

BEHOLD I COME QUICKLY

TEXT: REVELATION 3:7-13

INTRODUCTION:

1. In Scripture, the second coming of Christ is described as imminent, i.e., it will come suddenly without announcement (3:11).
2. There are no prophecies that must be fulfilled before the rapture.
3. Of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, only two received no word of rebuke from our Lord -- Smyrna and Philadelphia (3:7).
4. "Quickly" (3:11) here means suddenly and unexpectedly. The expression "quickly" is to be understood as something which is sudden and unexpected, but not necessarily immediate.
5. To the dead church in Sardis it was a warning (3:3), but to the faithful church in Philadelphia it was a promise of blessing.
6. In fact, prophecies dealing with the second coming of Christ are always presented this way. Revelation 11:18 says, "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."
7. In the middle of this warning of judgment upon the nations, we read, "and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets."
8. And it is not only prophets who will be rewarded. Our Lord said in Matthew 10:41, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."
9. The second coming of Christ will be a wonderful blessing for godly believers, but judgment for those who are not right with God.

I. THERE IS A CROWN TO BE WON (3:11).

1. The "crown" here refers to rewards at the judgment seat of Christ, which will immediately follow the rapture. Revelation 4:4 describes them as "crowns of gold."
2. Sadly, most Christians know very little about the judgment seat. The apostle Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10; cf. Romans 14:10).

3. A number of years ago, the great Bible teacher Merrill F. Unger wrote a book entitled, *Great Neglected Bible Prophecies*, and in this book he has a chapter on the judgment seat of Christ.
4. Dr. Unger said this about the judgment seat of Christ: "It would not be easy to find another scriptural truth, at once so vital and pivotal to Christian living, subject to so much disregard and error."
5. Therefore, as Bible-believing Christians, it behooves us to study this important doctrine, and to proclaim it to others. Paul said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Cor. 5:11).
6. There are many references to crowns and rewards in the Bible, and it is a profitable subject for Bible study.
7. Psalm 58:11 says, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth."
8. In the very last chapter of the Bible we read, "And, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).
9. First Corinthians 3:8 says, "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."
10. "To give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).
11. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (I Cor. 3:8).
12. We need to differentiate between salvation and rewards. Salvation is a free gift. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).
13. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).
14. Salvation is a free gift, but rewards are given for faithful service to those who are already saved by God's grace through faith.
15. The Bible describes the Christian life as a race to be run. At the end of the race, rewards (crowns) will be given (cf. I Cor. 9:23-27).
16. This is not speaking of salvation. Those who will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ.
17. Various crowns are described in Scripture. The apostle Paul refers to the crown of rejoicing in I Thessalonians 2:19.
18. This is the soulwinner's crown (2:19, 20), and every Christian can win a soulwinner's crown. Everyone can give out gospel tracts. I was in a church in California a few days before Carl and Pam's wedding and

- the pastor said most of his members had made a commitment to give out at least one tract a day.
19. James 1:12 and Rev. 2:10 refer to the crown of life. This is the crown for those that endure trials and temptations for Jesus' sake. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."
 20. The church in Smyrna was a suffering church (2:10). But the glories of everlasting life stand in contrast to the trials of persecution and martyrdom.
 21. Second Timothy 4:8 refers to the crown of righteousness for "all them... that love his appearing." Demas had forsaken Paul, "having loved this present world"
 22. First Peter 5:4 refers to the crown of glory for faithful shepherds; and I Corinthians 9:25 refers to the incorruptible crown for temperance and self-control in the race of life.
 23. Let me emphasize there will be different degrees of rewards in heaven, and different degrees of punishment in hell.
 24. Three times it is recorded in Scripture that our Lord gave this solemn warning to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, "Ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matthew 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47).

II. THERE IS A DANGER TO BE FEARED (3:11).

1. The danger to be feared -- the loss of our crown. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).
2. First John 2:28 says that when our Lord returns, some Christians will be "ashamed before him at his coming." They will be ashamed because they will lose their crown (cf. II John 8).
3. A preacher said, "The race may be lost in the last lap. Our boat may be wrecked near the shore. The campaign may be lost in the last battle" (Stephen Olford).
4. King Saul lost his crown. The prophet Samuel said to King Saul, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (I Samuel 15:28).
5. Earlier, Samuel warned King Saul, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee" (I Sam. 13:13).

6. Many Christians have lost their crowns by foolishness, by carelessness, and by compromise.
7. "God will never condemn sin in the sinner, and condone it in the saint" (Stephen Olford).
8. Colossians 2:18 says, "Let no man beguile (defraud or cheat) you of your reward." Some are being beguiled by wrong associations.
9. The apostle Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
10. The word "castaway" means, "not approved." The same Greek word is translated "rejected" in Hebrews 6:8. Paul did not want to be rejected. He did not want to be a castaway. He did not want our Lord to say, "Not approved."
11. He wanted our Lord to say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23).
12. Some people come to church with the wrong motives. Physically they are here but their hearts and minds are elsewhere. They love the world, and therefore their heart is not right with God.
13. When the Lord returns, He will bring all of this to light. It will all come out at the judgment seat of Christ (cf. I Cor. 4:5).
14. First Corinthians 3:13 says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it."
15. Theodore Epp told a story about a professor giving an X-ray demonstration to friends at a party. This was in the early days of X-ray and his friends found his demonstration very interesting.
16. He suggested they place their jewels under the X-ray machine, and the people gladly did so. When he turned on the X-ray machine, the rays revealed the true character of the jewels. Some of the guests were dismayed to discover their costly jewels were cheap imitations!
17. At the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord will not need an X-ray machine. What will be revealed? Will you be exposed as a cheap imitation of a godly Christian? (I Cor. 3:12-15).

III. THERE IS A COMMAND TO BE OBEYED (3:11).

1. "Hold that fast which thou hast" (Rev. 3:11). In view of the imminent return of our Lord, we are to hold fast to our testimony for Christ (cf. 2:13, 25; 3:3).
2. If there were ever a day that we needed to "hold fast" it is today. The worldliness that has engulfed the churches in America today is frightening.

3. First Thessalonians 5:21 says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
4. Second Timothy 1:13 says, "Hold fast the form of sound (wholesome, healthy) words."
5. Hebrews 10:33 says, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)."
6. We must hold fast in prayer (cf. Luke 18:1-8).
7. We must hold fast in soulwinning. Proverbs 11:30 says, "He that winneth souls is wise." Many churches have closed down their doors because the members stopped winning souls.
8. This is our duty to God and our duty to others.
9. William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army, and in his day their emphasis was on salvation.
10. General Booth led in spreading the Gospel all over England, and then all over much of the world, as he organized street meetings and evangelistic services.
11. When he got old, General Booth's health began to fail and his eyesight failed him. One year he was in such bad health that he was unable to attend the annual Salvation Army Convention in London, England.
12. Since he was unable to attend the conference, it was suggested that General Booth send a telegram to be read at the opening of the convention. General Booth agreed to do so.
13. When the thousands of delegates met, the moderator announced that General Booth would not be able to be present because of failing health and eyesight.
14. Those in attendance were disappointed, but their spirits were lifted when the moderator announced that General Booth had sent a message to be read with the opening of the first session. He opened the message and began to read the following:
15. Dear Delegates of the Salvation Army Convention: "OTHERS"
Signed, General Booth.

CONCLUSION:

Charles Meigs wrote this hymn:

Lord, help me live from day to day
 In such a self-forgetful way
 That even when I kneel to pray
 My prayer shall be for—Others.

Others, Lord, yes others,
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.

Help me in all the work I do
To ever be sincere and true
And know that all I'd do for You
Must needs be done for—Others.

Let "Self" be crucified and slain
And buried deep: and all in vain
May efforts be to rise again,
Unless to live for—Others.

And when my work on earth is done,
And my new work in Heaven's begun,
May I forget the crown I've won,
While thinking still of—Others.