

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

By Rick McKinney

MOG Praise and Worship Meeting, December 2, 2018

Good evening. This talk on the Second Coming was delivered last March during our Growing in Faith series upstairs, but it was felt to be appropriate to proclaim it again at this time at the end of the Church year and the beginning of Advent, so as to engender an appreciation and hope for Christ's coming and to spur us on to become more fully the Bride of Christ without spot or wrinkle. On the table near the doors there should be a two page handout with the bulk of this teaching on it so you need not take notes. There is also a two page handout with two poems I wrote (actually they more like poetic prose). One is about the Second Coming, entitled, "The King, the Son of Man is Coming." The other is about his First Coming, entitled, "He the Son of God, Became the little one." In addition to these, selected and highlighted "Second Coming" paragraphs from scripture and from the Catechism is available by e-mail from the MOG office or from me as they are not on the brief handouts, but were included in the original handout last March.

Second Coming Proclaimed by Scripture, the Catechism, the Liturgy and the Creeds

Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and the Catechism of the Catholic Church all proclaim the Second Coming of Christ with its attendant events such as the resurrection of the dead, the final judgement, the abolition of death and sorrow and the unending, joyous dwelling of God's people in a new heaven and a new earth. The Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed also profess it, and I quote, "from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead; ... I believe in the ... resurrection of the

dead and life in the world to come.” “He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end ... I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” In the liturgy of the Mass the people respond, “We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection until you come again,” and after the Lord’s Prayer the celebrant says, “as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” The Second Coming has a special place here in the Mother of God Community for both in the opening of our statutes and our covenant we profess, “We believe that God has united us as a community within the Body of Christ in order to live out the New Covenant in a specific way by the grace of the Holy Spirit as we await Christ’s coming in glory.”

The Importance of Belief in the Second Coming of Christ

The Second Coming is an important belief for it manifests both God’s justice and His mercy and love. It also undergirds His purpose for us in sharing with us his own divine nature (see 2 Peter 1:4) and our hope for an imperishable, resurrected body (see 1 Peter 1:3-8) as we wait for the coming wedding feast of the Lamb and his bride, which is the Church, the body of Christ.

End Times Literature in the Bible

The Hebrew prophets generally foresaw only one coming of the promised Messiah, sort of like looking at one hill and not realizing there is another one just behind it. However, what was difficult for them to reconcile was the suffering Messiah (like Psalm 22 –“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” or that in Isaiah 53) with the triumphant Messiah (like Isaiah 2 and Joel 2). Much of these writings are in the form that scripture scholars call apocalyptic literature or eschatological writings. The word apocalypse comes from the Greek “apocalypsis” and means “unveiling” and is usually translated in English as “revelation.”

The connotation today conveys the sense of the world ending disaster. The word “eschatology” has to do with the doctrine or branch of theology dealing with the final things which include much more than final cataclysmic events. There are many parts in the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, Revelation, and others that have these eschatological passages and descriptions, not to mention Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and 1 Corinthians 15 (see handout by request).

Trials, Persecutions, Great Witnesses, Jewish Inclusion

Before the Second Coming of Christ it is written that there is to be a period of great trial and tribulation and apostasy as well as a great witness of believers who remain faithful and whose witness also brings about a full inclusion of Jewish believers in Christ. Throughout Christian history and even now there have been many trials, many cataclysmic events, many persecutions and many witnesses and martyrs for Christ, but only in recent decades have there also been the return of the Jewish people to their promised land and the reappearance, since the 4th century, of Messianic Jewish synagogues. As a matter of fact, there are a number of Messianic Jewish synagogues in this area. One of these meets close by in Montgomery Village at Northgate Community Church on Saturday mornings.

The Ministry of Monsignor Peter Hocken

Probably the person who has worked and written the most about End Times and the Jewish Inclusion is Monsignor Peter Hocken, a Catholic priest, author, scholar, Pentecostal/Charismatic historian, and formerly a long-time member and resident here at the Mother of God Community when we knew him as Father Peter Hocken. He it was that brought Messianic Jewish pastors to meet with the last three popes, including Pope Francis who allowed Msgr. Hocken and a Messianic Jewish pastor from Brazil to pray over him in Argentina the week before the conclave that elected him Pope. When Pope Benedict XVI met with them, then as Cardinal Ratzinger, he said, “we theologians always knew that one day

you all would come knocking on the door of the Church, and here you are. It is an eschatological sign.” One of the things that Messianic Jews are pressing for is a new Council of Jerusalem which Msgr. Hocken coined for them as “Toward Jerusalem II.” In the first Council of Jerusalem, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the Church definitively declared that gentiles did not first have to become Jews in order to be Christians. In the Second Council of Jerusalem, Messianic Jews would like the Church to definitively declare that Jews do not first have to become Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox or whatever in order to be considered full brothers and sisters in Christ. Pope Francis particularly asked Msgr. Hocken to hold a seminar with some Messianic Jewish pastors at the 2017 Jubilee Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Rome a couple of days before Pentecost, which a number of us in this room attended. Shortly after the conference, Msgr. Peter Hocken was suddenly called home to be with his Lord, his work, apparently, being finished here on this earth. We held a memorial service for him at St. John Neumann Church across the street, where he had often celebrated Mass and gave learned homilies.

Keep Your Eye on Jesus not Apocalyptic Predictions

One can get all worked up over the cataclysmic events and rise of the antichrist that are said to precede the Second Coming of Christ, but I don't believe that God would want his people to put their concentration on such things. When I was a little child growing up in a Protestant church, one the first heart felt prayers I prayed was, “Lord, please don't come soon, I'm not ready and a lot of other people are not ready.” Somehow God gave me a peaceful assurance not to worry about it anymore. My father told me his story that when he was a young man training to be a missionary during World War II he was devastated to hear that the Italian people had killed their dictator, Benito Mussolini in 1945. He said to himself, “They can't do that. They killed my anti-Christ.” Of course for centuries many people have thought they were living in the last days and saw various signs in their time and various people and

nations as matching up with those in Scripture. For many Jews it was the end of the world when Jerusalem and their sacred temple was destroyed by Roman armies in 70 A.D. Many scripture scholars believe that Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation refer to that event for it was the end of the world as they had known it. In 1,000 A.D. it was said that most Europeans were expecting the end to come. In 1848 the Adventists in the United States sold their farms and homes as they were all expecting the end of the world to come according to their interpretation of the Book of Daniel. In the 19th Century there also began a scripture interpretation about “the rapture” of all believers. In the 20th Century there was very popular book by Hal Lindsey called “The Late Great Planet Earth” which predicted the end times to come quite soon and there was popular “Left Behind” series in books and video. There have been many others.

It may well be that we are living near the Day of the Lord, but our concentration should be on the LORD not the interpretations of signs and the beasts and persecutions.

This was brought home to me exactly one year ago on Saturday, December 2, 2017, the last day of the Church year, as I was sitting in the church across the street waiting for the 9:00 a.m. Mass to begin. I began reading the Scripture readings for that day in chapter 7 of the Book of Daniel and in that chapter Daniel was asking an angel more about a vision concerning the fourth beast to come that was more frightening than the rest. I said to myself, “Wait didn’t yesterday’s reading also talk about the coming of the son of man. Why isn’t Daniel asking about him?” So I went back to the reading the day before, and as I was reading about the four beasts and came to the part that read, “I saw one like the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven,” suddenly the direct rays of the sun arose out of the dawn and shined through the window above the tabernacle directly on the seat I was sitting for about 30 seconds or so before moving on. It was so bright I found it difficult to continue reading. I believe God spoke to me with that image of the sun and wanted me to

know that when the Son Man appears all else and all other lights are so much the lesser. There is no comparison. Jesus is the Light of the world. Whatever beasts or anti-Christ Satan throws our way now or at the end of time they are not where our focus should be, for as the passage in Daniel further states, "his dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingdom shall not be destroyed." This is part of the same reading that was read at Mass last weekend on the Feast of Christ, the King.

Back to the Garden and Beyond the Garden

In the beginning it is written that God placed man and woman in a garden, a place where nature is ordered aright and where man walked with God in the cool of the day with unveiled communication, unfettered trustfulness, un-self-centeredness and un-defensiveness. God had breathed His breath into man's spirit and his spirit was alive to God and unclouded by sin or fear. But man and woman, after due deliberation, chose to be mistrustful of God and to decide for themselves what was good and what was evil. The forbidden fruit of mistrustful disobedience produced the immediate death of man's unrivalled access to God along with self-centeredness, self-defensiveness, fear, and much more. But God could not and would not abandon his beloved to such a fallen state. For many years later, in another garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, the new Adam made a final decision, after agonized deliberation, to trust God in obedience, and to cry out, "yet not my will, but yours be done." The new Adam was our savior Jesus who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried - in another garden, a garden where he also rose from the dead. At the end of time it is written that there shall be a new heaven and a new earth and a New Jerusalem out of whose temple shall flow the river of life with the unfailing tree of life on either side, like a garden, and its fruit shall be for food and its leaves for healing. The restoration of mankind is also in a new resurrected body in glorious splendor that shall not be subject to suffering or death and the

particular joy and the particular gratitude of each one of the redeemed, no one can describe.

Everyone Lives, Dies and Faces A Judgement

Most people have not and will not live to the end of time, but in a very real sense everyone lives their life knowing that their time on earth will come to an end. We go through various trials, we witness, we learn, we laugh, we mourn and we each have a particular judgement at the end of our life, and hopefully and mercifully share in Christ's resurrection. In John 15 Jesus says, "I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." Jesus also says that his Father is the gardener who prunes each branch so that it bears more fruit. Abiding, dwelling, remaining in Christ and He in us is the present privilege and glorious future of God's beloved in Christ and it is meant to begin now and blossom gloriously in eternity.

The Greatest Love Story

At the beginning of the Bible there is an account of God finding a suitable mate for Adam in the creation of Eve out of Adam's rib. At the end of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation, there is the promise of the wedding feast of the Lamb and his bride, the Church. In between there are the stories of God's care for his wayward people and God wooing them by the laying down of His life in love. In a very real sense, the entire Bible can be considered as one great love story between God and His beloved people, the greatest love story of all time.

Divine Union is God's Ultimate Goal For Us

It is a mysterious truth that that the participants in Holy Communion, marital union, and Divine Union all voice the same words, "I am in my beloved, my beloved is in me, we are one together." God the Father's desire is that His beloved Son, through the Holy Spirit, be joined in nuptial union with His bride, the Church, a Church in which he laid down His life

for in love. Jesus defeated sin, Satan and death. He delivered us from the dominion of darkness and He deserves a spotless, holy bride. Does he not? Can you not make yourself ready to greet the bridegroom and to say with all the saints, "Come Lord Jesus, Come."

Two days before I gave this talk earlier this year I was inspired to compose a song related to this subject matter that goes like this - "From the Father God has spoken through his son, his only one. Through the Spirit God has chosen his own bride for his own son; his own bride for his own son; his own bride for his own son."