

CHANGED IN A MOMENT.

A DIALOGUE,

ON THE LORD'S COMING TO GATHER UP HIS SAINTS TO MEET
HIM IN THE AIR AS DISTINCT FROM HIS COMING TO THE
EARTH IN GLORY, AND ITS PRESENT BEARING
UPON THE CHURCH OF GOD
IN THE WORLD.

“THE DAY IS AT HAND.”

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but
we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”
1 Cor. xv. 51.

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“BEHOLD, I SHEW YOU A MYSTERY ; WE SHALL NOT ALL SLEEP,
BUT WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED, IN A MOMENT,
IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE.”

1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

WELL, William, said a christian father to his son, who had come to see him one Sunday evening, I hear you have been attending those lectures in Fore Street, on the Lord's coming.

Yes, father, I have ; and I only wish you had been with me, for what I have learned by so doing has made it appear as though I had been asleep almost all my days, so different does everything look in the light of the Lord's coming. You seem different ; I myself seem different ; the world seems different, and all I see bears another aspect altogether in the light of that glorious day. I have been a christian now these ten years ; and I have heard you say that you have known the Lord nearly forty years, but I never heard you speak of these things ; neither have I ever heard any one else speak of them till very lately, and it makes me feel quite sad to

think that I should have been converted all this time, without knowing that that glorious One is coming to take us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also, and not only to be with Himself, but to be like Him for ever. John xiv. 3 ; Phil. iii. 20, 21 ; 1 John iii. 2.

Oh! William, I hope the Lord is coming every day, and every hour in the day, to comfort or convert some poor soul. I am sure I feel Him coming, and comforting me continually ; and I know He comforts us when we are assembled together in His name ; and I hear every now and then of some poor sinner being converted : what is that but the Lord's coming? This is the way I have always looked at it, and I am sure it has given much joy and comfort to my soul so to do.

In this sense, father, the Lord Jesus is with us always, according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (or age). But His being with us down here, in our sorrows and trials, is a very different thing from our being with Him up there in His glory, with these vile bodies changed, and made like unto His glorious body, sitting with Him on His throne, being His bride, His companion, sharing in everything which He is, and in everything which He has, as the exalted Son of Man. Oh! my heart bounds with joy at the glorious prospect, knowing that it is all sure and certain *through His death*. Three times in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus tells us that *He is coming quickly*. Oh! father, the Lord Jesus is coming quickly—surely He is coming. Eph. v. 32 ; Rev. iii. 21 ; xxi. 9 ; Rom. vi. 5 ; viii. 17.

But, William, do we not go to be with the Lord when we die? Did He not say to the believing thief on the cross, "this day shalt thou be with me in paradise?" And St. Paul says, "absent from the body, and present with the Lord." 1 Cor. v. 8.

Yes, dear father, but do you not see that it is "*absent from the body?*" and this is a very different thing from *the body being glorified*, and with the Lord. When we die, our souls go to be with Christ most assuredly, and this is most happy; but our bodies go into the grave. The souls of Paul and of Peter, and of thousands of God's saints, are up there with Christ, enjoying the Lord's presence, but are still in an unclothed state, and therefore not glorified, but in a waiting position, until that happy moment come, when their bodies will be raised again, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Therefore death is never spoken of, in the word of God, as *the hope* of the believer, but always *the Lord's coming*. 2 Cor. v. 4.; Titus ii. 13.

Yes, William, I know the Scriptures speak of the Lord Jesus coming with ten thousands of His saints, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: and then we shall really know whether we are His or not. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8; Jude 14, 15.

But, father, this is not the time of which I am speaking. Before the Lord comes *with* His saints, He will first come *for* them; because we must be with Him up there, before we can come forth with Him down here, and the distinction between these two events is marked very plainly in Scripture; for when He comes *with* His saints, every eye shall see Him (Rev. i. 7); but when He comes *for* His saints, it is not at all likely that any but His saints will do so: for as the apostle John says, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2.) So that it seems very plain that every one who sees Him then, will know this transforming power. And then again, when He comes *with* His saints, He will come to this earth, His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives. (Zechariah xiv. 4.) But when He comes *for* His saints, He will only come into the clouds,

and not to the earth, and His saints (the dead raised, and the living changed,) will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and go back with Him into heaven at once. (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.) And there every one will be put into his proper place (Matt. xx. 23; 2 Cor. v. 10), and the marriage of the Lamb will take place, and after that we all shall come forth with Him in glory to the earth. (Rev. xix. 7—14.) And, dear father, as regards our knowing, when that day of judgment comes, whether we belong to Christ or not, Scripture never speaks in this way; but it always tells us in the most positive and plainest language possible, that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are really His now, down here, as much as they will be by and bye, when they are with Him up there: not yet glorified, of course, but really His, altogether His, and His alone, bought with His own blood. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Then again, in the epistle to the Colossians, "*hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Therefore, you see, father, it is not a thing which remains to be done, but it is done already. And what God does, He does like Himself, and worthy of Himself. He allows nothing to be added to it, nor anything to be taken from it, so that we may have perfect liberty to serve Him in this world, with the full consciousness that we are His, altogether His. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Col. i. 13; Eph. i. 5—11.

Why, William, you quite surprise me; for I always thought our minister preached us very beautiful sermons; and I have been hearing him now these twenty years and more; but he never talks to us in this way. He is continually telling us to hold on, labour hard,

and pray without ceasing, and then we may expect to get the blessing at last, or perhaps we may be sure of it, if we do not give way.

Yes, father, I know the way you have been preached to, and the way I have been preached to also; but since I heard these lectures, I have been reading the word of God for myself, and have read it as the word of God, and believed what it says. This is what Mr. — so pressed upon us, telling us to bring our bibles with us, when we came to hear him speak; and not to depend upon what he said, but upon what God said; and thankful, indeed, I am that I ever did so: for I have now a joy unspeakable, and full of glory, which before I knew nothing of. Not that I was not a child of God before, for I can now see that I really was, because I truly believed in Christ, and was able, through mercy, to say, "Abba, Father." But I had been listening to what man says, instead of reading the word of God for myself, to see what He said; and the result was, that I went on holding down my head, not knowing whether I should be safe at last or not; and I am sure I did not honour God by so doing; for the true way to honour Him is to believe what He says, and do what He tells us to do. And if He tells us that by believing in His Son we are His, and His for ever; and that He loves us, as He loves Christ, it is for us to bow our heads, and say, Amen; and thank and praise Him for it: not to doubt whether He is as good as His word or not, and thereby virtually to make God a liar. Oh! I do wish christians would hearken to what God says, and not to what man says. 1 Thess. ii. 13; Rom. viii. 15; John v. 24; xvii. 23; Col. i. 12; Gal. iv. 6; 1 John iii. 2; v. 9—12.

William, how long is it since you heard those lectures, and took to reading your bible so much?

Not quite fifteen months, father, yet; but I seem to have learned more, in this short time, than I had

done in the whole ten years before. I am sure there is no teaching like being taught of God Himself. John vi. 45 ; 1 Thess. iv. 9 ; 1 John ii. 27.

But did this new view you have got of the Lord's coming do all this for you, William?

Not entirely, father, but it sent me to the word of God, and then, in looking into that for the Lord's coming, I saw other things also. And not only so, but Mr. — shewed us from the Scriptures that the Holy Ghost is down here, not only to gather out of the world a bride for Christ, but that He has taken up His abode in each believer, and is now instructing them, taking of the things of Christ, and shewing it to them, and shewing them things to come ; and so, is leading the church along through the world up to the glory, always delighting to point believers to that happy day, when they will see Him who died for them. I am sure I have found it to be so with me, and I can only wonder that I could have been kept so long in such darkness and ignorance as I was, but I now see the blinding effect of traditional teaching, and the power and claim which early education has upon us ; but I am happy in knowing that it is, in some little measure, losing its hold upon me now, and I do hope the Lord will still lead me on, for I am sure that He alone is able to do so. John xiv. 16, 17 ; xvi. 13—15 ; 1 Peter i. 18.

Do tell me, William, how it is this knowledge of the Lord's coming has such an effect upon the christian, for I cannot understand it, although I can see the effect it has had upon you ; and there certainly seems something very beautiful in it.

It works in this way, father : suppose I retire to bed to-night, with the thought, that, perhaps, Christ may come before the morning ; and I rise in the morning thinking He may be here before night ; you can understand the effect it will have upon my

thoughts, my will, my ways, my desires. I shall be very careful to do everything I can that is pleasing to Him, and to avoid everything which is contrary to Him : and, as Peter exhorts those to whom he wrote, I shall be diligent "to be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (many things which christians look at as blameless and harmless now, and call by pretty names, look very dark in the light of that coming glory). This is the way the Lord's coming is always presented in Scripture; *not as a doctrine telling of something coming merely, but as a blessed hope*, which acts as a stay to the soul, and meets us in every corner of our lives, stirring us up to active service for Him. 1 Cor. xv. 58. It is also a balm for every wound, an antidote for every sorrow ; and I am sure there is not a sorrow that can enter the mind, nor a pang can rend the heart, but this blessed hope is a solace for it all, as well as a remedy against worldliness.

Now, if we look at a few passages of Scripture, where this glorious event is spoken of, I think we shall very plainly see that it is always spoken of in such a way as to meet those to whom it is proposed, in the very circumstances of sorrow or trial in which they were then found. In the fourteenth chapter of the gospel by John, we see the disciples were in sorrow, because the Lord Jesus was going to leave them ; for up to that time they had not been aware that He was going to do so. They had been looking at Him as the King of Israel, about to take the throne of His father David (Luke i. 32 ; xix. 37, 38), instead of looking at Him as a suffering Saviour, going to be crucified ; therefore they were very sad, and the Lord said to them, "Let not your heart be troubled ; . . . in my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again* and receive you unto myself ; that were I am, there ye may be also." Now,

what could have met them in their circumstances of sorrow and separation, like this precious promise? How it must have dried up their tears, and bid their sorrows cease, thus to know, that though He, whom they so loved, was going away, yet He was coming back again to receive them to Himself, that they might be with Him to enjoy His company for ever. And what is so comforting to the children of God now, who are feeling their loneliness in this world, and mourning the absence of that glorious One, as to be able, by faith, to look up and see the Lord Jesus gone to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, and to know that very soon He will fulfil His parting promise, and they shall be with Him, basking in the sunshine of His presence throughout an unchanging eternity? Thus you see, father, how the hope of the Lord's coming lifts the soul above this present scene through which we are passing. Luke xviii. 32—34; John xii. 12, 13.

Ah! William, I am afraid there are but few of God's people who are feeling themselves lonely and sorrowful in the world, because the Lord Jesus is absent; we seem to be trying to make ourselves comfortable, and at home in it, and the sorrows we mostly have are the result of not being able to do so: but, surely, it ought not so to be, for it was a path of loneliness and sorrow indeed to Him, when He was down here, and we ought not to desire it should be otherwise to us, nor to be seeking a path of roses, where He had a path of thorns and briars.

This is too true, I know, father, with the greatest part of God's people upon earth, but still, it is pleasing to know, that there is one here, and another there, who in secret are sighing and crying because of these things, and who are longing to see and be with that blessed One who has died for them; not to get away from the trials and sorrows of the world merely, but because of their desire of being with Christ: the lan

guage of their hearts is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee:" and their inward breathings are continually, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly:" and I am sure it is such desires which truly please and honour God.

Now, if we look again at the Lord Jesus after His resurrection, when He finally left His disciples, to take His seat at His Father's right hand, He having been seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, He led them out as far as to Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them; and it came to pass that while He blessed them, He was taken from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. Thus we see them going quietly back, holding themselves in a waiting position, ready to do any little service which God might call upon and enable them to do in the meantime, while He was away. And very soon we see them brought into such a position of power and service, and active testimony for Christ, through the Holy Ghost, as the world never saw before, nor since; and I am sure there is nothing which gives such power for calm, yet true and acceptable service to God, as this blessed hope, filling our hearts, and regulating all the movements of our lives: because, if we are continually expecting to see and be with that glorious One, we shall be seeking very carefully to know His mind and will in all things; and knowing it we shall do it. This is a very different thing from that bustling religious zeal which is abroad in the world. Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 2—12; ii. 41.

Do you think, William, that the Apostles were really looking for the Lord Jesus to return in their day?

Yes, father, undoubtedly they were; for we find them telling the Jews that though they had crucified Him, yet if they repented, God would send Him back again; and the burden of their preaching was, "through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts iii. 20; iv. 2); not *of* the dead, but *from* the dead, or, from among the dead, as it was with the Lord Jesus Himself. He rose out from among the dead. So will it be with all who are united to Him; they will rise to meet the Lord in the air when He comes, leaving the unbelievers, or wicked dead, still in their graves. Acts iv. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 16. Then, again, the apostle Peter found it needful to exhort the Christians to whom he wrote, not to think the Lord was slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, because He had not come according to their preaching; but he assured them the reason of His delay was salvation, God not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. So you see, father, the reason why Christ has delayed His coming these eighteen hundred years is, that you and I, and many other poor sinners like ourselves, might be brought into this blessed position, and form a part of that glorious company. 2 Peter iii. 9; Rev. iv. 10, 11.

Why, then, William, you make out that there will be two resurrections. I never heard anything like this before. Surely this cannot be the case.

Yes, father, it is; for nothing is more plainly declared in Scripture, than that there will be a resurrection both of *the just* and of *the unjust*: two distinct things at two distinct times, and a long time separate from each other: a thousand years, at least, is to elapse between the two, as we see in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. And the Lord Jesus, when

He was upon earth, told the Jews, when they made a feast, not to call their rich friends, but their poor neighbours, because their poor neighbours could not ask them again, and so make a recompence, but they should be recompensed at the resurrection of *the just*; so that the Jews had a certain knowledge of two resurrections, as we see also from Heb. xi. 35; Luke xiv. 14; Acts xxiv. 15.

Well, William, if this be the case, what a state the church of God has been in, the greatest part of its time!

What a state, indeed! father; but I am so glad that the Lord Jesus has, in His grace, opened the eyes of many of God's people now, just as He is about to return; for you remember, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, in the parable of the virgins, that *they all slumbered* and slept, and at midnight, the cry went forth, "Behold! the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him:" and the slumbering virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps, and the bridegroom immediately came. So now, I find the cry has gone forth far and wide now these thirty years and more, and many of God's people have awaked and trimmed their lamps, and are standing waiting for Him, as the Lord Jesus said, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men who wait for their Lord." This is a happy position; and I am sure it is the one we should occupy, expecting Him daily and hourly.

But who do you think the foolish virgins are, William?

Oh! this is a very solemn question, indeed, father, because, you see, they had only lamps: they had no oil in their vessels with their lamps; or in other words, they had not the Spirit of God dwelling in them; they did not love Christ, though they professed His name, and were associated with His people: therefore they could not be admitted to that happy scene, where nothing

but love reigns. They would not be happy and at home amid the joys of the Father's house, were it possible for them to be admitted. The unrenewed soul would, like Adam in the garden, seek to hide itself from the presence of the Lord, even were it in the glories of heaven.

Oh! William, this almost makes me tremble.

I do not see why it should, father. I suppose it arises from the bad teaching that we have been subject to. The great test to our souls, as to whether we are of God, is, *Do we love Christ?* (Eph. vi. 24,) because "he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." I may have all those external things which the eye of man can look upon and admire, such as the "tongues of men and of angels;" "faith so as to remove mountains;" "give all my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned;" but, without love I am nothing; I am only like "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." I lack the only thing which will throw the gates of heaven wide open to me in that day of glory. But if I have love to Christ, I have everything. "Unto you therefore which *believe*, He is precious." Is Christ precious to my soul? then all is well. 1 Pet. ii. 7; 1 John iv. 7, 8.

The next passage we will look at is the fifteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians. There we see the Lord's coming spoken of as taking place very suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the shortest space of time which can be expressed; and this is quite in keeping with their condition, for, as a church, they were in a very careless and loose state, reigning as kings, while Christ was absent, and His apostles in sorrow; and were allowing things among them, which were not so much as named among the Gentiles. What was, therefore, so calculated to arouse them, and bring them to a sense of their condition, as the sudden appearance

of their Lord? I can almost fancy I see them, when it was thus pressed home upon them by the apostle, all in confusion, as it were; pushing this thing this way, and that thing that way, to get things a little straight, as soon as possible, lest the Lord Jesus should come before they were able to do so; like a servant, hearing his master's feet at the door, while things inside were all in disorder. This is what the true knowledge of the Lord's coming always does: it throws a light upon present things, giving us to see them as they really are, so that we are able to discern between the evil and the good, the precious and the vile, and to see that which is of God, and that which is not of Him. I am sure, this is how it has been with me; for how many things have I been glad to push aside, and cast away altogether, since my eyes have been opened to it, in which, before, I saw but little or no harm. 1 Cor. iv; Mark xiii. 33—37.

This quite accounts for the difference I have seen in you of late, William, for many things with which you were formerly so pleased, now seem to have lost their charm for you, and many other things which before you did very wearisomely, now seem your delight.

It is so, father, and I am so glad it is made manifest in my conduct; for words, however prettily spoken, do not speak so loudly as actions.

But do you not think, William, that those early christians must have felt very much disappointed, when they knew themselves to be dying, and the Lord had not come?

Oh! no, father. I have no doubt whatever, but that most of them drew their last breath looking for His coming; and there they are now, up there, with Christ, still waiting for that same happy day; and when it does come, they will then have the fruit of their having waited for Him down here. They had a certain fruit of their doing so while upon earth, in its having filled

their hearts with joy and gladness, and kept their souls above present things, and their affections true to the Lord. Thereby they escaped many corruptions and entanglements, which otherwise they might have been led into (2 Peter i. 4); and beside this, there will be its fruit also in resurrection glory, for when the apostle Paul came to the end of his earthly course, and sought to stir up and encourage his son Timothy to a life of faithfulness to God, he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that *love His appearing*." Now there are several crowns spoken of in Scripture to be given as rewards for faithfulness to the Lord in this world. Peter speaks of a crown of glory which fadeth not away, held out to those who properly feed and take care of Christ's sheep during His absence: and in the book of the Revelation there is a crown of life promised to those who are faithful unto death; and in the first epistle to the Corinthians, an incorruptible crown to those who run well; and here, in Timothy, a crown of righteousness to those who love His appearing, or those who have fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith; because it is impossible for us to love Christ's appearing, without doing so, in our measure. We may have a very correct knowledge of it in our minds, and be able to speak pretty well of it with our lips, but if we *love it*, we shall act consistently with it. Therefore, to say we love Christ's appearing, and yet go hand in hand with the world, or seek to please ourselves in it, is a contradiction; because the two things cannot exist together, any more than can light and darkness.

Oh! I see this very plainly, William, the one must expel the other; for we cannot be glad to see any one,

even if we love them ever so much, if we know they will find us doing things that they do not like.

Yes, father, I am sure it is so, and I think it is so beautiful to see the apostle Paul, when in the full flow of service to the Lord, saying he did not count his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God; and then, when he had come to the end of his course, he could look back and see that he had done it; he had not loitered in the way, nor been pleasing himself on the road, but had done that which the Lord Jesus had given him to do; therefore he was not ashamed, but could hold up his head with joy, knowing that the crown was waiting for him. And I am sure it is the privilege of each of us, in our measure, to do the same things. How many there are of God's dear children who find their dying pillow planted with thorns, instead of roses, because they have not been careful to do so, but have allowed present things to occupy their attention, instead of service to the Lord. 2 Tim. iv. 6—8; Gal. vi 7.

Oh! yes, I see it now, William; and this puts faithfulness to Christ in this world in its proper place; not making our salvation depend upon it, but it is the fruit of salvation: we being already saved, through His death, it is for us to seek to please Him who has saved us. 1 Thess. ii. 12.

Yes, father, it is so. Were it otherwise, our salvation would depend upon our own doings, and not upon what Christ has done. Christ has saved us, and then given each of us a path to walk in, a service to do; and by doing it, we get present blessing to our souls, and shall have His acknowledgement and approbation of it by and bye, when we see Him in the glory. 2 Tim. i. 8, 9; Matt xxv. 21.

Again, if we turn to the epistle to the Philippians,

the latter end of the third chapter, we shall there see they had some among them who did not like the cross, but, on the other hand, made a god of their belly, and gloried in their shame, and were minding earthly things. Now, this is just the opposite to our true position; for we are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, but our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven: and instead of feasting these vile bodies down here, it is for us to be looking for the Lord Jesus to come from heaven, to change them, and make them like unto His glorious body. But, instead of this, there were some, even in the apostle's days, who began to say in their heart, "my Lord delayeth His coming." They did not say it with their lips, perhaps, but in their heart; and their conduct answered thereto.

But, oh! what a sure remedy is this glorious hope for every carnal appetite: and if it is not abiding in our souls, something else is sure to take its place; inward corruptions will arise, and lead us into paths which are not good. Knowing this, the apostle might well say, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly-beloved and longed-for, my joy and crown, so stand fast *in the Lord*, my dearly-beloved;" for, so sure as we are not standing fast in the Lord, with that glory vividly before our souls, so surely will the world gain upon us, in one way or other: we shall begin to pamper our appetites, or take pleasure in something that is going on in the world, or among ourselves; but the sure way to keep everything in its proper place down here, is to be occupied with that glorious One up there. It is not to be done by effort, nor by carefulness, but by being occupied with Christ; communion with Him being the moving spring, everything will work properly; there will be a time and place for everything, and everything will be in its place: we shall then be content that the world should have its own, and that we should have the

cross, knowing that, very soon, those who now have the cross will then have the crown. Oh! father, what a contrast! a few moments the cross; the crown eternally! 2 Cor. iv. 17; 1 Peter. v. 4.

What a contrast! indeed, William: how little it makes everything down here look, except it be faithfulness to God, and His saints.

Yes, father; little indeed the things of earth are, in the light of that coming glory; because present things are fast passing away, and therefore ought not to cause one anxious thought: because nothing will avail us, in that day, but what has been done in and to the Lord. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." All else, then, will be vain. We shall then see that all flesh is indeed grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass; in the morning it groweth up, in the evening it is cut down, and withered: but a cup of cold water, given *for Christ*, will not be forgotten by Him in that day, nor lose its reward in the glory: a kind look, a kind word, or a smile to one who belongs to Christ in this cold world, will then shine more brightly than all the diadems of earth, or all the gold of the Indies. Phil. iii. 8; iv. 1; 1 Peter i. 24; Psalm xc. 6; Mark ix. 41.

Again, if we turn to the first epistle to the Thessalonians, we shall find them in a very different condition to any of the other churches; hence, the Lord's coming is also spoken of in a very different way to them; but in such a way as to dry up every tear they had, and dispel every sorrow. When the apostle went first to Thessalonica, to preach Christ's gospel, he found them worshipping idols, bowing down to blocks of wood and stone; but, those who believed, soon cast their idols away, to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for*

His Son from heaven. But the apostle was not allowed to stay among them more than three weeks, being driven away by persecution. Acts xvii. 2—10. He, therefore, had not time to fully establish them in the doctrine of the Lord's coming, but he had taught them *to wait* for the Son of God from heaven: and, so earnestly were they doing so, that they never expected any among them would die; but death did come in, and took some from their midst, and it put them all into consternation, for they seem to have thought that those who had died would not partake of the glory: therefore the apostle wrote to comfort them in their sorrow, and to set them right wherein they had made a mistake. And this he did, by referring to those brethren who had been taken from them by death, as being asleep, exhorting them not to sorrow as those who had no hope, because, "they who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him," when that day of glory comes. He also told them, that we who are alive shall not be in the glory before them, for, "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the *dead in Christ* shall rise *first*: then *we* which are *alive* and remain, shall be *caught up together with them* in the clouds, *to meet the Lord in the air*, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." "Wherefore," said he, "comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess. i. 5, 9, 10; iv. 13—18.

Well, William, I never saw the death of God's people in such a beautiful light before. This must have been a comfort, indeed, to those poor sorrowing Thessalonians. How very differently they must have looked at those brethren, who had been removed by death; and how very different must have been their feeling as to those who died afterwards.

Yes, father, it takes the gloom away from the cold icy grave, thus to regard those who depart in the

Lord as being asleep, asleep in Jesus, like a babe asleep in its mother's arms, watched over, and cared for with the tenderest love, knowing that very soon, the same gracious, loving One, who has put them to sleep, will come and wake them up again in His own likeness, to enjoy His company for ever, in unfading glory, where sorrow and death can never reach them any more, and separation will be unknown. But, of course, to the natural eye, it is death, with all its terrors: but, to faith, it is sleep, sleep in Jesus. Oh! how sweet these words are to my soul, because they rob death of its sting, and chase away all its gloom. 1 Cor. xv. 51—55; Isaiah xxv. 8. This passage also makes that portion in the eleventh chapter of the gospel by John so very simple and plain, which at one time was quite a mystery to me. The Lord Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whoso *liveth* and *believeth* in me, *shall never die*: believest thou this?" So that you see, father, those believers who are alive when Christ comes will never die at all, because the living will be changed, and, like Enoch and Elijah, will be taken up to heaven, without tasting the pains of death in any way whatever. I do not suppose Martha understood this at the time, but no doubt she did so fully, afterward, when the Holy Ghost was given. Then, again, in this fourth chapter of the Thessalonians, there seems something so very beautiful in the word, "shout:" people shout in victory; and well may the Lord Jesus do so, when He comes to call His sleeping ones out of their graves, and His living ones out of the reach of Satan, to be with Himself for ever. John xvi. 13, 14; Rom. xvi. 20.

Ah! William, this is the crowning point of all, to be with the Lord Jesus for ever. The thought of heaven is very pleasant, the Father's house very beau

tiful, the glory very desirable ; but what is it all, when compared with being with Christ ?

Ah ! what indeed, father. It would be all a dreary blank, if He were not there ; but the thought is so cheering, that we are to be *with* the Lord Jesus, and like Him, without the possibility of any change, or separation whatever. Could there be for a moment the fear of such a thing happening the glory would instantly grow dim in our eyes, and it would quench every spark of joy we have: for, what makes all so exceedingly precious is, that it is sure, and certain, and unchangeable, because it is He Himself, who has done and secured it all. John xiv. 19 ; xvii. 24.

Now, if we pass on to the epistle to the Hebrews, the latter part of the tenth chapter, there we shall see the state of suffering and sorrow these poor Hebrew christians were in. I feel more for them than I do for any of the other churches ; because, when they first believed, their joy was very great, and, like their forefathers on the banks of the Red Sea, they sang triumphantly ; but they found the wilderness very rough and trying to their feet, for through their having believed in Christ, and receiving His apostles, they became subject to a long and bitter persecution, and all their earthly goods were taken from them, and they themselves “made a gazing-stock both by reproaches, and afflictions, and partly whilst they became companions of them that were so used.” But they took it all joyfully, knowing in themselves, they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. But they found the continuance of these things very painful, and hard to endure ; for week after week, and year after year, passed away, and the Lord did not come, nor their circumstances alter, and they felt themselves very much discouraged, and cast down, and almost ready to turn back, and give up their confidence in Christ, and the apostle had to exhort them not to do

so, but to go on patiently; for after we have done the will of God, we shall receive the promise: "for yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." What a balm must these three little words, "*a little while*," have been to their drooping spirits! How it must have cheered them, and enabled them to go on their way with a light, but steady step, to be thus assured they should soon see their Lord and Master, and be with Him for ever; and that then they should bid farewell to the wilderness and all its circumstances; the journey would be over and past, suffering and sorrow for ever gone, all tears wiped away from their eyes, and they with Him who had died for them.

This was a word of comfort for them, indeed, William.

Yes, father, this is the way our gracious God always does; when we are pressed to our utmost strength, then He never fails to come in with His abounding consolations, making up, in Himself, whatever we may be lacking of present things, through faithfulness to Him: and when our souls are enjoying His company, a very little of the things of earth goes a great way; the cravings of nature are kept down in His presence: and though He may allow the privation and sorrow still to go on, yet, on the other hand, He never fails to administer that joy and strength by which we are able to bear it. 1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Cor. i. 3—5; vii. 6.

Yes, William, I know it to be so. All His ways, from first to last, show Him to be a God of love; and, I was thinking, if the apostle could say, "*a little while*," eighteen hundred years ago, how must it be now? It must be very near indeed.

Yes, father, that, and many other passages, shew very plainly that *the Lord is at hand*, as it were, just at the door; and I am so glad it is so, for I long to see Him, and, as Job says, that my eyes may behold Him

for myself, and not another. But I know that His time is the best, and my desire is, that my heart may be directed more and more into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ, and at all times, and in all circumstances, to say, "not my will, but Thine be done:" for, by so doing, we truly glorify God. True service to Him is doing or suffering that which He has given us to do or suffer; not making to ourselves paths of our own, nor walking by the light of sparks of our own kindling, but seeking simply to know His will, and then cheerfully doing it.

The next passage we will turn to is in the epistle of James, the last chapter. The believers there addressed seem to have been, mostly, agricultural labourers, and their rich neighbours seem to have employed them to reap down their fields, and did not pay them for it. Of course, these poor christians must have suffered very much, in thus being deprived of their wages. Only look at them in their lonely cottages, with their empty cupboards, and their fireless hearths, through their cruel oppressors. But the apostle exhorts them to take it patiently, for *the Lord is coming*; and he bids them behold the husbandman, who never looks for fruit in the winter: he is then ploughing the ground, casting in the seed, and waits patiently till harvest time for fruit: therefore, says he, let it be the same with you. "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*." Therefore, never mind enduring hardness now, you will have plenty of fruit by and bye, in resurrection glory. The apostle Peter, also, writing to the strangers scattered throughout different countries in his day, reminds them of "the inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time:" and he speaks of their being in heaviness through manifold

temptations, and tells them it is "that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Therefore, you see, father, that these very trials and sorrows which we are now passing through, if endured properly, will enhance our glory when we see the Lord. 2 Tim. ii. 3; 1 Peter i. 7; Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 11—13.

Well, William, the farther you go on, the more surprised I am that my eyes should have been closed so many years to these beautiful Scriptures.

Beautiful, indeed, they are, father, and I am so glad you can see their loveliness; for they give a real dignity and calmness to the soul, pointing us on to the Lord's coming, when everything will be put straight with God's people, and every loss fully made up, and more than made up, a thousand-fold. Thus the apostle in writing to the Philippians, says, "Let your moderation, or yieldingness, be known unto all men: *the Lord is at hand.*" As if he had said, "If men seek to deprive you of your rights, do not stand up and contend with them, but quietly yield, for the Lord is coming; He is just at hand, and you will not then be sorry for anything you may have been deprived of for His sake down here." Phil. iv. 5; see 2 Samuel xix. 29, 30.

Ah! William, though this is very beautiful and very happy, no doubt, yet on the other hand, it is very trying to flesh and blood to allow ourselves to be trampled upon, and say nothing. Isaiah liii. 7.

Yes, father, I know it is; but it is not for us to consult flesh and blood at all, seeing we have died and risen with Christ, and are united with Him in heavenly glory. We are not of this poor world, even as Christ is not of the world; but we are only passing through it to our heavenly home. And did not the Lord Jesus allow Himself to be trampled upon, indeed, for us,

when He laid aside the glory which He had with His Father, before this world was, and became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich? He was reviled, but reviled not again, and when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously, and, at last, gave Himself a ransom for us: surely, then, we ought to count it happy, if we are allowed, in any little measure, to make Him the smallest return in any way. We want to know more of our true character as strangers here; it would remove many difficulties out of our path, and make many things pleasant which now are really very trying. People think but little of many inconveniencies and hardships they have to endure while on a journey, away from home, which, if at home, would not be so easy to put up with. We shall have plenty of rest and ease when at home, in the Father's house. Besides, if we are looking onward, with delight and joy, to something which is coming, we do not feel the pressure of present things half so much, as those who are not doing so; therefore we do well, at all times, to keep that bright day of glory before our souls, knowing that it will soon burst upon our view in all its eternal realities; and in the light of that glory, present things look so little, 'Oh, so little.' But on the other hand, everything connected with Christ and His Church, so weighty, 'Oh, so weighty!'

I wish these things had more power over us all, William, for I see very plainly that much of the weakness and failure among God's people, is because these things are so little before our minds.

This is the case, father. We get looking at the things which are seen, instead of the things which are unseen, and our souls get dragged down by them. It would not be so, were we more occupied with Christ up there, and His glory down here; ever ready to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

May the Lord keep us from looking for ease or satisfaction in this world, for, if we do, we shall be sadly disappointed; because it is not to be found in it. It is a plant that will not grow upon earth; earth is too ungenial a soil for it; but it grows freely in heaven: and we get, as it were, a small bud, now and then, from the tree, but we no sooner have it, than it withers in our hands; the atmosphere of earth is so bleak, and chilly; but we shall be able to enjoy it fully, when we are with the Lord. It is in Him alone that joy is to be found: and we ought to be drawing from Him now, moment by moment: but we are so prone continually to look for it in something down here. This is a great mistake, and we reap sorrow, instead of joy, by so doing. Phil. iv. 4; John xvi. 33.

Now, if we turn to the first epistle of John, the third chapter, we shall find these words: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, *when He shall appear* we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath *this hope* in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Here the Lord's coming is spoken of as a means by which we are kept from the evils by which we are surrounded; and surely it is so; for there is no possibility of giving way to any evil thing, when that blessed hope is filling our hearts, and throwing its rays upon our path. And not only so, but if we are delighting ourselves in the thought that we shall very soon see Christ, and be like Him for ever, we shall delight ourselves also in seeking to be, as much as possible, like Him now; meek, lowly, loving, mild: because, when it says, that when we see Him we shall be like Him, it does not mean that our bodies are to be changed merely, but something much deeper than this: it means that we shall be altogether like Him, both outwardly and inwardly; thoughts, desires, feelings, ways, yea, in everything like

Him, so that there will not be one discordant note throughout eternity; but we shall be entirely meet for His presence, with capacities to enjoy His company in everything; therefore, we shall be quite at home, able to sit at our ease. Col. i. 12; Rev. iii. 20, 21.

Then, again, in the book of the Revelation, the first chapter, I think we have a very sweet reference to this same happy time. There John sees the Lord Jesus in glory, and falls at His feet, as dead: and He lays His right hand upon him, and says unto him, "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore: Amen; and have the keys of hell (or the grave) and of death." Thus reminding John of that time of suffering and sorrow, when he saw Him bow His head on the cross, and followed Him to the sepulchre: but that He was now alive again for evermore, and had, as it were, brought away the keys of death and the grave with Him; and that in His own proper time He would shew it forth by unlocking the graves of all His saints, and bidding death be gone. John xix. 30; Luke xxiii. 55.

Then, I suppose, William, the Lord Jesus was here reminding John of the happy day when He would fulfil His promise as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of the gospel by John?

Yes, father, there is no doubt of it. And what could have inspired John with such happy confidence in the Lord's presence as this?

Ah! what indeed, William, for since we have been looking into it this evening, I am sure I have had such a happy longing after the Lord Jesus as I have not had for many a long day before; the world has, indeed, been under my feet.

This is the way the Lord's coming always acts, father, when the heart is true; and the great reason why the children of God are so mixed up with the

world is that they have lost sight of that happy day. Titus ii. 11—14.

Yes, William, I believe it is so, that I do.

Then again, in the second and third chapters of this book, we see the same glorious time continually referred to by the Lord Jesus, and used by Him as a means to stir up the churches to faithfulness and watchfulness. Then, in the fourth and fifth chapters, we see the church in glory, casting their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power." And again, "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and *we shall reign on the earth.*" And the church is ever after seen in heaven, that favoured company having been completed, and taken to be with the Lord. Then in the sixth chapter, we see the judgments begin to be poured out upon the earth, previous to the Lord's coming in glory with all His saints, and taking to Himself His great power, and reigning. Rev. xi. 15—17. Then, "the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ"—that joyful time for which creation groans, and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Then this bondage of corruption, which all creation is now labouring under, will be removed; and the lion and the lamb will dwell together, and the sucking child will play upon the hole of the asp, and put his hand on the cockatrice den: they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And not only will the poor brute creation be at peace with each other, but men also will "beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-

hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Rom viii. 19—22; Isa. ii. 4; xi. 5—9; lxxv. 25.

But, William, I have always heard that this blessed time is to be brought about by the preaching of the gospel!

Yes, father, I know this is what man has been saying, but God says just the reverse. He says that during this dispensation, "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived;" and that this glorious time is only to be brought about *by the appearing of the Son of God*, the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke xvii. 26—30; 2 Tim. iii. 13; Eze. xxi. 25—27.

What is meant, William, by the manifestation of the sons of God?

It is that which will take place at this same happy time, father: for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then shall we also appear with Him in glory.*" Col. iii. 4. *Then we shall be manifested as the sons of God in glory with Christ. We are the sons of God now*, but the "world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not:" then it will (John xvii. 22, 23; 1 John iii. 2). The Lord Jesus will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe: he will then set up His kingdom upon earth and reign in righteousness.

And do you really think, William, that the Lord Jesus will yet reign as King over this earth?

I do, father, Scripture tells us over and over again that it will be so: you remember at His first coming He was born King of the Jews; but He came in circumstances of humiliation and need (Psalm xl. 17). A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and Israel hid as it were their faces from Him: He was despised and they esteemed Him not; He was to them as a root out of a dry ground without form or comeliness,

and they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him ; (Isaiah liii.) and when He presented Himself to them as their King sitting on an ass's colt, (John xii. 15.) they took Him and put Him to death : they even sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. But though they did this, the kingdom was not done away with, only put off for a time, in which God is bringing about His eternal purpose respecting the church ; and when the Lord Jesus shall come again in glory Israel will gladly receive Him both as their Saviour and their King : they will then look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn : He will come out of Zion as their Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. xi. 26), and bring them into everlasting blessing ; they will not then be a proverb and a byword among the nations as they now are, but they will be gathered into their own land, and men will call them the holy of the Lord, honourable ; for they will be the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them : the Lord will be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning will be ended (Isaiah lx. 20). But this cannot be till the church is gathered in and taken to be with the Lord, also the Old Testament saints will be raised at the same time and will be with Christ in glory : this is the happy time for which all creation is groaning and waiting with earnest expectation (Rom. viii. 19—22).

Then I suppose, William, we must be carefully looking out for those signs which are spoken of in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and other places ?

Oh ! no, father ; they are for the faithful among the Jews, when the Lord Jesus is about to come in blessing to them ; and *they* will have them in abundance ; but *for us* there are neither signs nor seasons, nor times nor dates : but the Lord has left us this promise ; "*Surely I come quickly.*" And it is for us to be wait-

ing for Him, with our loins girded, and our lights burning, and not to put our hands to a single thing, if we cannot leave it half finished, and go to meet Him with a smile. 1 Thess. v. 1—6 ; Rev. xxii. 20.

Then, we have ~~not~~ been looking at the Lord Jesus coming to the earth in glory at all, William ?

No, father ; perhaps we may do so at some future time, if the Lord tarry ; but we have been looking at *our being gathered unto Him, the Lord Jesus having come into the clouds, to call us up to meet Him in the air ;* because, as we have already said, we must be *with Him up there,* before we can *come forth with Him down here.* For this we are to be looking and waiting continually, as it may take place any day, or any hour in the day. I think, father, I must now go, as I have stayed very much longer than I had intended.

Well, William, I am sure it has not been in vain ; and I do hope I shall prayerfully look into the word of God for myself, and pray that this evening's interview may result in an abiding blessing to each of our souls. But do not let it be long before you come to see me again, William.

No, father, I will try to come soon ; perhaps next Sunday evening, if the Lord will, and then, perhaps, we shall be able to look a little into the Scriptures, to see what they tell us about *the Lord Jesus coming to this earth in glory with all His saints.*

Oh ! William, I shall be so pleased, and thank you very much.

H. T.
