

The Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness

by H. A. Ironside

Revelation 22:16-21



The Old Testament ends with the solemn words, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6). The last word of the Old Testament is "curse" for that is all the Law could bring to man. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). But the New Testament ends with the words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Rev. 22:21).

It seems so fitting that the Holy Spirit should have so arranged it that when we come to the end of the canon of Scripture the last voice we hear should be that of our beloved Saviour. You notice how He addresses His people, using the personal name "Jesus" which was given Him when born on earth. Before His birth the angel said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Jesus is to us a unique name, but it was not unusual to the Hebrew people. The name "Joshua" is the Hebrew form of the word, the Greek being "*Iesous*," or as we say, "Jesus." Joshua means "Jehovah the Saviour." The name tells us who and what He was. When He grew up on earth He bore that name. He was Jesus in the carpenter shop. He was Jesus as He went over the hills and through the valleys of Galilee, Samaria and Judaea preaching the gospel. When hanging on the tree,

"They wrote that name above Him,
That all might know the reason we
Forevermore should love Him."

Pilate commanded and a placard was made out in Hebrew, Greek and Latin saying, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37). It was intended as a grim jest on Pilate's part, for the people hated that title, but Pilate practically said, "The reason I am crucifying this Man is that He is seeking to raise an insurrection against Caesar, proclaiming Himself King."

When He arose from the dead and ascended to God's right hand we are told that the Father ordained that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). That includes even the infernal regions. "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).

The apostle says, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9). Now when He speaks to His own for the last time before He descends to call us to be with Himself, He says "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (Rev. 22:16). "I, Jesus" — Jehovah the Saviour.

John Hamilton, the converted actor, used to like to make this into an acrostic: "Jesus Exactly Suits Us Sinners." The five initial letters spell "Jesus." Have you found that out? Have you fled to Him as a poor sinner?

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," (1 Tim. 1:15) said Paul. So the chief of sinners is already in heaven, and everyone else can get in behind him if they will.

Revelation, while dealing very largely with events after the Church has left the scene, is nevertheless God's last message to the churches. It is for His Church of this age, in order that they might order their lives now in view of that coming day. When I understand what is coming it helps me to take the right attitude toward this world at the present time.

"I am the Root and the Offspring of David," says Jesus (Rev. 22:16). "I am the Root of David" that is, David sprang from Him. That is a title of Deity — "I am the Root of David." David came into existence through the omnipotent power of Jesus. He was David's Creator. But He adds, "I am the Offspring of David." As Deity David sprang from Him, but as Man He sprang from David. Mary was a lineal descendant of David through his son Nathan, and Joseph was a lineal descendant of David through another son, Solomon.

"I am . . . the Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). What is the morning star? It is the herald of the dawn. This tells us of the Lord Jesus as the Coming One. Peter says we are to cherish the Word of prophecy for it shines as a light in a dark place. We are to keep it in our hearts until the Day Star arises. Jesus is the Day Star — the Bright and Morning Star. In a little while He is going to shine forth in glory — quietly, serenely, beautifully, to herald the coming day.

That is not the way the Second Coming is presented in the Old Testament, nor always in the New Testament. In Malachi, after giving the description of the terrible things to take place on the earth during the Great Tribulation, which comes between the Rapture of the saints and the appearing of Jesus in His glory, the Spirit of God says, "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2). Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming as the Sun of Righteousness to dispel all the sin clouds of earth and to bring in the reign of everlasting righteousness.

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32:1). "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps. 72:7). "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14). That is the way the people of Israel were taught to look for Him. That is the aspect of His coming that is presented in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; they are practically all occupied with His coming again as the Sun of Righteousness to bring in the kingdom; that is, the coming of the Son of Man. That term always refers to His coming to the earth.

But in John's Gospel you get another aspect of His coming. On the last night before going to the Garden of Sorrow, with His disciples around Him, He warned that one of them should betray Him, and when Peter declared that he would never fail to follow Jesus but would lay down his life for his Master, the Lord said to him, "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice" (John 13:38). Jesus immediately adds, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Did you notice how these words follow what He said to Peter? Jesus knew how broken-hearted Peter would be after denying his Lord, and how he would go

out in the dark and weep bitterly; He knew how he would feel when he realized the terrible thing he had done, so He said, "Even then, do not be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. You believe in God when you can't see Him; believe also in Me, when you no longer can see Me. When I am no longer here personally to comfort and help, believe in Me, trust and confide in Me." "In My Father's house are many mansions: [many abiding places, resting places for you.] ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2,3). There is nothing like this in Matthew, Mark, nor Luke. There is no hint in those Gospels that the first thing in connection with the Second Coming will be to take His own to be with Him in heaven. This is a new revelation, a new development of truth, an opening up of something very precious and lovely that had not been heard by them before.

This is the aspect of His coming developed by Paul through the Holy Spirit. He was used to open it more fully. He said, "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 Thess. 4:16,17). It is Paul who tells us, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:51-53). That is what is going to take place when the Lord Jesus shines forth as the Bright and Morning Star.

Some of us do not often see the morning star. It shines out just before the dawn when everything is darkest down below. Through the gloom there is that beautiful star shining. No matter how dark it gets, do not be discouraged. Though apostasy is increasing, iniquity is abounding, the love of many is becoming cold, distress on earth with grave perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear — no matter how dark conditions may be, Jesus is coming. He may come at any moment now, and when the Morning Star shines forth we know that the day — the day of righteousness — will soon appear.

"I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star," says Jesus (Rev. 22:16). And immediately there is a response on the part of His own: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come" (Rev. 22:17).

I don't think the word "Come" here is addressed to the unsaved. Generally it is used as though this verse is simply a message to sinners. Undoubtedly the last part of the verse does, but the first two sentences have an altogether different meaning. I like to read Wycliffe's Old English translation: "I am ye roote and ye offspring of David, and ye bright and morning star. And ye Spirit and ye spouse are saying, Come Thou. And let him that heareth say, Come Thou." The "come" is addressed to Christ, and wherever the message is carried and men hear with faith, let them say, "Come, Lord Jesus."

I remember one night in Stockton, California, in a German church I was preaching about the coming of Jesus. As I was in prayer I was conscious of a woman getting

up and going out, for in those days the skirts would swish whenever a lady walked. It seemed to me that this lady must have gone out in a hurry. When I finished my prayer and went to greet the friends at the door, I found a woman pacing back and forth in the lobby. The moment I came she said to me, "How would you dare pray like that — 'Come, Lord Jesus'? I don't want Him to come. It would break in on all my plans. How dare you!"

I said, "My dear young woman, Jesus is coming whether you want it or not." But she was indignant, irate. She told me of certain worldly interests which she had, that some day she wanted to be a Christian, but not until all these things had gone by.

But you cannot bargain with Christ in that way. If you put worldly things first, perhaps the day will arrive when you are ready to come to Christ but you may find you have no inclination left. The Lord says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). So harden not your heart.

But oh, if you know Him, and love Him, surely your heart says, "Come, Lord Jesus." If we are really waiting for His coming, of course we shall not be indifferent to the needs of the world. Naturally we shall be concerned about men and women who are unsaved. So we shall be glad to take up the gospel invitation given in the last part of the verse, "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Is there a poor thirsty soul here? You have tried in vain to slake your thirst on the waters of earth. What Jesus said of the water in Samaria's well is true of all that this world offers: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." I don't care what it is, you may try it all but you will thirst still — "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

"I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But all their waters failed.
E'en as I stooped to drink they fled
And mocked me as I wailed.

"The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,
But never wept for Thee,
Till grace my sightless eyes received
Thy loveliness to see.

"Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me;
There's life, and love, and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee."

Because we know how well He can satisfy the human soul, we take up the cry and invite you to come. "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

Now we come to two very solemn verses, Rev. 22:18,19: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this

book." I shudder when I read a verse like that and think how people try to add to Scripture pretended revelations of their own and foist them upon others. Think of Mohammed making up the Koran for his religion, and trying to force it upon the people as an addition to the Book of God. Think of Smith trying to foist the Book of Mormon as an addition to the Scriptures, and of Mary Baker Eddy trying to foist upon the world her book, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," as something added to the Bible. I don't need her key, for the Bible is already an open Book...

"If any man shall add unto these things." It will be awful for men and women to have to face in eternity the results of their work. But the next verse is as solemn, and it makes me tremble for our so-called "modernists." "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:19). God says, "You will never reach heaven if you try to destroy My Word." What a serious thing it is to teach men and women that God's Bible is not, after all, the inspired Word of the living God!

But after these two tremendous statements we hear again the voice of Jesus from heaven — the last word that ever will be heard from heaven until 1 Thessalonians 4 is fulfilled, and "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." That will be the next word from heaven. It is in Rev. 22:20. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen." And John, speaking for the whole ransomed Church of God says, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Does your heart say that?

Those who know their Bibles best and are most familiar with conditions in the world today are persuaded we are living in the last hours of the Christian dispensation. We see conditions prevailing in the Church of God — ever-increasing apostasy among some, coupled with a greater interest in missionary work on the part of others — and the signs tell us that Jesus is coming soon. We see the Jews gathering back to their own land, prophecy being fulfilled before our very eyes, and these things tell us that the fig-tree is putting forth its green leaves to show that Jesus is coming soon. We see conditions in Europe and the Far East that are working up to the very circumstances predicted in the Scriptures concerning the last days. If it were not that many of us know that Jesus is our Saviour, our hearts would be filled with fear and dread, but because we do there is no fear or dread. With joy we cry, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."