

# “We Look Forward to that Great Day”

## An Exposition of Article Thirty-Seven of the Belgic Confession

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### Article 37 – The Last Judgment

Finally, we believe, according to God’s Word, that when the time appointed by the Lord is come (which is unknown to all creatures)<sup>1</sup> and the number of the elect is complete,<sup>2</sup> our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly,<sup>3</sup> as he ascended, with great glory and majesty,<sup>4</sup> to declare himself the judge of the living and the dead.<sup>5</sup> He will burn this old world, in fire and flame, in order to cleanse it.<sup>6</sup> Then all human creatures will appear in person before that great judge<sup>7</sup>—men, women, and children, who have lived from the beginning until the end of the world. They will be summoned there by the voice of the archangel and by the sound of the divine trumpet.

For all those who died before that time will be raised from the earth,<sup>8</sup> their spirits being joined and united with their own bodies in which they lived. And as for those who are still alive, they will not die like the others but will be changed “in the twinkling of an eye” from “corruptible to incorruptible.”<sup>9</sup> Then “the books” (that is, the consciences) will be opened, and the dead will be judged according to the things they did in the world, whether good or evil.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, all people will give account of all the idle words they have spoken, which the world regards as only playing games. And then the secrets and hypocrisies of men will be publicly uncovered in the sight of all. Therefore, with good reason the thought of this judgment is horrible and dreadful to wicked and evil people.<sup>11</sup> But it is very pleasant and a great comfort to the righteous and elect, since their total redemption will then be accomplished. They will then receive the fruits of their labor and of the trouble they have suffered;<sup>12</sup> their innocence will be openly recognized by all; and they will see the terrible vengeance that God will bring on the evil ones who tyrannized, oppressed, and tormented them in this world.<sup>13</sup>

The evil ones will be convicted by the witness of their own consciences, and shall be made immortal—but only to be tormented in the everlasting fire<sup>14</sup> prepared for the devil and his angels.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the faithful and elect will be crowned with glory and honor. The Son of God will “confess their names” before God his Father and the holy and elect angels;<sup>16</sup> all tears will be “wiped from their eyes”;<sup>17</sup> and their cause—at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil officers—will be acknowledged as the “cause of the Son of God.” And as a gracious reward the Lord will make them possess a glory such as the heart of man could never imagine.<sup>18</sup> So we look forward to that great day with longing in order to enjoy fully the promises of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 24:36, 25:13; 1 Thes 5:1-2 <sup>2</sup> Heb 11:39-40; Rev 6:11 <sup>3</sup> Rev 1:7 <sup>4</sup> Mt 24:30, 25:31 <sup>5</sup> Mt 25:31-46; 2 Tim 4:1; Pt 4:5 <sup>6</sup> 2 Pt 3:10-13 <sup>7</sup> Dt 7:9-11; Rev 20:12-13 <sup>8</sup> Dan 12:2; Jn 5:28-29 <sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 15:51-52; Php 3:20-21 <sup>10</sup> Heb 9:27; Rev 22:12 <sup>11</sup> Mt 11:22, 23:33; Rom 2:5-6; Heb 10:27; 2 Pt 2:9; Jude 15; Rev 14:7a <sup>12</sup> Lk 14:14; 2 Thes 1:3-10; 1 Jn 4:17 <sup>13</sup> Rev 15:4, 18:20 <sup>14</sup> Mt 13:41-42; Mk 9:48; Lk 16:22-28; Rev 21:8 <sup>15</sup> Rev 20:10 <sup>16</sup> Rev 3:5 <sup>17</sup> Is 25:8; Rev 7:17 <sup>18</sup> Dan 12:3; Mt 5:12, 13:43; 1 Cor 2:9; Rev 21:9-22:5

There is coming a day when all injustices will be made right, all human suffering will cease, and every tear will be wiped from our eyes. One day our blessed Lord Jesus will suddenly return from heaven to earth to raise the dead, judge all men and women, and renew the heavens and earth by removing every hint and trace of human sin. For those who know not Christ, this will be the most terrible day imaginable. In Revelation 6:15-17, John describes this day as follows:

*“Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’”*

But for those who are Christ’s, this will be the most blessed day imaginable. In Revelation 21:3-4, John depicts how God’s covenant promise will come to fruition:

*“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’”*

We conclude our exposition on the Belgic Confession, as we come to the final article (Thirty-Seven). It is quite appropriate that the last article of our confession deals with the final events of human history, the second advent of our Lord and those events associated with it—the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the renewal of all things. Not only is our Lord’s second advent the glorious concluding chapter to the biblical drama of our redemption from sin, but this doctrine is also the capstone of our confession of faith.

As we look back at the ground we have covered in this series, recall that articles Twelve and Thirteen of our confession describe God’s creation of all things and his providential control over everything he has made. Article Sixteen sets forth the doctrine of election, as God demonstrates his mercy by choosing to save a multitude so vast they cannot be counted, while leaving the rest of Adam’s fallen children to face his justice. Article Eighteen takes up the incarnation of Jesus Christ, while the following articles describe those things our Lord has done to save us from our sins. But all of these things will find their ultimate fulfillment and true meaning in the second advent of our Lord. God will indeed save his elect and bring all of creation to its appointed ends. Ultimately, all of this will come to pass on the great and glorious day when Jesus Christ returns to earth.

Unlike much of the contemporary evangelical discussion of eschatology—which almost always seem to focus upon connecting current events to biblical prophecy—instead, our confession seeks to summarize the biblical teaching about the return of our Lord and then leave the explanation of the mysteries of eschatology (such as the timing of our Lord’s return and so on) to the time of their actual fulfillment. In other words, our confession tell us, “here’s what the Bible teaches about our Lord’s return and we’ll know when it happens as well as finally see how all the details fit.” Geerhardus Vos, the father of modern Reformed eschatology, reminds us that there are many prophecies, “whose best and final exegete will be the eschatological fulfillment, and in regard to which it behooves the saints to exercise a peculiar

kind of eschatological patience.”<sup>1</sup> We should not speculate, but wait for the Lord’s return patiently.

Therefore, knowing what the Scriptures actually teach about our Lord’s return is the best way to avoid the seemingly endless speculation of our contemporaries—“pin the tail on the Antichrist,” as some have called it—as well as to properly prepare ourselves for whatever lies ahead.

Furthermore, the many details of biblical eschatology can all be boiled down to a simple theme reflected in all the Christian creeds: “Jesus will return from heaven.” When he does, he will raise the dead, judge the world and make all things new. This has always been the expectation of the faithful. It should be ours as well.

Our confession takes on a tone and tenor which is anything but speculative. This should not be taken to mean that our fathers in faith did not take eschatology seriously or that they neglected it. On the contrary, eschatology is a major theme in Reformed theology, even though eschatology is not treated as a matter of speculation tied to current events. Instead, eschatology is a major source of comfort and assurance—the second coming is the capstone of all of God’s promises to us. It is a day for which we long. In fact, one Reformed pastor, who has written one of the few commentaries on the Belgic Confession writes, “the closing article of the Reformed Confession is, no doubt, the most impressive, heart-stirring and soul-moving of the thirty-seven heads of doctrine composing the Creed. One feels when reading it that it was written during the days when martyrdom was not a historical recollection, but an every day occurrence.”<sup>2</sup> To someone who lived every day with his own arrest and death as a distinct possibility, it is only natural that Guido De Bres would confess before all his faith in God’s promise to vindicate his people and punish all wrong-doers. De Bres did not fear the wrath of men for he knew that he would never face the wrath of God, but that all those who opposed the gospel would.

In order to most effectively summarize the Bible’s teaching about our Lord’s second coming and final judgment, our confession makes the following points. First, our confession addresses the time of the end—that time ordained by God and unknown to humanity. Second, our confession takes up the doctrine of the second coming of the Lord and the present millennial reign of Christ. Jesus will return bodily, visibly, and suddenly, to raise the dead, judge the world, and make all things new. This event ushers in the eternal state, not an earthly millennial reign. Third, our confession takes up the subject of the resurrection of the dead, before turning to the topic of the punishment of the wicked and the reward which awaits all those who are in Christ. Finally, our confession reminds us of the hope and comfort that the doctrine of our Lord’s second coming should give us, especially in times of trial, suffering and persecution.<sup>3</sup>

As we turn to the final article of our confession, we begin by taking up the question of the time of our Lord’s return. That the date and hour of our Lord’s return is a mystery is clearly stated by our confession: “Finally, we believe, according to God’s Word, that when the time appointed by the Lord is come (which is unknown to all creatures) and the number of the elect is complete, our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven.” The biblical evidence for this point is beyond question as we can see by turning to the teaching of our Lord. In the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24), which contains the clearest and most

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<sup>1</sup> Geerhardus Vos, The Pauline Eschatology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Beets, The Reformed Confession Explained, 274.

<sup>3</sup> Beets, The Reformed Confession Explained, 275.

complete teaching by Jesus on the subject of his own return, he makes it perfectly clear, that “*concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*” The reason why God does not give us this information is spelled out in the following chapter when Jesus says: “*Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.*”

The tension found throughout the New Testament between the signs which precede our Lord’s return and the warning that he may suddenly return at any moment is surely intentional—to prevent both date-setting and idleness. Because the hour of the Lord’s return is unknown to us, we must be ready at all times. And yet, Martin Luther surely had it right when someone once asked what he do if he knew that the Lord was returning tomorrow. Luther reportedly said, “I’d plant an apple tree today.”

That no one knows the time of our Lord’s return is also taught by the apostle Paul in chapter 5 of his first letter to the Thessalonians:

*“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”*

Since our Lord will comes like a thief (unexpectedly), about the only time you can be sure that our Lord will not return is at the exact moment that some prophecy “expert” predicts that Jesus is coming back! That people even try to set dates shows the lengths to which some will go to satisfy their sinful curiosity. Rather, as Paul sees it, the fact that the time of our Lord’s return is not known is to be a powerful incentive for us to be alert and self-controlled. We belong to the day and not to darkness.

That our confession links the timing of the second coming to the last elect person coming to faith may be a new idea to many, but it is clearly taught in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 6:11, John writes, “*Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*”<sup>4</sup> This is an important point because it indicates that God is directing all of human history towards an appointed goal—the salvation of all those given by the father to the son under the terms of the covenant of redemption (that inter-Trinitarian covenant made before time).

When the last one of God’s elect comes to faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord will return to earth to bring all things to their appointed end. This, of course, not only underlies the importance of missions and evangelism, but this should remind us that all things do work together for good and that while some may think the key to figuring all this out lies in some political event in Israel, we should instead be focusing

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<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that our confession does not appeal to Romans 11:24-26.

upon preaching the gospel to all those within our own sphere of influence, as well as to the ends of the earth. When the last one of God's elect comes to faith in Jesus Christ, only then shall the end come.

Next, our confession takes up the nature of our Lord's return and his present millennial reign. As we noted earlier in our series, Christ's kingly office is mentioned in passing in Article Twenty-Seven, "Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects." This implies a present and not a future millennial reign. With that in mind, our confession simply rehearses the clear teaching of Scripture to the effect that "Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty, to declare himself the judge of the living and the dead. He will burn this old world, in fire and flame, in order to cleanse it"

The Bible does not teach what preterists of both the orthodox and heretical variety tell us—that Jesus has already returned in 70 A.D. when he came back to judge the nation of Israel. Nor does the Bible tell us that our Lord's coming is really two returns—one of them being secret, as dispensationalists teach with their doctrine of a "secret rapture." The Bible is clear that our Lord's return is visible, bodily, and no one is going to miss it! On that day, the glory of our Lord Jesus will be fully revealed!

Given all the confusion about our Lord's return, it is probably a good thing to recount what the New Testament actually teaches about our Lord's second advent. In the opening chapter of Revelation, John writes "*behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen*" (1:7). This doesn't sound like a secret or a localized return to me! In Matthew 24:30, we similarly read, "*then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*" Our Lord's return will be the final and consummate revelation of his glory and that hour when the nations mourn. Why? For the day of judgment is at hand. The same exact thing is taught in Matthew 25:31, where we read, "*when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.*"

Why does Christ come in glory with all his angels? Matthew goes on to tell us in the parable of sheep and goats.

*"Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"*

The elect receive their inheritance at the time of our Lord's return. But what about the wicked? Their fate is described in verse 41. "*Then [Jesus] will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'*" That our Lord's return is also the time of final judgment is reiterated in verse 46: "*And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*"

In 2 Timothy 4:1, after Paul has discussed the godlessness of the last days and reminded Timothy of the importance of holding fast to Scripture, since it is God-breathed, he gives his young pastor friend a solemn charge in light of the preceding, "*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.*" Paul also speaks of judgment occurring at the time of our Lord's return in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9:

*“and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”*

As Paul understands the second advent, when Jesus Christ appears, it is to judge both the living and the dead. The same thing is taught in 1 Peter 4:5, when Peter reminds his readers, that the pagans *“but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead,”* presumably on the day Christ appears.

But one of the most significant passages in this regard is found in 2 Peter 3:10-13, where, like Paul, Peter speaks of the suddenness of our Lord’s return, but this time, Peter connects the second coming to cosmic renewal, when every hint and trace of sin is removed from the universe. Peter writes,

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

When Christ returns unexpectedly like a thief, we will dwell in a new heaven and earth, redeemed by fire, and now the home of righteousness. Once again, the knowledge of this event is to encourage us to live godly lives as we await that great day yet to come.

Even from this short litany of verses, it should be clear that Jesus Christ will return bodily, in great glory with the heavenly host, to judge the world and make all things new. No, our Lord did not return in AD 70, and no, there will be no “secret Rapture.”

But at the heart of our Lord’s return is the resurrection of the dead, a subject to which our confession turns next. Our confession states that at the time of our Lord’s glorious appearing, “then all human creatures will appear in person before that great judge—men, women, and children, who have lived from the beginning until the end of the world. They will be summoned there by the voice of the archangel and by the sound of the divine trumpet.” This too is clearly taught in Scripture.

Before we turn to the primary text cited here by the author of our confession (1 Thessalonians 4), it might be useful to consider briefly some of those Old Testament texts which anticipate a bodily resurrection as the capstone to all of human history. In Daniel 12:1-4, the prophet connects the time of the end to the resurrection from the dead.

*“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life,*

*and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”*

The messianic age will culminate in the resurrection of the dead unto the final judgment. Daniel does not foretell of a millennial age yet to dawn upon the earth after our Lord’s return.

Much the same thing can be seen in Isaiah 25:7-8, where the prophet foretells of a time (the coming messianic age) in which the coming redeemer *“and he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.”* Israel’s Messiah will overturn the curse, which is death, and renew all of creation.

And then in Job 19:25-27, Job’s comfort in the midst of his intense personal suffering stems from the fact that Job believes God’s promise in spite of his present circumstances. *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!”* The one thing that keeps Job going is his belief that he will be raised from the dead and that he will see God with his own eyes, knowing that God will keep his promise and that Job will be vindicated. It is not until Christ had come and suffered and died for our sins upon the cross and was then raised from the dead, that we see exactly, how God will do all of this.

This, then, sets the tone for the famous passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, in which Paul describes how Christ’s resurrection is the basis for our own resurrection at the end of the age. Paul writes to a Thessalonian church greatly confused about the time of the end,

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

Notice what Paul does and does not say. Paul does not say that Christ’s coming will be a “secret” event. Our Lord’s return is accompanied by a loud command, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. Unless this is like a cosmic “dog whistle” which only Christians can hear, Paul’s point is that this is the last trumpet, which announces the arrival of the end of the age, which is the day of resurrection, the day of judgment and the day when all things are made new.

Notice too that Paul connects our Lord’s return to the general resurrection—the dead in Christ will be raised and all those living will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Paul tells the struggling Thessalonians of this so that they will encourage each other with the hope that the Lord is going to return exactly as he was taken upon into heaven. As the apostles watched the Lord ascend, so too shall those

living see him return.

Having established the fact that our Lord's return is connected to the resurrection, the final judgment and the renewal of all things, our confession now takes up the nature of the final judgment—eternal punishment for the wicked, and eternal blessedness for those who are Christ's. Once again, our confession speaks of the final judgment in very straight-forward terms, avoiding undue speculation which so often accompanies discussion of this topic. "For all those who died before that time will be raised from the earth, their spirits being joined and united with their own bodies in which they lived. And as for those who are still alive, they will not die like the others but will be changed 'in the twinkling of an eye' from 'corruptible to incorruptible.' Then 'the books' (that is, the consciences) will be opened, and the dead will be judged according to the things they did in the world, whether good or evil. Indeed, all people will give account of all the idle words they have spoken, which the world regards as only playing games. And then the secrets and hypocrisies of men will be publicly uncovered in the sight of all. Therefore, with good reason the thought of this judgment is horrible and dreadful to wicked and evil people. But it is very pleasant and a great comfort to the righteous and elect, since their total redemption will then be accomplished. They will then receive the fruits of their labor and of the trouble they have suffered; their innocence will be openly recognized by all; and they will see the terrible vengeance that God will bring on the evil ones who tyrannized, oppressed, and tormented them in this world."

These words—most of which come directly from Scripture—not only remind us that as Christians, Christ's second advent is pure gospel (glorious good news) and not law, but that the opposite is true for those who will stand before God clothed in the filthy rags of their own righteousness. It is a day to be feared like no other. But for the Christian all of the promises in the gospel will be fully and finally realized.

Furthermore, these words certainly reflect the hopes of a persecuted saint and a leader of a persecuted church, namely that God will settle all outstanding accounts by punishing those who seek to take their lives. De Bres goes on to say, "The evil ones will be convicted by the witness of their own consciences, and shall be made immortal—but only to be tormented in the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. In contrast, the faithful and elect will be crowned with glory and honor. The Son of God will "confess their names" before God his Father and the holy and elect angels; all tears will be "wiped from their eyes"; and their cause—at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil officers—will be acknowledged as the 'cause of the Son of God.' And as a gracious reward the Lord will make them possess a glory such as the heart of man could never imagine. So we look forward to that great day with longing in order to enjoy fully the promises of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

With this kind of confidence in God's promise—even in the face of civil authorities who were then seeking to arrest him for preaching the gospel—it is no wonder that De Bres was willing to lay down his life for the cause of God and of truth. As he himself says, De Bres knew a glory of the heart of which unbelievers could never conceive.

Finally, the pastoral application typical of the Reformed approach to eschatology is also provided by our confession as well. De Bres, writes, "So we look forward to that great day with longing in order to enjoy fully the promises of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Our Lord's return is not something to be feared, but longed for. For the Christian, the return of our Lord on the last day is what Paul calls the "blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). This is the day when we receive our promised inheritance, as we are finally and gloriously conformed to the image of Christ, and now without sin. As we read in 1 John 3:2, "*beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see*



*him as he is.”*

This is why we look forward to that great day when the story of redemption comes to its glorious final chapter, when sin, pain and suffering finally cease and when all things are made new. On that day our Lord Jesus himself will appear and we will finally see with our eyes the glory of which we have just read. In an instant sin will be purged from creation, the curse will be removed and we shall be changed from corruption to incorruption. Everything which God has promised will be ours. After all, it is for this end that we have been chosen (that God might show his mercy), it is for this end that Christ has come and died for our sins (to redeem God’s elect), and it is for this end that human history rushes forward toward that great and glorious day when history comes to an end.

It is surely fitting to be reminded of one of the great biblical expressions which comes down to us from the apostolic church—the Aramaic expression, *Maranatha*, which means “*come, O Lord* (1 Corinthians 16:22).” As God’s chosen people who believe and confess all those things set forth in our confession of faith as a witness to the unbelieving world around us, what an appropriate place to end. For Jesus Christ is coming back, and even though scoffers say “where is this coming that he promised?” the great day of blessing draws near.

Therefore, as we look forward to that great day, we close with the apostolic benediction, *Maranatha!* Come quickly Lord Jesus!