

Second Coming

The war against Iraq, the famines in Ethiopia, Sirdan, the destructive typhoons in Bangladesh, earthquakes, outbreaks of cholera, the mass return of the Jews to the land of their forefathers have led to renewed interest in Biblical prophecy. Some evangelicals have drawn up a tight timetable for our Lord's return; others have even pinpointed a date. As I watch the news and read Scriptures, I too believe in the soon return of our Lord. Our times are apocalyptic!

When shall the Lord return? Groen Van Prinsterer (1801-1876), Dutch statesman, historian, philosopher and a devout Christian, was convinced that Christ's coming was near. As a student of the book of Revelation, he saw the fulfillment of prophetic signs. He said that we know what our Lord has foretold, the increase of wickedness, departure from the faith, antichrist powers at work and persecution of Christ believers. When shall Christ return? When the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached to all the earth; when many false prophets shall arise to lead multitudes of believers astray; when you hear of earthquakes, revolutions, famines and epidemics. But in the midst of our predictions and speculations, we should not forget that our Lord comes whenever it pleases Him.

We don't know if our certain future is near or faraway. We must refrain from guessing and calculations because mere mortals may not run ahead of God's will and purposes. We can't lift the curtain that hangs between us and the day of Christ's return. This we know, our God holds the reins tightly in His hands. Christ is the beginning and the end of history. In the midst of all the troubles of our time, we lean on Him, on Whom, according to the Prophetic Word, the development of history depends. With confidence we can face the end of history.

As Christians we look behind the news. The signs of the times are ominous and the end is drawing near. But we must not panic, despite all the frightening news. Our hope does not depend upon the turn of events in Baghdad, Moscow, or Washington. Our covenant God is the God of our past, present, and future. We look at today's developments from the perspective of tomorrow. We must meet the uncertainties of today with the certainties of our Christian hope. The apostle Peter prophesied, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up" (2Pet.3:10). But not even this prospect should cause us to fear. We have the promise of the new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and peace. This is not time for trembling knees and anxiety about the future among the sons and the daughters of our covenant God. As someone wrote, "The darker the night the brighter the stars of faith shine and the sooner comes the morning. Look up and lift up your heads; your redemption draweth nigh!"

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