this thought to haunt you for ever— “I was invited and pressed again and again, but I would not come.”

     I want you to remember, too, that you are called to come now, at once. You may not be bidden to come to-morrow for several reasons: you may not be alive, or there may be no earnest person near you to invite you. Can there be a better day than to-day? You have always said “To-morrow,” yet where are you now? Not a bit forwarder some of you than you were ten years ago. Do you recollect that sermon when you were made to tremble so, and you said, “Please God, I get out of this, I will seek his face,” but you postponed it, and are you any forwarder now? You remember the story of the countryman who would not cross the river just yet, but sat down and said he would wait until all the water had gone by. He waited long in vain, and he might have waited for ever, for rivers are always flowing. You too are waiting till a more convenient season shall come, and all the difficulties shall have gone by. Be quit of such supreme folly. There always will be difficulty, the river will always flow. O man, be wise, plunge into it and swim across. Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. Oh that you would believe in Jesus Christ! May his Spirit lead you to do so now.

“Only trust him! only trust him!
Only trust him now!
He will save you! he will save you!
He will save you now!”

Cast yourselves upon the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus, and the great work is done. The Lord help you to do so. Amen.