

From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. This article enunciates the dogma of the second coming of Jesus Christ and of the general judgment. We distinguish two advents or comings of Jesus Christ. He came into the world to save it when He was born at Bethlehem: this was His first advent. He shall come to judge it at the last day: this will be His second advent.

When we say that He shall come to judge the living and the dead, these words have a double meaning: in the first meaning, the living signify those alive at the end of the world, and the dead, those who will have died before that event; in the second meaning, the living mean the just, and the dead, sinners.

When and in what manner will the general judgment take place? Jesus Christ has distinctly declared to us His coming, but not the precise time in which He will come: this is a secret which He has willed to keep to Himself. He has, however, indicated events which will precede and make known to us the near approach of that great day.

1. The Gospel will first be preached throughout the world.
2. Christian charity will have lost its warmth, and faith will seem to have become extinct in the world.
3. The Jews will be converted to Jesus Christ.
4. There will be great wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, and upheavals of the sea. The sun, the moon, the stars, will be darkened, or will no longer follow their ordinary course. The whole order of nature will be disturbed, and will announce an approaching destruction (St. Luke. xxi. 25 seq.).
5. There will appear a man of the deepest wickedness, called Antichrist; that is to say, opposed to Jesus Christ. He will lead astray the people; he will excite most cruel persecutions, and effect an almost universal apostasy. His domination, according to the words of the Scripture, will continue about three years and a half.
6. The prophet Elijah and the patriarch Enoch will return to the earth to oppose Antichrist, to enlighten the lost, and to sustain the constancy of Christians. These two powerful defenders of the faith will be put to death by Antichrist, who will himself be confounded and overthrown by the power of Jesus Christ.
7. There will descend a fire which will destroy all things on the earth: this is what is called the final conflagration. A little while after this universal destruction will take place the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment.

Then will there remain naught of the riches, of the pleasures and vain grandeur of this world; nothing will be possessed by us but our works. Let us, then, labour, my brothers and sisters, with courage, for the purpose that on that day we may not have to bear a burden of iniquities, but rather a wealth of merits.