

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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“ONCE FOR ALL”

Part Two – “Once for All” versus the “Rapture”

by Lee Moses

In the January issue of the *Fulton County Gospel News*, we began looking at some events the Bible describes as being “once for all.” Three of these are the earthly appearance of Christ, man’s physical death, and the sacrifice of Christ. Being “once for all,” they are events that, once realized, have fully accomplished what they are intended to accomplish, and cannot be repeated. Such “once for all” events teach us about the sufficiency of God’s work, and about our own necessary response and responsibilities in light of that sufficiency. This month, we will examine what the Bible teaches with regard to the sufficiency of Christ’s Second Coming versus the doctrine of the “Rapture.”

Christ’s Second Coming

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). Here the Hebrews writer looks to something yet to happen, making clear that it is a unique event in all of history. This particular appearance of Christ only needs to happen once.

This reference to Christ’s Second Coming is found in a passage discussing several events that are “once for all,” and Christ’s Second Coming is one of those events. The Hebrews writer had just mentioned Christ’s earthly appearance in the flesh as a singular event (“now once in the end of the world hath he

appeared,” verse 26). Now the writer discusses a similar, but similarly **unique**, event of history.

There have been multiple comings of Christ in a **representative** sense—He “came” when His kingdom (church) was established (Matthew 16:28). He “came” in the form of the Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem (24:27). He said He would “come” to judge erring churches that fail to repent (Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:3). He “comes in” to “sup” with all who will receive the salvation He seeks to grant (3:20). However, these “comings” are not **personal** comings of Christ. These refer simply to His **actions** as seen upon the earth, just as the LORD had told Moses and the Israelites, “In all places where I record my name I will **come** unto thee, and I will bless thee” (Exodus 20:24, all emphases LM). But let it be stressed that the Bible teaches that Christ will only make one more personal appearance to the physical realm.

Unfortunately, many people teach there will be at least **three** personal comings of Christ, and many people believe it. This is the false doctrine of the “Rapture,” part and parcel of the popular sci-fi spirituality known as *Dispensational Premillennialism*.¹ According to the Rapture doctrine, Jesus will come the second time to take away His saints immediately preceding a seven-year period known as “The Great Tribulation.” Dispensational Premillennialism goes on to teach that after the seven years of the Tribulation have expired, Christ

will return a third time to establish a worldly kingdom over which He will reign a literal thousand years. Once the thousand years has ended, He will resurrect the wicked dead for judgment, destroy the earth, and return to heaven.

The primary passage Premillennialists use and abuse to teach the Rapture is First Thessalonians 4:13-17:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [Christians who have died, LM], that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if [or “since,” LM] we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [or “precede,” LM] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

According to the Rapture doctrine, this coming of the Lord is on an entirely different occasion than other passages referring to His coming (such as 1 Timothy 6:14), and **one thousand seven years** prior to His resurrecting the wicked dead for the

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(continued from page one)

Judgment. They do this by claiming:

(1) “The dead in Christ shall rise first” (verse 16) means that the dead in Christ and the wicked dead will be raised at different times.

However, this passage is not making a distinction between the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the resurrection of the wicked dead. Rather, the distinction is showing that the dead in Christ shall be resurrected before living Christians ascend to be with the Lord. Note the “first...then” order of verses 16-17, as well as the context of refuting the notion that living Christians would be received up into glory before the dead in Christ (verse 15).

Also, Jesus affirmed that the dead in Christ and the wicked dead would be raised in the same **hour**: “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection*

of damnation” (John 5:28-29). To change Jesus’ “*hour*” into a 1007-year interlude is the height of presumption.

(2) At some time Christ is going to come “with all his saints” (1 Thessalonians 3:13). Before He can come with His saints, He will have to come for His saints.

Yes, the term “saints” (literally “holy ones”) is often used to refer to Christians. But the interpretation given above is to read into the passage far more than it says. The passage reads, “*To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints*” (1 Thessalonians 3:13). But “all” does not necessarily mean that there can be no Christians on earth when Jesus arrives. Other passages clearly teach that there is at least the possibility of faithful Christians being on the earth when Jesus comes (Luke 18:8; 1 Thess. 4:15, 17; 1 Timothy 6:14). Perhaps First Thessalonians 3:13 refers to angels (also called “saints” or “holy ones,” Jude 14), who will accompany Jesus when He comes in judgment (Mark 8:38; 2 Thess. 1:7; Jude 14). Perhaps it refers to the dead in Christ whose spirits will be rejoined with their glorified bodies (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 1 Corinthians 15:52). Regardless, there is no need to stretch this passage to controvert other passages which teach that Christians can, and probably **will**, be on earth when Jesus comes again.

(3) The “coming” (*parousia*) of Christ refers to the Rapture; but the “revelation” and “appearing” (*apokalupsis* or *epiphaneia*) of Christ refer to His third coming, when He will establish His earthly kingdom.

Premillennialists try to make a distinction by saying that Christ will not “appear” or “be revealed” to all mankind at His Second Coming (the Rapture). They allege that it will be a secret, silent coming. While the right-

eous will depart to be with the Lord, those remaining will have no idea what has taken place. Indeed, Jesus spoke of His coming as resembling “*a thief in the night*” (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). However, this simply means that Christ will not announce the time of His coming (compare with Matthew 25:13). His coming will **not** be “silent” or “secret.” Note the earsplitting tumult that will accompany His coming: “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*” (1 Thess. 4:16). That would be quite a clamor for a “secret, silent” coming. As Peter describes that “coming like a thief in the night,” “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*” (2 Peter 3:10).

Also, the terms that Premillennialists insist must be used to refer to distinct events clearly are used to refer to the **same** events. Two of these words that Premillennialists insist must be distinct are found **in the same verse**: “*And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness [*epiphaneia*, elsewhere translated ‘appearing,’ LM] of his coming [*parousia*]*” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). The terms “coming,” “appearing,” and “revelation” are all used to refer to the (singular) Second Coming of Christ.

Paul exhorted, “*That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Timothy 6:14). How could any Christian be told to keep a commandment, to be observed on earth, until the Lord **appears**, when no Christians are to be on the earth when He appears?

“*To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before*

God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1 Thess. 3:13). Recall that Premillennialists insist that this passage must refer to a **third** coming because Jesus is described as coming **with** His saints instead of **for** His saints. Yet it uses the word "coming" (*parousia*) that Premillennialists insist must be limited to the Rapture, when Jesus comes **for** His saints.

The Bible teaches that the Second Coming of Christ will be a unique event in the history of the universe. On that day, God will destroy the universe in one fell blow: "*Whose voice then [at Mount Sinai, LM] shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet **once** more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven*" (Hebrews 12:26, emphasis LM). There will be no more physical universe to **come** to after He has come that second time (2 Peter 3:10). There will be no work left

with regard to the salvation or judgment of mankind—all will be accomplished.

Those who affirm the doctrine of the Rapture set themselves against the sufficiency of God's work. They deny that Christ will accomplish all the Scriptures affirm He will accomplish at His Second Coming. Not to mention, they deny the sufficiency of the kingdom Christ has already established, His church (Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 3:13; Revelation 1:9), insisting that He must establish a kingdom more to their liking.

It seems that at least part of the motivation behind the doctrine of "The Rapture" is to give the opportunity for a second chance. However, second chances are granted only while we are still living and while the universe stands (2 Peter 3:9). Dear reader, once Christ's Second Coming has taken place, there will be nothing

requiring a "Third Coming." There will be nothing left to allow the **possibility** of a "Third Coming." We simply must be prepared when He comes the second time.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen (Revelation 1:7).

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matthew 24:44).

1 Dispensational Premillennialism is the false notion that the entire history of the world, past, present, and future, is divided into seven dispensations (thus the "dispensational"); that the final dispensation will be a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on earth (thus the "millennial"); and that Christ's coming will precede His establishment of His kingdom (thus the "pre-"). Some have aptly added that the "-ism" means "it ain't so."

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

by Jerry C. Brewer

Do you remember billionaire Howard Hughes? When he died, myriads of people came out of the woodwork, brandishing what they claimed was his last will and testament. It took the courts years to sort through the false claims and establish the fact that Hughes had only one will. That's exactly the case of Mormonism with their book which they claim is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

Jesus Christ left only *one* last will or testament. It is that which we call The New Testament. But, like those who claimed Howard Hughes had "another" testament, the Mormons loudly and boldly proclaim that Joseph Smith's 19th century work of fiction is "Another Testament of Jesus Christ." The inspired apostle Paul

pronounced a divine curse upon all who would preach "another gospel" in Galatians 1:6-9. In that passage, he said, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" That means that even if there was such an angel as the so-called "Moroni" who gave Joseph Smith the Book of Mormon, that angel is accursed of God. The New Testament Scriptures are inspired of God and fully sufficient to supply all we need to serve God acceptably (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God never intended another than that which He revealed to furnish man unto every good work.

Paul also told the Galatians, "*I marvel that ye are soon removed from*

him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7). There is no such thing as "another testament of Jesus Christ." The Lord left only one testament, and it is not the Book of Mormon. The gospel of Christ—the complete gospel—is found in the New Testament—the only one Christ has. Joseph Smith wrote his fiction 1,800 years *after* the New Testament of Christ declared that the faith had been once and for all time delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). That makes the Book of Mormon 18 centuries too late to be the word of God, or it makes God a liar.

And, while no Bible writer ever contradicted his own words, Joseph Smith did just that. He wrote in Mosiah 3:5 in his book that God is eternal. But he later wrote in *History of The Church*, 6:305, "We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that

idea.” He also condemned polygamy in the Book of Mormon in 1830 in Jacob 1:15 and 2:24. But in his other creed book, called *Doctrine and Covenants*, he contradicted the Book of Mormon in a revelation to his wife Emma so he could have more than one wife. Here is what he wrote: “And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me...And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore he is justified.”

The Book of Mormon also contradicts the Bible regarding Christ’s birthplace. In Alma 7:10, Smith wrote that Christ was to be born in Jerusalem, but the Bible plainly declares that His birthplace was Bethlehem (Micah 4:2; Matthew 2:1, 4-6). How could Smith have made such a blunder if he was inspired? The truth is that he was not inspired of God and that his book came from his own uninformed imagination.

When one compares Smith’s Book of Mormon with Bible Truth, Smith is clearly shown to have been an imposter and his book false. The Book of Mormon is *not* “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.” It is the work of a religious charlatan whose contradictory writings constitute prima facie evidence of its spurious nature.

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GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God’s commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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