

THE  
**Midnight Cry;**

OR,  
THE HOPE  
OF  
THE CHURCH OF GOD.

BY  
A. H. B.



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# The Midnight Cry ;

OR,

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.



**I**N the following pages it is our desire to bring before the reader a subject of daily increasing interest to every child of God ; and in doing so we most earnestly ask the prayerful and serious consideration thereof which its importance demands.

The return or the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is the subject to which we allude ; and in approaching it in company with our readers, we would urge upon them the importance of doing so Bible in hand, and of examining for themselves every passage which may be referred to, in dependence upon the teaching and guidance of the Holy Ghost,—that Spirit of truth sent down from heaven at the day of Pentecost by the ascended and glorified Christ, and whose blessed office it is, amongst many other things, to guide us into all truth, and to show us things to come (John xvi. 13).

It may be, however, that some into whose hands this paper may fall have not yet found

“peace in believing.” The great question of their souls’ salvation has not yet been settled, and consequently they have no inclination to look into this subject, for something seems to tell them that they are not ready to meet the Lord if He should come at this very moment.

We would remind all such of the blessed fact that Christ has already been here. His sinless feet have trod this sin-stained earth, and on Calvary’s cross He who knew no sin “once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter iii. 18). Yes, dear anxious soul, this spotless One has died in your stead, has suffered for your sins, has borne them “in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter ii. 24). He has endured the judgment which you deserved, met every claim of divine justice on your behalf, and eternally glorified God in reference to the question of sin itself. Yes, He has done all this, and infinitely more than tongue could tell or thought conceive. Listen to those peace-giving words to which He gave utterance upon the cross, “**It is finished,**”—words which have been the solid and eternal resting-place of multitudes of sin-burdened hearts.

“Hear the Lord Himself declaring  
All performed He came to do ;  
Sinners, in yourselves despairing,  
This is joyful news for you.  
Jesus speaks it :  
His are faithful words and true.”

Say, beloved reader, can you not rest there? If the *justice of God* has been **satisfied** in reference to your sins, what more do you need in order to enjoy peace with God?

On the other hand, some who read these lines may be truly converted, may have the forgiveness of their sins, may possess peace with God and the certainty of being in heaven any moment that God may see fit to call them, and yet perhaps feel no interest in this subject. They are not filled to overflowing with the "blessed hope" of meeting face to face that precious Saviour who suffered on the cross, and bled and died to save their guilty souls from hell, and to secure for them an eternal title to be in that same glory with and like Himself.

Some time ago we met with one whose condition was pretty much what we have described above. He was unquestionably a child of God, and seeking to serve his Saviour. But on being asked if he were waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Ah! well," said he, "I do not dive into these matters so deeply as you. This question does not trouble me much. I know that I am ready to go any moment God may see fit to call me. If I were to die on the spot, I have no fear; and therefore it seems to me of very little consequence whether He come to-morrow or not for a hundred years, for I am ready whenever He comes."

"Let me imagine," was our reply, "that you

had gone to India to transact some business, and that you had left behind you your wife and family. Though left behind, you do not forget them ; they are still the objects of your deep affection. Not a day passes but what your thoughts travel back to those dearly-loved ones, and you long for the time when you will once more enjoy their company. Your business nearly completed, with intense satisfaction you write home to tell them that they may expect you to arrive at any time now. You cannot tell them the exact day, but they may be on the look-out for you. Confident of their love, you imagine that it will cause them as much joy to receive this announcement as it has given you to make it.

“ Soon after the receipt of this letter I pay them all a visit, and on inquiring whether they had lately heard from you, I am told, ‘ Oh, yes, he has just sent us word that he is soon coming home ; indeed, that we may expect him back at any time. But after all it does not much trouble us whether he returns to-morrow or not for another year, for we are quite ready to receive him whenever he thinks fit to come ! ’ Would not this,” we inquired, “ manifest a lamentable state of things ? Where would be the affections of their hearts ? *Trouble them !* I should think not, indeed ! If they had any love for you at all, it would make their very hearts leap with joy to think of so soon seeing you again.”

And has not the blessed Saviour left us here ?

And though in heaven, does He not constantly think of us? And is not His love for us now as deep and fervent as it was for His beloved disciples when He walked with them through this world? "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1). And has He not sent us word to say that He may return at any moment? Yes, dear Christian reader, **He has**. Three times over in the last chapter of Revelation, which furnishes us with His closing communications to His people in this scene, He has made use of those thrilling words, "**I come quickly.**"

And shall our affections be unmoved by them? Shall our hearts be untouched? We trust not; but rather let our willing voices take up the joyful response, "Even so, **come, Lord Jesus**" (Rev. xxii. 20).

We would now ask the reader to open his Bible at Matt. xxv., and to read carefully the first thirteen verses, and let him keep his Bible open at the very page whilst together we cast our eyes over its contents.

A very little attention will suffice to show that this parable of the Ten Virgins is divided into three parts, which very remarkably coincide with three distinct periods of the Church's history here on earth.

We would observe in passing, that the history of the Church commenced at the day of Pentecost. Though in the counsels of God no doubt

from all eternity, it was nevertheless “a mystery kept secret” (see carefully Rom. xvi. 25 ; Eph. iii. 3-7 ; Col. i. 24-28), and had no actual existence as such in this world until, at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came down from heaven (Acts ii. 1-4), and baptised all believers into **one body** (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13). It was there, then, and thus, that the Church began. We cannot now go into this deeply important subject, but merely make the foregoing remarks, in order that it may be clear to the reader to what especial period we refer,—namely, to that which began at the day of Pentecost in Acts ii., which has continued up to this present moment, and will continue until the Lord descends into the air, and we are caught up to meet Him there (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). *Then* the Church’s history on earth shall be closed.

## PART I.

### “THEY WENT FORTH TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM.”

This characterised the Christians at the very commencement. “*They went forth to meet the Bridegroom.*” He who had just died for them had gone away from them into the glory of God. He, as a Man, was sitting there at the



right hand of the Majesty in the heavens ; but ere going away had left them a promise, that He would *return* to take them to the same place of glory where He was going Himself. Cheered by this promise, and filled with this hope, they went forth to meet Him. The world, which had just cast out and rejected Him whom their hearts loved, presented no attractions to them. Though in it, they were not of it (John xvii. 14). They coveted not its glories, they courted not its honours, and they sought not its pleasures. Thoughts of their absent Lord filled their hearts, and they longed for the moment when they should see Him, and behold Him.

We lately met a young and ardent Christian. He was seeking to serve the Lord by preaching the gospel, and hoped ere long to leave his native shores and go as a missionary to the heathen.

“Have you ever thought of the coming of the Lord?” we asked.

“No,” said he ; “I cannot say that I have.”

“Have you never noticed,” we replied with surprise, “how repeatedly the New Testament speaks of it?”

Again he answered in the negative, hinting at the same time that it spoke more of death than of the coming of Christ.

Reader, will you be as surprised as he to learn that death—for the *Christian*—is not mentioned more than four or five times ; whereas the coming of the Lord is treated of in all the gospels, in the

Acts, in almost every epistle,\*—in two of these epistles (1 and 2 Thess.) in every chapter,—and lastly in the book of Revelation over and over again?

He was quite astonished at this, and promised to search the Scriptures, to see if these things were so.

And now, beloved reader, is it not strange that Christians in the present day should be occupied so much with death, which is but seldom mentioned in the Word in reference to them ; while the bright and blessed hope of the Lord's personal return, which is its constant theme, and shines on almost every page, is ignored, forgotten, or looked upon as one of the eccentric views of a small portion of peculiar Christians ? No, dear Christian friend, be assured it is a vital truth of God, given to us as our true and proper hope, and interwoven with our every right affection and duty.

But let us briefly look at a few of the passages

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\* It is most instructive to notice the reason why the Lord's coming is omitted in Galatians and Ephesians. In Galatians, the fundamental truths of the gospel were being given up, such as justification by faith, &c. ; consequently the apostle has, so to speak, to lay the *foundation* again, and cannot occupy them with the blessed *hope* of the gospel. He has to travail in birth again for them (chap. iv. 19). In Ephesians, the believer is looked at as *already* seated in heavenly places in Christ, and accordingly, in *this* aspect of our position, His coming is not needed to bring us there.

which speak of it; we cannot attempt to do more, or this tract would expand itself into a volume. First of all, we would turn to John xiv. 1-5. Here the blessed Lord is about to leave the world. Rejected by men, and knowing that "His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father" (John xiii. 1), He gathers around Him "His own," whom He was about to leave behind "in the world." He draws them to His side; for He finds Himself at home with this little company, and He knows that to them He can speak in all the unrestrained freedom of His deep affection for them. Judas too, the betrayer, is gone out, "and it was night" (v. 30). How strikingly suggestive of the appalling moral darkness which enveloped the world at that very moment! Jesus, we read, "was troubled in spirit" (v. 21).

It was not only the hatred of man, deep and long felt as it had been, nor was it the treachery of Judas, nor the unfaithfulness of His disciples, bitter as must have been the sorrow caused by all this; it was not *only* this, we repeat, which oppressed His spirit at that terrible moment. Deeper shadows still were casting themselves across His lonely path. The cross, in all its intense reality, was rising before His soul. The storm of divine judgment against sin was about to break upon His devoted head, and its heavy clouds were now passing before Him. But amidst it all He looks beyond, to the glory

which He is straightway about to enter (xiii. 31, 32), and now distinctly communicates to them the sad intelligence that He is going away. He knew what trouble would fill them, and, forgetting for the moment His own deep sorrow, He seeks to lift their poor hearts above this world, by telling them of the Father's house, where He was going Himself, and where He would prepare a place for them—a place better far than all this world could give.

But how should they reach it? Ah, that is the point! Read, and as you read imagine that you are listening to the blessed Saviour Himself: “If I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again**, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (xiv. 3). What cheering words for them! What comfort for their broken hearts! “**I will come again!**”

“But did He not, by these words, refer to their death?” some may inquire. Surely not. When they died, *they departed* to be with Him (Philip. i. 23). He did not leave the Father's house and come to fetch them. We believe it would have been simply impossible for them to have understood His words in any other sense than that of His own **personal return**; and, further, we are convinced that it is because His *absence* is so little felt by us in these days that the thought of His *return* fills us with so little joy. The blank which the *absence* of a dearly-loved one makes can be filled up by nothing but the *presence* of

that very one. And what friend have we like Jesus? Can we not, in some little measure, say, "Whom having not seen, we love"? (1 Peter i. 8.)

"True," we hear some saying; "but did He not return to them after His resurrection? And is it not to this that He refers?" Undoubtedly He did come back after His resurrection, but only for a brief moment. Forgetful of His own words, which assured them that He would rise again the third day, and refusing to accept the combined testimony of Mary Magdalene, and of the two disciples returning from Emmaus, who had actually seen Him alive and spoken with Him, they are filled with fear and alarm when "**Jesus Himself** stood in the midst of them" (Luke xxiv. 36). So unbelieving are they, that they cannot realise that it is in very truth their own beloved Lord and Master once more in their midst. They think it is an apparition, and suppose it to be a spirit. He upbraids them with their unbelief, bids their fears begone, and reassures their trembling hearts by those touching words, "It is **I Myself**: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."

Ah, no! His resurrection was no mere spiritual manifestation, but an actual fact. There He stood before their very eyes—a **real Man**. As truly *a Man* after His resurrection as He had been before His death; He even asked for food, "and did eat before them" (Luke xxiv. 63).

Being seen of them forty days (Acts i. 3), He now leads them out "as far as to Bethany" (Luke xxiv. 50), and, as He blesses them, is, "parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

Let us turn aside and look at that marvellous scene described in Acts i. See that little company gathered around the risen Saviour. See their eager faces as they listen to His parting words, bidding them return to Jerusalem and there await the coming of the Holy Ghost, who in a few days would descend from heaven, and take up His abode *with* them, and *in* them (John xiv. 17), and who would thus be their power for service and testimony whilst the Lord was away. "When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, **He was taken up** ; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." How steadfastly they look toward heaven as He goes up ! How eagerly is their gaze fixed upon that cloud that has just hidden Him from their eyes ! They scarcely seem to notice the presence of those two angelic messengers. But listen ! "**This same Jesus**, which is taken up from you into heaven, **shall so come** in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

To what did they refer ? To death ? Most certainly not. By no possible means could those words be so interpreted. No, no, they do but repeat the same blessed truth that Christ Himself had expressed in John xiv., namely, the fact of His own **personal return**.

We would now briefly consider I Thess. iv. 13-18. By reference to the first chapter, and comparing it with Acts xvii.,—which gives the historical account of the visit of the apostle Paul to Thessalonica, and of the first preaching of the gospel to that people,—we shall see that many of them were nothing but heathen idolaters, but that to them and also to the Jews were announced the wondrous glad tidings of the death and resurrection of Christ. He had died for their sins, been delivered for their offences, and raised again for their justification (Rom. iv. 25). At the cross He had stood as the holy spotless Victim, charged with all their sins ; and now God had raised Him from the dead, and put Him at His own right hand in heaven. *How better could He have proved His entire satisfaction in that sacrifice ?*

“ All His billows rolled o’er Jesus,  
There exhausted all their power.”

“ **Some** of them believed ” (Acts xvii. 4), we are told, and no doubt their faith rested on the Word of God ; but we cannot pass on without noticing a beautiful contrast in the case of the Bereans, their neighbours. Of these last we read, “ **Therefore many** of them believed ” (v. 12). Why this difference ? “ *They searched the Scriptures daily* ” (v. 11). Ah, there was the secret ! And may this earnest spirit be increased a thousandfold in the present day amongst all who desire to grow in the knowledge of God and His truth !

But what a marvellous effect was produced amongst those who did believe at Thessalonica, few in number as they may have been ! They “became followers of the Lord,” “examples to all that believe ;” and by their changed manner of life the word of the Lord was “sounded out,” and their faith to Godward “spread abroad.” And having turned to God from their idols, they were **waiting** “for His Son from heaven” (1 Thess. i. 6-10). Yes, beloved Christian reader, this formed an integral part of their conversion. Not only had they been “delivered from the wrath to come,” not only saved from eternal judgment by His death, but now, He having been raised from the dead and seated in heaven, they were eagerly waiting, *not for their own death*, but for **His personal return**.

They were expecting Him to come back even in their very lifetime. They had been taught that at *His return*, and not at *their death*, would every desire of their hearts be satisfied ; but as the days and weeks rolled on, and still He for whom they were waiting and watching did not return ; and as death too began to make its appearance in that little company, they were filled with dismay, imagining that those only who were alive would reap the full joy of His coming, and that those who had passed away would in some way or other be losers. Accordingly the apostle writes the first epistle to revive their drooping spirits and reassure their desponding hearts.



Does he reproach them with ignorance for expecting their Lord so soon to return? Does he comfort them by assuring them that they themselves must soon die, and thus follow those of their number who had fallen asleep? Not at all. "Let not sorrow fill your hearts," he says. "Be not like the poor world, which has 'no hope' in death; 'for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we \* which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent [or, go before] them which are asleep'" (1 Thess. iv. 15). It was as though he said, "We shall in no wise outstrip them, for (1) the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven; . . . and (2) the dead in Christ shall rise first; then (3) we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

It is inconceivable how any one, who gives the smallest thought to the subject, can imagine that all this refers to death! Do, beloved reader, let your eye rest upon the words of verse 16, "**The Lord Himself**"—(is that *death*?)—"shall descend from heaven with a shout." When a saint of God dies, does death come down from

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\* Notice how careful the apostle is to place himself, along with those to whom he was writing, amongst the number who *might* be alive at the very moment when the Lord should return—"we which are alive," &c. He does not say, "*they* which are alive."

heaven with a shout ? And further, “ the dead in Christ shall rise first ; ” \* this is **resurrection**, and *not death*. At death the body is put down into the grave and there sees corruption ; but at the glorious moment of which this passage speaks three events take place, “ in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ” (1 Cor. xv. 52),—(1) the Lord Himself descends from heaven **into the air** ; (2) the dead in Christ rise, and, as 1 Cor. xv. 43 tells us, they are “ raised in glory ; ” and (3) the living saints are “ changed in a moment ” (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52), and “ caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air,” and so to be for ever **with Him**. Blessed hope ! Comforting words !

The meeting-place, observe, between Christ and His glorified saints, both raised and changed, is *not* the earth, *nor* is it exactly heaven, but **in the air**.

There it is that we shall meet our blessed Saviour. And oh, what shouts of triumph, and what songs of praise, shall fill the vaults of heaven, as He takes us back with Himself, and ushers us into the Father’s house ! (John xiv.) Alas ! for this poor world which is left behind, and which will then, for a short while, go on increasing in iniquity with fearful rapidity, until the heavens open and Christ comes forth in majesty and

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\* On this subject see a little book entitled *The Two Resurrections*.

power, accompanied with all the glorified saints, to execute judgment.

The scriptures which we have thus briefly looked at are, we trust, sufficient to show the reader who desires to be taught of God, and to learn in subjection to the Word of God, that the early Christians were expecting the speedy return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself was the first to put the thought into their minds (John xiv.) He had even said of one, "If I will that he tarry **till I come**" (John xxi. 22); thus showing that He *might*, though not positively stating that He *would*, come back before the death of the disciple to whom He was speaking. The angels too, after His ascension, took up similar language (Acts i.); and lastly the apostles, on many occasions, were inspired of God to repeat the same comforting words. Is it any wonder, therefore, that this blessed hope filled the hearts of God's people then, and that "they all went forth to meet the Bridegroom?" But, alas!

## PART II.

"THEY ALL SLUMBERED AND SLEPT."

At the beginning "they all went forth to meet the Bridegroom." This, as we have seen, characterised the early Christians. They were not of this world; their "conversation [or

citizenship] was in heaven, from whence also they looked for the Saviour" (Philip. iii. 21). They had taken up their cross to follow Him, and amidst the many trials and persecutions with which their path was strewn, their hearts were cheered by His parting promise—"I **will come again**, and receive you unto Myself" (John xiv. 3).

But still the Bridegroom tarried. The weeks, months, and years rolled by, and still there was no sign of His return. Had He forgotten His promise? Had He led them to expect what He never intended to fulfil? By no means. Their faith, no doubt, was being tested; but "ye have need of patience," says the inspired apostle, "for **yet a little while**, and He that shall come **will come**, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37). But, alas! their hearts grew weary of waiting, and their eyes grew heavy with sleep. The world too grew weary of persecuting them, and began to spread out before their eyes its bright and glittering attractions. How quickly the direful effect of all this was felt! The evil servant had no sooner said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming," than he began "to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken" (Matt. xxiv. 48, 49). He did not say, mark, "My Lord will **never** return," but "My Lord **delayeth** His coming;" in other words, instead of treating it as his daily expectation, his immediate hope, he postponed it to an indefinite

time in the far-distant future. Wordliness swept in like a flood, and the Church began to seek her home and portion in the scene from whence her Lord had been cast out.

“We are but strangers here, we would not crave  
A home on earth which gave Him but a grave.  
His cross has severed ties which bound us here,  
Himself our portion in a brighter sphere.”

Instead of breathing such a spirit, “They all slumbered and slept.” Yes, **all**, without exception, wise and foolish alike,—those who were real Christians as well as those who were mere professors. **All** were fast asleep ; for the hope of the Lord’s return was completely forgotten.

Centuries rolled by, and still the slumber of the professing Church continued. Search through the books that were written and the sermons that were preached, not a mention will you find of that which fills the pages of the New Testament, not an allusion to that bright and purifying hope (1 John iii. 3) of the coming of Christ.

Let us not be misunderstood. Warnings of judgment there were, no doubt ; appeals to flee from the wrath of God, which would eventually be poured out upon this earth when the Lord Jesus should be revealed from heaven in flaming fire ; but of His coming into the air to gather His people home to glory, of His descent into the clouds to remove His own in the twinkling of an eye from the earth, which would *then*, and

not till then, become the scene of all those terrible judgments,—of this blessed hope not a line do we read, not a word do we hear. Alas ! alas ! “they all slumbered and slept.” But hark !

### PART III.

“AT MIDNIGHT THERE WAS A CRY MADE.”

The midnight hour has arrived, the cry has gone forth. Some fifty years ago, we believe, its first notes began to fall upon the ears of the slumbering Church. The Lord, who loved His Church, and still loves her, all-forgetful of Him as she has proved herself to be, at that time led some of His servants to search the Scriptures more attentively ; and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, unfolded before their eyes and revived in their hearts the same blessed hope that had led the Christians at the beginning to go forth to meet the Bridegroom.

Reader, has that cry reached you ? If not, may God use these few pages to make it ring in your very ears, and reach your very heart.

“*Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet Him*” (Matt. xxv. 6).

Behold, the Bridegroom ! Yes, beloved reader, He is at the door. No time for slumber now ; “Awake, thou that sleepest !” The history of the Church is about to close, its sojourn on earth

is about to cease. **“The coming of the Lord draweth nigh”** (James v. 8). “Then *all* those virgins arose” (v. 7). What a stir was made! The foolish as well as the wise begin to open their eyes ; but, oh, what a discovery do they make ! They had “no oil with them ;” the lamp of an external profession they had, but its light was fast going out (v. 8, margin—“Our lamps are going out”). Of what use is a lamp which has no oil ? In like manner the outward profession of Christianity is useless without the inward reality which the possession of the Holy Ghost alone can give.

Reader, we would earnestly press upon you the importance of these things. Consider them well, we beseech you. We are living in a day of great profession, but God looks for reality. He searches the heart ; and how often, alas ! does He see that, though He is approached with the lips, the heart is far from Him (Matt. xv. 8).

It may be that some, upon whose ear this warning note may fall, are resting on the sandy foundation of a Christless and lifeless profession. Baptized, confirmed, and a regular communicant you may be, and yet, reader, have no saving knowledge of Christ. You may be a Sunday-school teacher, a tract distributor, a district visitor, and even a humanly ordained preacher ; but if still unsaved, all this is but the oilless lamp, which ere long will go out, and you will be plunged into the awful darkness of an eternal night.

“ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ” (Matt. vii. 21). Oh, Christendom, Christendom, heed these solemn words in time !—words spoken by the lips of Him who cannot lie. And again, “ When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath **shut to the door**, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us ; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are : then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.” And cannot multitudes say this in our day who yet have no real love for Christ in their hearts ? We have taken the sacrament, they can say ; we regularly attend our parish church ; we are subscribers to many benevolent institutions. All this, beloved reader, may be true of you ; but remember, it is quite possible to be very religious, and yet **unsaved, unconverted** ; and if this is your case, you most assuredly will hear those terrible words, “ I know you not, . . . depart from Me ” (Luke xiii. 24-27).

*Behold, the Bridegroom cometh !* And long had His coming been foretold ; many a time, no doubt, had these very words been read, but the blessed truth they contain was unheeded, unnoticed, and unseen. And why ? Ah ! the professing church was slumbering with the world, the warmth of first love towards Christ had



grown cold,—she was *sleeping instead of watching*. But the night is now far spent, yea, the midnight hour is past,—

“Soon will the morning break  
In radiance through the sky.”

The cry has gone forth, it is spreading to the remotest corners of Christendom, and multitudes of souls are being awakened to the fact that Christ is about to return. May every soul that reads these lines be stirred up! *Professor*, see to it that *you* do not lack the oil! *Christian*, see to it that *your* lamp is trimmed; for it is quite possible to possess the oil, and yet the light be very dim!

Let everything be removed that hinders the light of testimony for Christ shining forth; examine your walk, ways, and associations, and give up everything of which you would be ashamed if Christ were to return this very day. When we see Him as He is, we shall be like Him; let us seek to be as like Him now as we can. “Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure” (1 John iii. 3). Purposely is the moment of His coming left uncertain, in order that we should always be like unto men who are waiting and watching for their Lord. If we turn to Luke xii. 33-49, we shall see what the Lord Himself desired should be the attitude of the hearts, and the occupation of the lives, of all His people, *and it is His desire still*. Our treasure is in heaven—a treasure

inexhaustible, for it *faileth not* ; no thief can approach it there, and no moth can corrupt it. How unlike everything in this world of fleeting joys and crushing disappointments ! Then let our hearts be there also !

But if our *hearts* are in heaven,—and through grace they may be,—in ourselves as to our bodies we are still on this earth, a scene of defilement and darkness. We need, therefore, to gird up the loins, lest our garments should pick up the defilement of the scene through which we pass ; and we need to have our lights burning, in order that some little ray of light for Christ may cast itself across the darkness of this world.

And while He tarries we must wait, and wait too with the hand upon the latch of the door, ready to open immediately the first sound of His footstep is heard. Then, “when He cometh,” He will make us sit down within those heavenly courts, in the eternal rest of His own presence. No defilement there ! We shall not need to gird ourselves ; but, blessed be His name, it will be His delight to gird Himself, and serve us, and thus throughout eternity to minister to our joy.

Oh, what an effect would be produced upon our whole life and conduct if we more constantly remembered that there is absolutely *nothing between us and that glorious moment but the twinkling of an eye !*

The foolish, who represent the mere professors of Christendom, now begin to understand the

gravity of their position. “**Give us of your oil,**” they say, as they behold with alarm the smouldering embers of their oilless wicks. But no, this cannot be; for *salvation is an individual and personal matter*. They now begin to bestir themselves, and with redoubled energies seek to buy, by their own efforts, that which can alone be had as a free gift on the principle of faith.

While thus engaged the Bridegroom came, “and **they that were ready** went in.” Mark these words, reader! Not “they that were *getting* ready,” nor “they that *hoped* to be ready;” but “they that **were** ready.” Reader, *are you ready?* For in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the Bridegroom will come. Then the door will be **shut**. It will be too late then to knock at the door; for when once that door is shut, it is *shut for ever*.

But perhaps you say, “I desire to be ready. What must I do?” Come as a poor, lost, guilty, hell-deserving sinner to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has died for sinners, and risen again. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts xvi. 31). His precious blood alone it is that “cleanses from all sin.”

“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.”

Ere closing, we would most earnestly warn the reader against supposing that this earth is the scene of the Christian’s blessedness. When the Lord Jesus comes into the air, He comes

not to bless us upon the earth, but to take us to the Father's house in glory. Our hope is laid up for us *in heaven* (Col. i. 5). It is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, *reserved in heaven*" for us (1 Peter i. 4).

It is ever Satan's effort to drown the truth of God in a sea of error, by which means some of the children of God are frightened away from the study of those particular truths ; while others, alas ! imbibe those fearful errors to the damage, not only of their own souls, but also of all whom they may influence by their teaching.

Hence, in the present day, the great importance of taking heed what we hear and read ; for many are now lecturing, preaching, and writing about such truths as the coming of the Lord, who are in reality saturated with every form of the nineteenth-century infidelity. Some denying the divinity of Christ, and others His humanity ; some denying the atonement ; others the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures ; while multitudes are giving up the deeply solemn truths of the immortality of the soul, and the eternity of punishment.

In such a day, amidst such perils, and threatened by the withering storms of scepticism and infidelity, we most earnestly commend our readers to God, and to the word of His grace. May we search the Scriptures more diligently, prize them

more highly, and hold them fast more tenaciously,  
“until He come !”

“The night is now far spent,  
The day is drawing nigh ;  
Soon will the morning break  
In radiance through the sky.  
Oh, let the thought our spirits cheer,  
The Lord Himself will soon appear !

“Though men our hope deride,  
Nor will the truth believe ;  
We in His word confide,  
And it will ne’er deceive.  
Soon all that grieves shall pass away,  
And saints shall see a glorious day.

“For us the Lord intends  
A bright abode on high ;  
The place where sorrow ends,  
And nought is known but joy.  
With such a hope let us rejoice,  
We soon shall hear the Saviour’s voice.”

We may add that the second coming of Christ has a double bearing, according as we consider it in relation to the Church, or in relation to the world. In the foregoing pages we have confined ourselves exclusively to the first aspect thereof. The Lord willing, we may, on a future occasion, turn our attention to the second.

*In the First.*

1. Christ comes for His saints.
2. He comes into the *clouds*, and we are *caught up* to meet Him in *the air*.
3. He comes as our Saviour to take us home to glory.

*In the Second.*

1. He comes *with* them.
2. He comes to the *earth*, and His feet stand upon the mount of Olives.
3. He comes as a thief in the night, to execute judgment upon a careless, Christless world.

Though both are spoken of as His coming, yet an interval of time elapses between these two parts of it ; and during this interval will be fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the restoration of the Jews, the time of great tribulation, the preaching to the heathen of the gospel of the kingdom (*not* the gospel of the grace of God, and the glory of Christ, as *now* offered to the world ; we must most carefully distinguish between the two). During this interval also all the judgments described in the book of Revelation from chap. vi. to chap. xix. will take place.

Unless this twofold aspect of the coming of Christ be clearly understood, all will be confusion. Once seen, all is as clear as the noonday sun.

ALFRED H. BURTON.

“The Lord Himself shall come,  
And shout a quickening word,  
Thousands shall answer from the tomb,  
‘*For ever with the Lord!*’

Then as we upward fly,  
That resurrection word  
Shall be our shout of victory,  
‘*For ever with the Lord!*’”

Those desiring further light from the Word of God on the events that will transpire between the coming of the Lord into the air *for* His saints and His return to the earth *with* them, may consult a work entitled *Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects*, by the late W. Trotter, to be had at the Clarendon Tract-Depôt.

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# The Coming of the Lord draweth nigh !

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Reader, these are solemn words ! He who once trod this earth as the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth **is coming again**. When here, “all bare Him witness, and wondered at the **gracious words** that proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke iv. 22). He, the eternal God, became flesh and dwelt among us, “**full of grace and truth**” (John i. 14).

His mission to this world was love,  
His embassy was peace.

But the world knew Him not ; man would not have Him. Away with Him ! Crucify Him ! was their cry. Some few received Him, and “to them gave He power (or title) to become the sons of God, even to **them that believe on His name**.” But He is coming again. Reader, are you ready to meet Him ? Have you received Him ? Have you believed on His name ? He will come in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ; those only who *are* ready will enter in, and then **the door will be shut**. Then delay no longer ; “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

“**Be ye therefore ready also ; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.**”