

# GOD'S DOOM OR GLORY

## (REVELATION'S APOCALYPSE)

Many expositors characterize the events during the prophetic periods that embrace the Second Advent as a “negative.” For some, that is a justifiable reason to minimize the study of end-time prophecy. The joy of salvation and “getting along” is emphasized at the expense of connecting with God’s “final insights.” He has chosen, however, a revelation that is alarming.

God’s prophetic missives choreograph a distinct “last purpose.” His “future stories” do reveal glory, rewards and bliss. But, in dealing with a progressively evil world, He has chosen to graphically **emphasize** the heart-wrenching devastation and oppressive experiences just ahead. The greatest drama portrays a progressive helplessness that the wicked will experience. **Why?**

- As they lose cherished assets and the world segmentally becomes desolate, He hopes that a dependency beyond this world will develop.
- He begins to use calamities as an early punishment.
- There are countdown “clocks” that will then be “ticking” (some have already begun), warning planet earth that its last chance is approaching.

In numerous places expositor White describes parallel thinking regarding this.

“Calamities will come – **calamities most awful**, most unexpected; and these destructions will follow one after another. If there will be a heeding of the warnings that God has given, and if churches **will repent**, returning to their allegiance, then other cities may be spared for a time. But if men who have been deceived continue in the same way in which they have been walking, disregarding the law of God and presenting falsehoods before the people, God allows them to suffer calamity, **that their senses may be awakened.**”<sup>1</sup>

“These judgments are sent that those who lightly regard God’s law and trample upon His authority may be led **to tremble before His power** and **to confess His just sovereignty.**”<sup>2</sup>

“The signs of the **coming of the end** are thickening around us, and **events are to come to pass that will be of a more terrible character than any the world has yet witnessed...** ‘knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, **the day is at hand:** let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.’” [Romans 13:11-12; cf. I Thessalonians 5:5-8].<sup>3</sup> “When these things **begin** to come to pass, then look up” (Luke 21:28).

“God calls for famine and plague and pestilence, for calamities by sea and by land, **to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.** In response to the call of God, the things of nature spring to do his bidding, either in wasting and destruction or in mercies and blessings.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, November 22, 1892.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1907.

We thought it valuable to create a scanning review of Revelation's key "advent" purposes. What is God trying to convey? His emphasis is most instructive to help mature what our focus should be! A "convicting purpose," a "decision time" urgency is a silver thread!

Throughout, Jesus drops discreet reminders: "*I come quickly*," "Understand the Apocalypse in that light!"<sup>5</sup> Time is running out.

### **Christ's Eschatological Template – Where it All Begins**

The introductory prophecy that all other New Testament Advent studies echo is in Matthew. We will see this often referenced in John's Revelation.

*"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.... And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:27, 30).*

Christ refers to:

1. Dramatic suddenness<sup>6</sup>
2. Easterly deliverance
3. Coming of Jesus, as the Son of Man (our elder Brother)
4. The sign of "clouds"
5. Earth's response of mourning (hopeless guilt)
6. Power and great glory with a "trumpet" call (vs 31)

The angels are then to gather the elect from around the world (Matthew 24:31). This "grand finale" follows a lengthy narrative of gloom that began in verse 4. This emphasis is a **prophetic pattern** we now explore in Revelation.

### **John's Introductory "Coming"** (Revelation 1)

The theme verse for that whole book: "*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).

John begins this verse with "**behold**" – a word he uses repeatedly to draw us into his experience – "See what I see!"

**John first notices** that Christ comes with "**clouds**."

- Daniel noted that the Son of Man "came with the clouds of heaven" (Daniel 7:13).
- The disciples had asked: "*What shall be the sign of thy coming?*" (Matthew 24:3). His answer: "*The Son of man coming in the clouds.*"
- "This cloud, when it first appears, is the **sign** of the Son of man in heaven."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977), p. 502.

<sup>6</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 36-37.

The imagery of clouds reveals that Jesus will come from “above” – somewhere from the celestial realms (cf. 19:11, 14). Clouds in Hebrew thought are commonly associated with the divine presence (Exodus 13:21, 16:10; Matthew 17:5; Acts 1:9).<sup>8</sup> This occurs shortly after a Jubilee begins<sup>9</sup> – a crucial link to Daniel 9’s prophecy!

The word for “**comes**” or “**cometh**” are *erchetai* (“He comes”) and *erchomai* (“I come”). John uses them at least 14 times – **all referring to Christ’s Second Coming** (16:15; 22:7, 12; 1:4, 8; 2:5, 16; 3:11; 4:8; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20)! In the Old Testament *ho erchonenos* (Greek translation) refers to “The coming one.”<sup>10</sup>

- It is no wonder that expositor White said:
- “In view of the revelation made to John on the Isle of Patmos, which from the opening of the first chapter to the close of the last chapter is light, great light, revealed to us by Jesus Christ, who chose John to be the channel through whom this light was to shine forth to the world – with such wonderful, solemn truths revealed, with such grand truths unfolded before us in the events to transpire **just prior** to the second appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory [the rest of the sentence questions why secret sins – in light of these truths].”<sup>11</sup> The Second Coming is the contextual timing of the whole book! (See next section.)

The “coming” messages stress **imminence** in time (22:7, 12).<sup>12</sup> Matthew and Luke do also in the context of specific signs.

John makes a statement of fact in this first “coming” reference: “**every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.**” (Revelation 1:7).

- This is explicit. Even those who pierced His side observe His return? This echos:
- “*They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him*” (Zechariah 12:10; cf. John 19:37).

Then come these words:

**“... and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7).**

For God’s people it will bring unspeakable joy – but that is not noted. The judicial heartache for the wicked is presented.<sup>13</sup> This is embellished later in Revelation 6:

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<sup>7</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Mounce, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 1–7 – An Exegetical Commentary* (Moody Press, Chicago), 1992, p. 76.

<sup>11</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 433-434.

<sup>12</sup> Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

- “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Revelation 6:15-16).
- Every eye sees – the wicked see, cry and then want to hide.

This is described elsewhere in many prophecies as the “Day of the Lord” (cf. Zephaniah 1:14-15).

- This is the “day” Jesus returns, the “day” when history is concluded.<sup>14</sup>
- There is “mourning” of **repentance** alluded to in Zechariah 12:10-12 (before that “day!”)
- Here, the mourning is **remorse**. Their last chance to repent has passed. It is a cry of **despair**.

“The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With **fearful forebodings** they gaze upon the symbol of God’s covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness”<sup>15</sup> (cf. Deuteronomy 4:13, Exodus 34:28).

The Second Coming prophecy noted early in Revelation is like the wail of a siren in the middle of the night: “Emergency – emergency – emergency!” – and there is no one then to rescue the impenitent.

### **Revelation’s Stunning Eschatological Timing!**

With so many references to the Second Advent in the New Testament, one muses as to why these details are repeated as part of Jesus’ **introductory testimony** to this book.

- The drama of Revelation begins with apocalyptic urgency, giving us a critical orientation to the whole book.
- Crucial to note: In the context of that Second Coming (vs 7), Jesus has **already** made two **timing statements**:
  1. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must **shortly come to pass**; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Revelation 1:1).
  2. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for **the time is at hand**” (Revelation 1:3).

**“Time” “out of the gate” is an “anchor point”** in John’s book!

- Towards the close of the first century John writes (twice in the first three verses) those urgent timing expressions.

<sup>14</sup> Beale, G. K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999), p. 198.

<sup>15</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 635 (cf. pp. 637-644).

- Many assume that they were meant for John's day. But verses 1-3 and 7 are linked together (verses 4-6 are "commentary inserts" – greetings from the Trinity).

It has been over 1900 years since the inspiration of this book was given to John. Most of its predictions have yet to unfold. Those early phrases and "**behold I come soon**" (22:6) at the book's end can have only one meaning within the context of all other messages. They surround the time Jesus will return! Just as expositor White noted.<sup>16</sup>

- Later, when there are specific timing prophecies [42 months (11:2, 13:5), 1260 days (11:3), time time half time (12:14)], they, too, **all** surround the Second Advent period!
- Again, this explains why Jesus repeatedly notes "*I come quickly*" (2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20) – all in the context of this book's prophecies.
- The whole book is end-time!

These expressions announce that His coming is drawing near (Mark 13:28-29; cf. Romans 13:11, Philippians 4:5).<sup>17</sup>

### **Messages for the Saved – They aren't Left Out** (Revelation 1, 5)

Jesus is ministering to His churches (1:13). Then the scene turns heavenward. A dramatic portrayal shows the redeemed singing with the angels! (Revelation 5:8-14). In elevated imagery those expressive choirs reverently worship Jesus with cries of "worthiness to the Lamb to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing!" What a wondrous future is ahead for the saints!

### **The Lost Come into View Again** (Revelation 6)

John describes a cross-section of humanity in Revelation 6:15a. Then it says that they all:

- "... hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the **face of him** that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (John 6:15b-16).

There is a surreal echo reverberating over time from Jesus. Unable to bear the wooden Cross, in words of sadness and pity, He said to those mourning His weakness:

- "*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.... [They will soon] say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us*" (Luke 23:28, 30; cf. Malachi 3:2, Isaiah 2:10, 19).

**That face**, beaming with glory, is eternal joy and bliss to the saints and terror and death to the wicked.

Paul had alluded to the "**light**" of His persona.

<sup>16</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 433-434.

<sup>17</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

- “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the **brightness of his coming**” (II Thessalonians 2:8).

This depiction of John in chapter 6 is of the executive judgment at His coming (cf. Matthew 25:31-33).<sup>18</sup>

### **Back to Heaven with Another Snapshot of the Saved** (Revelation 7 and 11)

At the end of the 1260 days of witnessing (11:7a) God’s emissaries are invited to: “Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them” (Revelation 11:12). Again, that cloud is the apocalyptic sign of the Second Advent.

In an earlier vision John had seen those saved around the throne:

*“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 7:14; cf. 7:15-17, 12:11).

### **More Second Coming Judicial Imagery** (Revelation 14)

*“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’”* (Revelation 14:14-15 – NKJV).

- Jesus (the Son of Man – Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27) – sitting on a white cloud – with a crown of victory (giving him authority)
- He is seated – a judicial stance ready to pronounce a sentence or execute the same.
- The sickle shows His readiness to execute a final harvest. Its sharpness suggests the finality of His act.<sup>19</sup>

An unidentified angel comes out of the temple [where God’s throne resides (7:15) – and is symbolic of His presence (3:12, 7:15, 11:19, 21:22)].<sup>20</sup> He announces to Jesus that it is **time** to harvest – the harvest is ripe. Begin the reaping.

- Those saints were described in 14:1-5 (the 144,000). In verse 12 they are said to keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.
- In Revelation 14:6 the hour of judgment had come (choosing the saints – vs 7). Here, the hour has come to “harvest” those saints!<sup>21</sup> The reward then goes back to verses 1-5.

This picture is of the “grain harvest,” symbolized in ancient rituals as related to the barley and wheat harvests.

<sup>18</sup> Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

<sup>19</sup> Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 551.

<sup>20</sup> Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 772.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 774.

***The harvest focus now turns towards the wicked! The picture is not pretty.***

*“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle”* (Revelation 14:17).

- This is the second unidentified angel.
- As with the others, his mission originates from the temple. It is assumed that God the Father commissioned them.

This is the angel of justice. Then *“another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe”* (Revelation 14:18).

- This *“another angel”* from the altar is Jesus (cf. 8:3-4), who affirms the harvest-time mission against the wicked.
- He has authority over the fire (cf. 8:3-5, 14:10). This also symbolizes final judgment.
- The grain represents the ***righteous*** – the grapes symbolize the ***wicked***.

Following a literal grape harvest, grapes were trampled to create the juice in a special vat. The analogy is adopted for the lost:

- *“For the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great”* (Joel 3:13b).
- Trampling the grapes became a metaphor for divine judgment (Isaiah 5:5; 63:2-3, 6; Lamentations 1:15)
- It depicts what God warns would occur in the Bible’s most painful language regarding the *“wine of his wrath”* (Revelation 14:9-11). This is explained further in Revelation 19:15.

What follows is graphic imagery of death to the wicked (Revelation 14:20).

- God doesn’t spare the prophecy from a final grotesque picture (see Revelation 19:17-18, 21b).
- The “grape juice” pouring from the vat is now seen as the blood of unrepentant sinners (the harvest was “ripe”). They had rejected Christ’s blood – they must now spill their own blood because of unrepented sin.

**Final Second Coming Portrayal** (Revelation 19)

Exciting words are given, announcing that God’s people – the Lamb’s bride – has made herself ready (Revelation 19:7).

- Invitations go out for the marriage supper (19:9)
- **Then:**

The bridegroom comes for His bride – **but judicial punishment imagery takes over!**

- “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth **judge and make war**” (Revelation 19:11).
  1. Heaven was first seen open in 4:1 at the “judgment of the living” onset. Now it opens for the Lamb to come for those chosen out of that judicial process.
  2. The white horse (warring body of saints) that Jesus directs was first seen in 6:2 as His saints going out to finish the gospel work. Here it symbolizes all the saints who had been resurrected with Christ and who had already been taken to heaven (a “multitude”) (Matthew 27:52-53, Ephesians 4:8).<sup>22</sup>
    - In Zechariah 9:9-10 (cf. Mark 11:7-10) the king rides forth on a donkey. At the *parousia* (Second Coming), King Jesus rides on a horse as a mighty conqueror.<sup>23</sup>



This quickly changes to the judicial fate of the wicked, when He will tread that winepress (Revelation 19:15).

This “coming” narrative is completed with another grotesque picture of the carrion from the sinners being eaten by birds – at God’s invitation (19:17-18, 21) (God’s ultimate warning of horror).

### **Ending in Hope**

After so much negative imagery, the last two chapters (Revelation 21–22) tantalize everyone to remain loyal to God and the Lamb by describing the eternal rewards of the righteous. It is heaven’s “travel agency’s” greatest promo!

- As Jesus signs off, He once again notes these things “*must shortly be done*” (22:6).
- I’m “*coming quickly*” (22:7, 12).
- “*The time is at hand*” (22:10).

### **Conclusion**

The Christian hope lies in Christ fulfilling the promise: “*I will come again*” (John 14:3). The Second Coming is highlighted in the Olivet discourse and recorded in three gospels.

“One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ’s second coming, to complete the great work of redemption. To God’s pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in ‘the region and shadow of death,’ a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is ‘the resurrection and the life,’ to ‘bring home again His

<sup>22</sup> White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 786.

<sup>23</sup> Roloff, Jürgen; *The Revelation of John – A Continental Commentary*, (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN), p. 217.

banished.’ The doctrine of the second advent is the very key-note of the Sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer’s power and bring them again to the lost Paradise.... Enoch, only the seventh in descent from them that dwelt in Eden, he who for three centuries on earth walked with his God, was permitted to behold from afar the coming of the Deliverer. ‘Behold,’ he declared, ‘the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all.’ The patriarch Job in the night of his affliction exclaimed with unshaken trust: ‘I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:... in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.’”<sup>24</sup>

That great hope, assurance and expectation is sustained in Revelation. But – Christ’s apocalyptic testimony brings a stern “spin” which shouts at us from those Advent narratives!

- This is the Scripture’s “grand finale” warning.
- It is “do or die” – “choose you this day” (Joshua 24:15).
- God chose to express *end-time* with a lot of *gloom and doom*. His choice!

The Second Advent in John’s Revelation repeatedly unveils “raw imagery” of terror, remorse, hopelessness and irrevocable horror awaiting the sinner and the rebellious.

- The “beauty of holiness” is never diminished, however. Its pedestal remains high and lifted up.
- The rewards of the saints remain tantalizingly attractive.

But – God would have all Christians be warned that when Jesus comes, the last chance to “love God” will have passed. In uncharacteristic “wrath” the wicked are rejected and life ends.

- When the “twinkling change” (I Corinthians 15:52) comes, it will not bring moral goodness.
- Some time, actually, before those “citizen jewels” (Malachi 3:17) join the Son of Man in the clouds, the sealing declaration will be “decreed.”

*“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still”*  
(Revelation 22:11).

Revelation is filled with incredible details of the approaching end! The how, who, what and where’s are blended into a story of clarity that can bring hope to those who have fallen in love with Jesus. But these prophecies are designed to bring fear to the careless.

The Second Advent is more judicial than merciful in Revelation. God is attempting to motivate a sense of utmost awareness of ***end times***.

- An echo of Matthew 25 reverberates through its pages.

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<sup>24</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 13.

- The intimation is clear: Christ wants you as His “sheep!” But – at the end, it’s “your call.”

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