

IV. The Kingdom and the Millennium

A. The Kingdom of God in Scripture

All Christians in all ages have believed in Christ's Return, His Second Advent, His Second Coming. These term "return", "Second Advent", "Second coming" all imply Christ's First Advent or Coming. In the fullness of time He came; once again in the fullness of time He will come again.

R. A. Torrey, well-known evangelist and writer, said that the greater number of predictions concerning Christ in the Old Testament are connected with His Second Coming. He also stated that the Second Coming of Christ is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament. Of course, others term are used as well. We not only read about His Coming, His advent, His return; we also find terms manifestation, "appearing", "revelation", and "rapture". All of these term refer to various aspects of the doctrine of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This great doctrine has been expressed in Christian creeds and confessions from the earliest times. In the Apostles' Creed (the earliest form of which dates back to A.D. 150) we read "he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence *he shall come* to judge the quick and the dead." In the Athanasian Creed (dating back to the fifth century) we read: "Ascended to heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father omnipotent, whence *he shall come* to judge the living and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall render an account for their own works." (italics added)

This truth of the Second Coming of Christ is a truly universal doctrine; one which has been held by the whole household of faith. It has been confessed always, everywhere, and by all. It has been held by all churches, whether eastern or western, whether ancient, medieval, or modern, as one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

However, although all Christians have believed in the personal return of Christ, they have held widely differing positions on the relationship of the Second Coming to the Kingdom of God, positions that have affected their conception of both the nature and the time of that kingdom. In part, these differing positions arise because of the different meanings of the term "Kingdom of God".

1. Various meanings of the term "Kingdom of God" in Scripture
 - a. God's comprehensive rule in the created universe

In its most comprehensive sense, the Kingdom of God means the rule of God in all spheres of the universe. This rule is as old as the universe itself. In this sense God's kingdom is already present, throughout the world. This first meaning is beautifully expressed in two Old Testament Scriptures:

Chronicles 29:11-12 -- "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in