

## Is The Lord Coming?

A Sermon by  
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Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. Luke 24: 51

Is the Lord coming? The Heavenly Doctrine says that “acknowledgement of the Lord is the first thing of all belonging to spiritual life and is the most essential feature of the Church” (AC10083:6). Therefore we will set our gaze upon the Lord. We place special emphasis upon the Lord because “salvation depends upon a knowledge and acknowledgment of God” (TCR 98).

But consider right now how we are connected with one another by means of our family or friendships. The likelihood is there will come a time when someone will leave. For example, a child eventually reaches adult age and leaves home. A person matures to advanced age and eventually passes into the spiritual world leaving us here. People will leave us for various reasons and under different circumstances.

But the case is very different with the Lord. Even though “He was parted from [His disciples] and carried up into heaven’ (Luke 24:51) He also said “I am with you always, even until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20) and furthermore “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18).

We learn in the Heavenly Doctrine that “the Lord is present with everyone...in an evil one as well as in a good one” (AC 981, DP 330:2). Also, “the Lord is present with every person with the good of love; He loves all people and in His love wishes to join them to Himself” (AC10127:4). As to our souls we are present here in the natural world and, at the same time, living in the spiritual world. However, while living our life we must bring our souls in harmony with heaven as we disassociate from the hells.

If we are obedient to the Lord’s Word by living the truth, which is to do what is good, something quite remarkable can happen. The Lord can be present with us in a very special way. In Heaven And Hell we’re told that insofar as a person is living a life of good “then the Lord is present in him both in the world and in heaven just as if he were in his heaven” (HH 57). Remember the Lord said when He was here in the world, “For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). And so, while we are midway between heaven and hell (as to our spirits) it is wonderful that the Lord’s heaven may dwell within us. Then the Lord can continue guiding us as we perform heavenly uses.

Even though the Lord is present with everyone there were times when in the world He would remove Himself from people. Once while in a synagogue in Nazareth He stood up and read from Isaiah “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.” Then He said to them “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” The people “were then filled with wrath and rose up and thrust Him out of

the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way” (Luke 4: 18, 21, 29-30). The Lord seemed to disappear out of their sight.

On another occasion during a dispute with the Jews about who He was, the Lord said “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day.” So they argued “you are not yet fifty years old” to which the Lord responded “Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was I AM.” Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by (John 8: 56-59). Once again, the Lord seemed to have disappeared out of their sight.

When He arose from the dead on the third day the Lord appeared to women at the tomb. Later that day He walked with two men along the road to Emmaus. That evening He sat at a table with them, broke bread and gave it to them and their eyes were opened; then He vanished from their sight.

On the same evening of the day the Lord arose He appeared to His disciples who had gathered together in Jerusalem. Because they were terrified and frightened the Lord showed them His hands and feet and He ate a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb in their presence. After “being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1: 3) the Lord led them out to Bethany. He lifted up His hands and blessed them. “Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24: 51).

What did the Lord do? While the Epistles do not contain an internal spiritual sense “they are nevertheless useful books for the church” (AE 815:2). So consider Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians: “He [the Lord Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth” (Colossians 1:15-16).

We know from the Gospel of John that “all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” that “He was in the world and the world was made through Him” and “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1: 3, 10, 14). The Lord created the world and, in the most profound of all miracles, He descended and dwelled on the very same earth that He created. Accordingly, He was conceived. He permitted Himself to be carried in the womb and to be born. He lived and grew up in this world as any other person with the difference that His soul is Divine, that His soul is Jehovah God Himself.

And after the Lord accomplished His mission on earth He returned to heaven. He alone and no other has dwelled on all planes of life, from inmost to outermost and back to inmost; from spiritual to natural and back to spiritual again. He now dwells in His Divine Human: “with and in His glorified Human, He returned into His Divine in which He was from eternity” (TCR 3). And now consider again one of the Epistles: “God was manifested in the flesh...preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world [and] received up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). In this great miracle of coming into the world

the invisible God made Himself visible. But having returned to heaven He now seems invisible.

Perhaps the Lord is invisible to some people. It's sad to say but to people in hell the Lord appears "like something altogether darkened and therefore as cold like that of winter and as thick darkness like that of night" (AC 3425:4). Unfortunately some among us have closed themselves and turned away from God. As much as the Lord descends to reveal Himself to people, they must be willing to open their souls to receive of Him. Their entanglement in evils and falsities can be one reason the Lord is invisible to some people. It is not that the Lord is invisible. Some people simply do not see Him.

But the Lord is always coming to reveal Himself. His love is unending. He strives as much as He can to help us to see Him. But we play an integral part in allowing the Lord to appear and reveal Himself to us. The Arcana tells us "the Lord appears according to the state of each person" (AC 1838). Each person's own state determines how the Lord is seen. The quality of the love and truth with each individual and the nature of his life shape how the Lord is seen or appears.

Accordingly we must ask: what kind of person am I? This is a critical inquiry because a person's character governs how the Lord appears. We must realize that "the Lord is present with every [person] urging and pressing to be received" (TCR 766). But, the Lord's appearance to a person has more to do with the person than the Lord. This is because "a person cannot receive the Divine in any way other than that which is a way suited to the kind of person he is" (AC 6832).

Therefore the Lord's appearance varies according to whether someone is good or evil. As the Arcana says "the Lord appears to everyone according to their true nature, so that He appears as love and the light of truth to those governed by good, but as an enemy and avenger to those ruled by evil" (AC 8819). And so we must ask: What kind of person am I? Whether or not we allow ourselves to fall under the influence of good or evil plays a part in how the Lord appears and can be present with us.

Although the Lord was carried up into heaven, He also said "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18). While the Lord's Coming is quite intriguing, His Coming has various features.

The first feature of the Lord's Coming [which is not a physical coming] is fulfillment of His promise that "the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly" (John 16:25). The Lord fulfilled this promise in His revelation of profound, rational truths that serve the human race like no other dispensation from the Lord. The Second Coming of the Lord occurred by means of a man [His servant Emanuel Swedenborg] to whom the Lord has revealed the Heavenly Doctrine, the revelation for the New Jerusalem (TCR 779).

A second feature of the Lord's Coming is the subtle but powerful way in which the Lord can speak to us in His Word. The True Christian Religion says that "this Second Coming

of the Lord is not a coming in person, but in the Word, which is from Him, and is Himself” (TCR 776). If we read the Word sincerely and with reverence we bring ourselves into association with the angels of heaven. If, at the same time while reading the Word, we recognize that the Word is the Lord those Words can become more than just Words on a page.

Do you ever when reading the Word, feel or sense that something is there living within those Words? Well, something incredible is happening. The Last Judgment says “the Lord’s coming is His presence in the Word” (LJ 28:3). And the Arcana teaches that “by the coming of the Lord is meant His appearing from the Word” (6895:2). So, should you feel a sense of peace or a soft presence with you while reading the Word, the Lord is coming to you. His still, small voice is speaking from the Word.

So we consider why then is the Word so important? First, the Lord appears in His Word and speaks to us. Second, a person “is regenerated by the truths of faith [found in the Word] and by a life according to them” (NJHD 186). This takes us to our next feature.

A third feature of the Lord’s Coming can be seen in the life we live. As we continue the habit of shunning evils as sins and living a life of good a way is opened for the Lord to come. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that “it is an attendant feature of every coming of the Lord that it is a beginning to [people] who are being regenerated” (AC 728). If we shun evils and do what is good the process of regeneration takes place. Regeneration occurs as long as a person practices repentance. Let’s remind ourselves of the meaning of repentance which is to examine one’s self, see evils, desist from them, seek the Lord’s help to shun them, and then live a new life. While a person is being regenerated the Lord is coming.

Still there are other features of the Lord’s Coming. Consider these wonderful ideas from the Heavenly Doctrine. Surely the Lord is coming but His “coming does not consist, as the letter has it, in His appearing once again in the world, but [consist] in His presence within everyone” (AC 3900:9). Remember, “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). Certainly, without a doubt the Lord is present with everyone – the good as well as the evil whoever they are. However the Word teaches that “His Coming is only to those who receive Him, who are such as believe on Him and keep His commandments” (TCR 774).

Now consider what to do in challenging times (for example, stress, despair, fear, uncertainty, heartbreak). We learn from the Arcana that the Lord is present within everyone and comes “as often as the gospel is preached and that which is holy is contemplated” (AC 3900:9). What is the Gospel? The Apocalypse Revealed tells us that “His coming into the world is called the Gospel of the kingdom” (AR 664; Lord 4). Imagine that in times of trouble a person can meditate upon the Lord or a story in the Word, or just read the Word. How about simply praying the Lord’s Prayer? If you set your heart and mind upon the Lord He will come.

Finally, the Lord is building a New Jerusalem within every person who believes in Him and obeys His commandments. To believe in the Lord and live by His Word is to love

Him. The Arcana says “the Lord’s coming is not used to mean His appearance together with angels in the clouds, but the acceptance of Him in people’s hearts through love and faith” (AC 6895:2).

Surely people will leave us under varying circumstances. No matter what happens here in the world the wonderful hope is husbands and wives, families and friends may reunite in the spiritual world. Meanwhile, throughout all our experiences and relationships here on earth the Lord never leaves us.

After the Lord accomplished His mission of redemption He returned back into His Divine from which He was from eternity. He was parted from His disciples and carried up into heaven. The children of Israel cried out “Is the Lord among us or not?” We need not worry for the Lord is with us. Right now this moment He is coming, saving and redeeming us. His coming is not a physical return to earth but a spiritual awakening within our souls. This awakening is possible as long as we continue to turn to the Lord in His Word, accept His teachings, and then live according to them

Is the Lord coming? Yes. And at this very moment He is doing something very special. We can trust that each and every one of us “is brought by continual steps out of hell up towards heaven and into heaven; this the Lord does without [our even] knowing it” (AE 1174:2).

*Amen.*

Lessons: Exodus 17: 1 – 7    Luke 24: 44 – 53    True Christian Religion 339:9

### 1<sup>st</sup> Lesson: Exodus 17: 1 - 7

1. Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. 2. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, “Give us water, that we may drink.” So Moses said to them, “Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?” 3. And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” 4. So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!” 5. And the Lord said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

2<sup>nd</sup> Lesson: Luke 24: 44 - 53

44. Then He said to them [the eleven disciples and those who were with them gathered together] “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45. And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47. and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48. And you are witnesses of these things. 49. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” 50. And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. 52. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53. and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

3<sup>rd</sup> Lesson: True Christian Religion 339:9

Faith in the Lord God the Savior is different; He, being God and Man, can be approached and be seen in thought. Faith in Him is not indeterminate, but has an object from which and to which it proceeds and when once received is permanent, as when anyone has seen an emperor or king, as often as the fact is recalled the image returns. That faith's sight is like one's seeing a bright cloud, and in the midst of it an angel who invites the man to him, so that he may be raised up into heaven. Thus does the Lord appear to those who have faith in Him; He draws near to every man so far as man recognizes and acknowledges Him, which he does, so far as he knows and keeps the Lord's commandments, which are, to shun evils and do good; and at length the Lord comes into man's house, and together with the Father who is in Him, makes His abode with man, according to these words in John: Jesus said, He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.