

“CAUGHT UP”

BY THE BRIDEGROOM,
COMING WITH THE
KING



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DEAR READER, are you aware of it? *The Lord Jesus Christ is coming again!*

Thousands on every hand are being awakened to this solemn, yet blessed fact; and though the latter-day “scoffers” are asking, “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Peter 3 : 4), and the “evil servant” saying in his heart, “My Lord delayeth His coming” (Matt. 24 : 48), yet “He that shall come *will* come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. 10 : 37.) “In such an hour as ye *think not*, the Son of man cometh.” (Matt. 24 : 44.)

There is an unmistakable and growing conviction in the minds of God’s people all over the world—a conviction, moreover, based upon the truths of His word—that the Church’s

history on the earth is about to close ; that the Lord Jesus is coming to take His bride away to the Father's house on high.

Reader, are *you* yet alive to the reality of this solemn matter, and what it involves ? If not, may the Holy Spirit use these few pages to awaken your precious soul, "lest coming suddenly, He find *you* sleeping." (Mark 13 : 36.)

There are four things, in connection with this subject, which I desire to briefly bring before you :

- 1st. The *promise* of His coming.
- 2nd. The *Person* who is coming.
- 3rd. The *purpose* of His coming.
- 4th. The *preparation* for His coming.

THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING.

Time was, when His coming as the humbled Sufferer was still an *unfulfilled prophecy*. Many a generation had come and gone ; empires had risen,

and again crumbled to dust; Israel and Judah had been "scattered," or carried away into captivity; and a remnant of the people had been again restored to their land; but no promised Messiah had yet appeared. The great majority of those who returned from the Babylonish captivity had no doubt, settled comfortably down, and well-nigh forgotten the promised Coming One; when lo! one morning there was a great stir in Jerusalem. Strange visitors were come—come with the wondrous tidings that the *long-promised King was born*. From Herod's palace to the priests in the temple, and from the priests to the people, the news must have spread most rapidly.

But what was the result of this intelligence? Was it a united shout of praise to God from the sons of Zion for at last fulfilling His word, and sending the Messiah? Did not every face beam with delight, and every heart dance for very joy? Alas! no. The very opposite. Sadness filled

the city. "Herod the king . . . was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." (Matt. 2 : 3.)

But how was this? Well, if, from the Scriptures, they knew anything about the matter at all, they must have known that Isaiah had foretold that the *king should reign in righteousness*. (32 : 1.)

Now, though there was in Jerusalem at the time plenty of *self-righteousness*, there was, no doubt, in the minds of most, an inward consciousness that they were *not ready* for the righteous One's presence, and therefore the tidings which ought to have filled every bosom in Jerusalem with thankfulness and joy, only produced trouble and dismay.

Still, whether they were prepared to welcome Him or not, *He was come*; come to reveal the Father; come, not only as Israel's Messiah, but as "Saviour of the world." The solemn sequel you well know. "God's Beloved" was hated and rejected, and

His wondrous pathway on earth brought to a close at Calvary—"by wicked hands crucified and slain."

God had thus far fulfilled the promise made unto the fathers in *sending* Jesus; *they* had fulfilled the prophetic writings in condemning Him. (Acts 13 : 27, 32, 33.)

Before His death, however, the Promised One became Himself a *Promiser*.

He had gathered around Him His beloved disciples. The traitor Judas had just left the little company. The dark shadow of the cross was but a few paces ahead, and He had been giving them a hint about it. What a moment it was!

Think of those sorrowful and bewildered faces as they eagerly bend to catch these farewell communications! "Let not your heart be troubled" (He says): "ye believe in God, believe also in Me." As though He had said, "You trusted in God without seeing *Him*, and now that I am going

away from you out of sight, put the same confidence in *Me*. *God* made you a promise by the prophets, and He faithfully fulfilled that promise in sending *Me*. I, too, am going to make you a promise, and you must just trust *Me* for the fulfilment of that also."

But what *was* this new promise?

Read John 14 : 2, 3, and you will see : " 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 where I am, there ye may be also.*"

A grosser mistake could not be made than to suppose that this second "*coming*" of *His* means "*death*." Let me give you an illustration of the difference. A kind-hearted father takes his son for the first time to some distant boarding-school. On parting with him, he plainly sees what a struggle is going on in the poor little fellow's breast as he tries hard to hold

back the tears. So, to comfort him, the father says, "Come, cheer up, my boy. I *must* leave you now, and return home; but when the day comes round for school days to end and holidays to begin, *I will come again myself*, and take you back home with me."

Now, could there be any mistake, think you, as to what the father intended to convey to his troubled boy by these words? And yet the language of the blessed Lord to His sorrowing disciples, at the eventful crisis just alluded to, is no less plain and unmistakable.

It was not, "I am going away to heaven, but you shall die and come to Me there"; but, "If I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.*"

If believers are called to die, Scripture speaks of them as being "*absent from the body,*" and "*present with the Lord,*" (2 Cor. 5 : 8.) Whereas when the Lord's coming takes place, instead of being "*absent from the*

body" (or, as verse 4 expresses it, "unclothed"), *their bodies* will be fashioned "like unto *His* glorious body." (Phil. 3 : 21 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 52.) "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the "dead in Christ" will be raised, and the living "changed." So that, instead of the coming of the Lord being death, it will be the undoing of all that death has done to the bodies of God's people for nigh six thousand years. What a morning of victory both for Him and for those who know Him!

But let us now consider the second part of our subject, viz.,

THE PERSON WHO IS COMING.

Many, who know something of the *doctrine* of the Lord's coming, seem to get their souls engrossed with "*events*" which they think have been, or are being, fulfilled, rather than with the *blessed Person Himself* who is coming.

A widowed mother stands upon the pier-head of a seaport town,

eagerly gazing seaward. She has heard that transport ships, bringing Her Majesty's troops from a foreign battle-field, are soon to arrive, and in one of them she ardently hopes to see her much-loved son. Preparations for a "grand review," to take place soon after the brave men have landed, are being made on a large scale. But these things have very little attraction for *her*. Military bands and waving banners, and triumphal arches may gratify the mere observer of passing events; but it is for her own dear lad that *she* waits. Day and night, since he departed, has she longed and prayed for his return; and what could really give her so much joy as getting *him* safely back? not that she has any objection to seeing him honoured at the coming "review"; for she believes him to be well worthy of all the honour they will give him; but even this will take place *after* he has landed. The uppermost thought in her heart *now* is this—" *he* is coming."

Now, dear reader, there *may* be certain events happening to-day which seem to indicate that the time cannot be far distant when the "*Sun of Righteousness*" shall arise with healing in His wings for the remnant of Israel who fear His name, and with consuming judgment for the wicked. (Read for yourself of that day "that shall burn as an oven," that "great and dreadful day of the Lord" in the last chapter of Malachi.) But the Christian's immediate hope is the return of *Christ Himself* as the "Bright and Morning Star," as He Himself so expresses it in Rev. 22 : 16. Using His own ever-precious personal name, He says, "*I Jesus* have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the *churches*. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the *Bright and Morning Star*."

Now the morning star appears in the heavens *before* the rising of the sun, sometimes a considerable time before. It is between the time when

He comes as the "Morning Star" and the time when He appears as the "Sun of Righteousness," that the terrible judgments spoken of in the Revelation will visit the earth. Then will that terrible consummation of wickedness and lawlessness, that "*man of sin,*" the antichrist, come upon the scene (2 Thess. 2); then, too, the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30 : 7), and "great tribulation" (Matt. 24 : 21, 22) will come, but a saved remnant will be preserved in the midst of it, like the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. Then those in professing Christendom, who have not received "the love of the truth, that they might be saved," will be given over by God Himself to a "*strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" (2 Thess. 2 : 11, 12.)

Then, indeed, there will be numberless signs—signs of a most appalling character, plenty of heart-crushing

sorrows, with sights and sounds that shall make the stoutest hearts quail—so that men shall “seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.” (Rev. 9 : 6.) But remember that all these are to be expected *after the “Morning Star”* is risen, and *not before; i.e., after* the Church, His heavenly bride, has been caught away from the earth to meet the Lord in the air.

Oh, let us never forget that it is HIMSELF who is coming so quickly to “gather His ransomed ones home!”

Looking for “*events*” instead of for *Him*, sadly robs the heart of much of that freshness and comfort which is the believer’s true portion in view of this heavenly hope. Indeed, the enemy has been but too successful in making the gracious promise of His coming to appear as much as possible like an angry, judicial threat: whereas, as we have seen in John 14, it was the Great Physician’s choicest

cordial for the fainting hearts of His trembling followers. And when the inspired apostle, years afterwards, writes his first letter to the bereaved and persecuted young converts at Thessalonica, he adds, to what he had just been telling them of the Lord's coming, this short but significant sentence—"Wherefore *comfort one another with these words.*" Now let us turn to I Thess. 4 : 16, and carefully examine these words of comfort: "*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.*"

Now notice that it was a real, living Man, the *Lord Himself*, who was going to *descend from heaven*. It was *the Lord Himself* that they were going to meet in the air. At their

conversion they had been taught that the "*same Jesus*" who had, by His death and resurrection, delivered them from the "wrath to come," was coming again; and they "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait" (not for certain prophetic events to be fulfilled, but) "for His Son from heaven." (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10.) And again, in writing to the Philippians, Paul says, "Our conversation" (or citizenship) "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ"; i.e., they were on the outlook for a Person, and that Person the known, and loved, and trusted Son of God.

Now, where that blessed Saviour is *not* known; where His finished work is not trusted, or His authority bowed to, there is little wonder that the news of His near approach should strike the conscience with terror and dismay, as in religious Jerusalem of old.

But, beloved fellow-Christian, it

ought *not* to be so with *you*. We ought, most assuredly, to be exercised about the suitability of our walk and ways to Him who is coming; and if we lay the promise of His speedy return *to heart*, we certainly shall be. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as *He is pure*." (1 John 3:3.) We ought never to forget, moreover, that we shall all be manifested before His judgment-seat; when all our service shall be reproduced, and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." This, however, like the "*grand review-day*" in our illustration, will be an *after event*. And besides, just as in a military "review" all the soldiers appear in their *best*, so shall *we* appear at His judgment-seat, clothed in bodies of glory like His own—we shall even be "*raised in glory*," (1 Cor. 15:43.) But He is first coming for us, as a loving Bridegroom to take home His bride; and I repeat it again, there is

nothing whatever for the true believer to *fear* in connection with it, though plenty to humble and to exercise the most devoted of us.

A few years since, in Manchester, I overtook a little boy about six years of age, as he leisurely sauntered along the street. As I approached him he was singing a little song—one of his own composing, I expect. A tiny ditty it was! Three words took in the whole of it—"At ten o'clock! at ten o'clock! at ten o'clock!"

He seemed so thoroughly absorbed with it, and repeated it so very often, that my curiosity was aroused to enquire what he could really mean by it. After a few kind words, he opened out his little heart to me. It appeared that his mother had been from home for some time, but that his father had received a letter to say she would be home that very day "at ten o'clock." I need hardly say that the little morning carol needed no further explanation. The news of his

mother's return had filled his heart—filled it to overflowing. No doubt he had sadly missed her, mourned her absence, and ardently longed for her return. But she was *coming*—coming “at ten o'clock,” and who wonders that this news was good cheer to him!

Now, why should it be otherwise with you and me, dear Christian reader, when the tidings of our Lord's return reaches our ears? Have we not tasted the sweetness of His love? Did He not suffer and die for us? Has He not kept us all along the way, since first we knew Him, relieving us of many a burden, succouring and sympathizing in many a sorrow, restoring us after many a fall? Words *cannot* express how dear we are to Him. Ah! dear brother or sister, it is as we think of *Him* that our hearts warm with desire to see Him.

“ Lord Jesus, when *I think of Thee,*
Of all Thy love and grace,
My spirit longs and fain would see
Thy beauty face to face.”

Not long since a Christian lady said to me, "When I think sometimes of the Lord's coming, my heart fairly *leaps* within me." And a little girl I knew years ago—only eleven at the time—said, after returning from an errand at dusk one evening, "Mother, as I came up the lane just now, I saw the clouds moving very swiftly along the sky. So I stood still, and looked up; for I thought that if the Lord Jesus were just coming, *how I should like to be the very first to see Him!*" Now, what was the secret of this peace and joy in the bosom of that dear child, as she stood all alone, in that quiet country lane, and at evening twilight, longing for a glimpse of His blessed face? It was just this, she knew and trusted the *Person* who was coming ("whom having not seen ye love"). She knew that, through His death for her, all her sins were not only *freely forgotten*, but *eternally forgotten*.

But perhaps some one might say,

“ I should not be in such calm quietude if I thought He were coming at once, though from my heart I do trust His precious blood.”

Ah! then you are forgetting *who* it is that is coming. It is the “ *same Jesus* ” who once, “ weary with His journey,” asked Samaria’s daughter for a drink of water ; the same who met the funeral procession outside the city of Nain, and gave back to the widow her only son ; who allowed the sinful woman in Simon’s house to tell out her love in tears and kisses at His blessed feet ; yea, the very same Jesus who spoke such wondrous words of grace and mercy to the dying robber at Calvary! It is *He*, it is **HE HIMSELF**, who is coming!

Would you have proof of this? Read in Acts I what those two angels said to the disciples on mount Olivet. Their Master had just left them, and gone to heaven, but not without first taking special pains to impress upon them that He was *not a spirit*, but a

living Man with flesh and bones, which, if they doubted His word, they could handle and see for themselves. (Luke 24 : 39.) “Ye men of Galilee” (said the angels), “*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.*” (Acts 1 : 11.)

Eighteen hundred years in the glory has not changed Him in the least! The self-same Person that Martha went forth to meet, after her brother's death, is He for whom we wait; and should we be “put to sleep” *before* He returns—the same “Resurrection and the Life” who said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but, *I go, that I may awake him out of sleep,*” will, at His coming, awake us too; that, like Lazarus, we may sit at the feast with Him “*in saint-thronged courts above.*” (See John 11 : 12.) Why then should we *fear*, when such a blessed Friend is coming from heaven to meet us?

“Surely *I come quickly,*” is the cheering promise; and it is not due

to such a lover as He, that our hearts should respond, and say, “*Amen*. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” ? (Rev. 22 : 20.)

But let us look a little more closely at

THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING.

It is important to see that, after the Jewish nation had rejected and murdered their Messiah, God revealed to the apostle Paul what Scripture calls “*THE MYSTERY*.” This “*mystery*,” we are told, had been “*kept secret* since the world began” (Rom. 16 : 25), had been “*hid in God*” (Eph. 3 : 9) ; that is to say, there had been, above and beyond anything revealed in the Old Testament, a secret purpose in the heart of God to have a *bride* for His beloved Son, and that this bride should be formed by the union of saved Jews and Gentiles in “*one body*” (the Church), and united by the Holy Spirit to Christ the Head in heaven (See Col. 1 : 18 ; Eph. 1 : 22, 23 ;

3:6; 5:30-32.) At Pentecost the Holy Spirit began to effect this by baptizing into this "*one body*" those very disciples to whom had been made the special promise already referred to. (John 14.)

But, for the proper understanding of the subject before us, it is equally important to see that this rejection of Christ by the Jews left *still unfulfilled* many most important Old Testament promises as to the earthly blessing of the nation of Israel. For example, read what is said of the reign of the *true Son of Jesse* in Isa. 11, when He shall have *assembled the outcasts of Israel and gathered together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.* (v. 12.) "The *wolf* also shall dwell with the *lamb*, and the *leopard* shall lie down with the *kid*; and the *calves*, and the young *lion*, and the *fatling* together; and a little child shall lead them. And the *cow* and the *bear* shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together:

and the *lion shall eat straw like the ox*. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall 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." (vv. 6-9.)

* Read, too, Isa. 64 : 25 ; 35 : 1 ; Amos 9 : 13-15 ; Micah 4 : 3 ; Hab. 2 : 14, where we are told that the "desert shall rejoice, and blossom as a rose," etc., and that the nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : . . . neither shall they learn war any more."

Then again, as to the restoration of the nation to their own land, read such passages as Isa. 35 : 10 ; Jer. 23 : 5, 6 ; Ezekiel 36 : 24 ; Jer. 31 : 10.

* It is particularly requested that where, for want of space, the Scripture is not quoted, the texts referred to should be carefully examined (Acts 17 : 11).

By a careful perusal of these and like Scriptures you will find that these promised blessings *are not the result of the conversion of the world*, through the preaching of the gospel; but, on the contrary, that they will be preceded by, and ushered in with, *most terrible judgments* on the wicked.

Here let me notice that there are two great subjects which form the theme of prophetic testimony in the Old Testament, viz., the *sufferings* of Christ, and the *reign* of Christ; or, as Peter expresses it, “the *sufferings* of Christ, and the *glory* that should follow.” (1 Peter 1:11.) Now the Jews of old stumbled over one side of this testimony, while fully accepting the other. They had no difficulty in believing what the prophets had said concerning a *reigning* Messiah, but totally rejected the truth of a *suffering* One. On the other hand, while every true Christian fully accepts the prophetic testimony as to a *suffering* Messiah, yet how many reject, or *try*

to reason away, the truth of His *coming* reign.

But remember that every jot and tittle of these Scriptures will most surely be fulfilled. (Matt. 5. 18.)

Thus we see that, when He went to heaven, He left *two sets of promises* to be fulfilled—those to the *Church*, and those to *Israel*; each peculiarly distinct from the other. In fulfilling one He will come forth as *Isaac* once did, when, according to Gen. 24, he went out and met Rebecca, not as a righteous judge, or a warrior king, but in the tender devotedness of a loving bridegroom; whereas, in fulfilling the other, He will come forth as *David*, the mighty conqueror, to *take His great power, and reign*. In other words, He is the *Church's Bridegroom*; He is *Israel's King*.

There are, therefore, *two distinct phases* of the Lord's second coming mentioned in the word of God—two stages, so to speak, in the same journey. First, He will descend into

the air to catch away His saints to heaven ; then, after a short period has elapsed, He will return to reign, when His heavenly saints will share His kingdom glories and reign with Him.

Let me illustrate this part of our subject. While walking down the high road one morning, you notice, we will suppose, a little pool of water. Carefully stepping out of the way of it, you proceed on your way, and think little more about it. A few days later, however, you happen to pass the same way again ; but the drops of water before noticed, are nowhere to be seen. Even those that had sunk the lowest, and got down out of sight into the earth beneath, have gone too. And what has become of them ? Why, the bright sun in the heavens shone upon them, and by his attractive power drew them all away upward toward himself. No one *saw* them depart, but they are certainly *gone*!

After a few weeks, those selfsame drops are seen by you once more. But *how changed* since you last saw and turned away from them in the muddy pool! They are lovely, white snow-flakes now, and the admiration of everybody!

Thus will it be, dear reader, presently. The Lord Himself will descend from heaven, and in the "twinkling of an eye" raise from the dust the bodies of all His sleeping saints, and change the bodies of the *living* ones at the same moment, catching both up together to meet Him in the air.

We have no scripture warrant for supposing that the *unsaved* will see them go. Probably the solemn discovery that every one of them is *missing* will be the first announcement of what has taken place. Enoch "was not found, because God had translated him." (Heb. 11 : 5.) Well then, having, with more or less privacy, taken the Church *to* glory, she will next appear

in fullest publicity, "with Him *in* glory," when, as it is written "*every* eye shall see Him." (Rev. 1 : 7.)

But the blessed Lord Himself, in one chapter, draws a most graphic picture of these two phases of His coming. I refer to Matt. 25. In the parable of the "*ten virgins*" He portrays one feature of it; in the parable of the "*sheep and goats*" the other.

In the one the wise virgins are seen *going in* with the bridegroom to the "*marriage*"; in the other the king is seen *coming out* to judge. I pray you mark well the striking contrast.

In the first parable the *saved* are taken to heaven, and the unsaved *left* on the earth for coming *judgment*. In the last, it is the *wicked* who are taken away in judgment, while the "*righteous*" are left on earth to share the blessings of Messiah's kingdom.

In one case the *saints go in*, and the "*door is shut*"; in the other,

“*heaven is opened,*” and the *saints come out.*

Now in Rev. 4, 5 and 19 we are told what actually takes place in heaven *after* the Church has been “caught up,” and has “gone in.” In chapter 4 : 4 the saints, as “elders,” are seen sitting around the throne, clothed in white raiment, with crowns of gold on their heads ; and in verses 10, 11 they are seen in the act of worship, falling down before Him who sits upon the throne, casting their crowns at His feet, and saying, “Thou art worthy, O Lord.” (See also chap. 5 : 9.) Then, in chap. 19 : 7, after referring to a mighty burst of “alleluias” at the commencement, we read, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him : for the *marriage of the Lamb* is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” Then comes the *marriage supper.* (v. 9.) Thus, you see, if Matt. 25 gives us the plaintive cry of the “foolish” *outside,* Rev. 19 tells of the festive

joy of the saved *inside*. Reader, with which company shall *you* find your portion ?

Then again in Rev. 19 : 11-16 we see the King of kings, and Lord of lords, accompanied by His armies, coming out of the opened heavens to “*judge and make war.*”

But let us take another glance at Matt. 25. A common, but totally erroneous thought about the last parable in the chapter is, that it is a picture of the *general judgment*, as it is called ; and accordingly it is often asked, “ Shall we not all stand before Him to be judged, and have our place assigned us among the sheep on His right hand or the goats on the left ? ” I boldly answer, “ *No.* ” What is contemplated here is the judgment of the *Gentile nations* found on the earth when the true King comes to reign. The Greek word, which is here translated “ *nations,* ” is rendered in the New Testament “ *the*

Gentiles” ninety-three times, the “*heathen*” five times, and “*nations*” thirty-seven times, and indicates “a present existence or locality upon earth.”

Now Israel was *not to be reckoned among the nations*. (Num. 23 : 9.) Still less are the saints, who compose the Church, thus reckoned. (See Col. 3 : 11 ; Acts 15 : 14.)

Then, it may be asked, if neither *Israel* nor the *Church* forms part of the “*nations*” here judged, where *do* they find their place in this solemn scene ?

Let Scripture supply the answer.

1. As to the saints of *this dispensation* :

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then shall ye also appear WITH HIM in glory.*” (Col. 3 : 4.)

“Behold, the Lord cometh *with ten thousands of His saints*, to execute judgment,” etc. (Jude 14, 15.)

“The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints *with Thee . . .* and the

Lord shall be king over all the earth." (Zec. 14 : 5, 9 ; see also Rev. 3 : 21.)

What could be more distinct than this, as to where the "co-heirs" will be when the "appointed Heir" of all things takes the inheritance ?

2. *As to Israel :*

Remember, in the first place, that this nation was of the "seed of Abraham," according to the flesh. Notice too, that in Matt. 1 we are told that Jesus Christ was the Son of *David*, "the Son of Abraham"; and in Heb. 2, "He took on Him the *seed of Abraham*." Thus, while as Son of *David* He is their "King," as Son of *Abraham* He can speak of them as His "brethren"; and, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Abraham's son (Isaac), He *blesses* all who have befriended the sons of Jacob, and *curses* all who have not. "Cursed be every one that *curseth* thee ; and *blessed* be he that *blesseth* thee." (Compare Gen. 27 : 29 with Matt. 25 : 34, 41.)

We see, then, that in addition to the saints who will, according to other Scriptures, "appear with Him in glory," the Lord here mentions three distinct companies, viz., "sheep," "goats," and "brethren." We have seen also that the "brethren" here spoken of are those of His own nation, according to the flesh. But it may now be asked, Who then are the "sheep" and the "goats"?

Well, other Scriptures show us that, after the Church has been taken to glory, there will be a special testimony, carried by Jewish missionaries, "*for a witness unto all nations,*" and called by the Lord Himself in Matt. 24 : 14, *the "gospel of the kingdom,"* the burden of which will no doubt be the near approach of the rightful "*King.*" Some of these "nations" will receive the testimony, and accordingly do all in their power to befriend those who bear it, while others, on the contrary, will not only reject the message, but withhold all

sympathy and succour from the despised and ill-treated messengers.

Carefully notice here that it is on this ground *alone*, viz., how they have treated His "brethren," that the nations are separated by the King at His appearing in glory, and ultimately either "blessed" or "cursed" by Him. The "sheep" represent one class, the "goats" the other.

The former (like Ruth the Moabitess, who showed kindness to the poor widowed daughter of Israel) will be rewarded by being allowed to share the blessings of Messiah's millennial reign over the earth, while the latter will be cut off in judgment.

There is *nothing* in this parable about the resurrection of the dead, or the end of the world; nor yet in Rev. 19, which pictures the same scene. The *resurrection of the SAVED* will have taken place *before*, as we saw in I Thess. 4 : 16 and I Cor. 15 : 51; while the *resurrection of the WICKED DEAD* will not take place until *after*

the thousand years of the Messiah's reign.

In Rev. 20 : 4-6, after speaking of the various classes of saved ones who will live and reign "with Christ a thousand years," we read, "But the *rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.* This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the *first resurrection* : on such the *second death* hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and *shall reign with Him a thousand years.*"

Is it not clear therefore that there will be TWO RESURRECTIONS? The *first including all who will reign with Him a thousand years*, and which must necessarily take place therefore *before the thousand years*; and "the *rest of the dead*," who will not be raised "*until the thousand years are finished*," when heaven and earth shall flee away, and the "dead, small and great," shall stand for judgment before the GREAT WHITE THRONE, and be cast

into the lake of fire for ever. John then adds, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . and there was no more sea." Blessed be God for revealing such wondrous realities to our finite minds, and giving us an understanding of them by His Spirit. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11 : 33.)

Let us now consider, briefly, the last part of the subject before us ; viz.,

THE PREPARATION FOR HIS COMING.

There are two ways in which Scripture speaks of our being "*ready*."

1. "They that were *ready* went in with Him to the marriage : and the door was shut." (Matt. 25 : 10.)

2. "I am now *ready to be offered*. . . . 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." (2 Tim. 4 : 6-8.)

In the first sense, all "that are Christ's" (1 Cor. 15 : 23) are ready. They have believed *on* Him, been washed from their sins *by* Him; they are accepted *in* Him (Eph. 1 : 6), they are indwelt by His Holy Spirit (Rom. 8 : 9), and all this without a single merit of theirs. They give *thanks to the Father*, who HATH MADE THEM MEET *to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* (Col. 1 : 12-14.)

But, in the second sense, Paul was ready, not merely because he was saved—he knew *that* years before—but because his service and testimony had been such, that he was conscious of his Master's "well done" in "*that day.*"

Let me try to simplify it for you, by another illustration, before I close. We will suppose that you send your son, on business of some importance, to a distant market town. You

furnish him, on starting, with a ticket for the whole journey, going and coming. You give him all necessary instructions as to *where he is to go, and what he is to do*, exhorting him, in conclusion, to give all diligence in the carrying out of your wishes, especially as his time there will be but short.

When he reaches the town, for a little while he appears to be very earnest and energetic; but, after the execution of a very small part of his business, he falls in with a few old companions, forgets your kind entreaty to be diligent, and loiters here and there sight-seeing with them, until at last he is startled by the stroke of the town clock, showing, alas! that he hasn't a minute to spare if he would catch the last train back. Off he rushes to the station, and is only just in time to take his seat. The door is shut, the signal is given, and the next moment he is safely on his way home.

Now, was he *ready* for the journey home?

The answer is twofold. Yes, and no!

As to all the requirements of the railway company, "*yes*"; for he had got his ticket (no thanks to him for that: *you had purchased it for him*). Not a single official on the line dare dispute his title to travel safe home!

But what about *his* business, and *your* wishes? Ah, he has forfeited your smile of approval for that! You cannot say "well done" for faithful service, and yet that very night he has a place with the family, as a son, at your own supper-table.

Now *every believer* has, in a once crucified, now glorified Saviour, at God's right hand, what answers to the "ticket"; viz., an undeniable proof that a full fare has been paid. But, while "*all that believe are justified*" (Acts 13 : 39), and "*whom He justified, them He also glorified*" (Rom. 8 : 30), yet all believers will not, in

that day, get the same reward. "Every man shall receive his *own reward* according to his *own labour*." (1 Cor. 3 : 8.)

The Lord will take account both of the *quantity* and the *quality* of our work—*how much* every man has gained by trading (Luke 19 : 15), and "*of what sort it is*." (1 Cor. 3 : 13.)

God grant, dear Christian reader, that your happy portion and mine may be, not only to have a title to go in "with Him to the marriage," and sit down at home with Him there, but that we may be found *watching, waiting, and working* for Him here, consulting His wishes, and caring for His interests, in the constraining power of His never-changing love, UNTIL HE COME. Let us bear in mind, that if we would take up our cross, and in loving devotedness follow Him, it must be *now*.

It is a *difficult* day—"perilous times" *are* come, evil men and seducers are waxing *worse and worse*,

deceiving, and being deceived. (2 Tim. 3 : 13.) (What a solemn contradiction to the popular blunder, that the *whole world will be converted before He comes!*) It is a day of high profession and low practice; a day when a spirit of *lawlessness* abounds in the world, and when *looseness of principle* and *lack of loyalty to Christ* abounds in the Church.

Yet, in spite of everything, we shall have "*God and the word of His grace*" to the end—His *word* to direct our steps, and His *grace* to sustain us in the right path when we have found it. Let us not be deceived by "*appearances*" in this boastful day, nor be discouraged if we do not find, in the path of obedience, that which, to the outward eye, *looks* like success. "*To obey is better than sacrifice.*" May our blessed Master's exhortation sink down into our ears: "*Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will*

return from the wedding ; that, *when he cometh* and knocketh, they may open unto him *immediately*. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh, shall find *watching*; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12 : 35-37.)

" Oh, let the thought our spirits cheer,
The Lord *Himself* will soon be here! "

Unsaved reader, a word with you. Do let me remind you of the *suddenness* of His coming, and of the certainty of your being left behind should He find you without " oil in your vessel." Cast your eye into the future for a moment. Think how swiftly the wings of time are bearing you into *eternity*. Oh, *what an ETERNITY!*

To be left on earth to discover that the saved (perhaps many a friend and many a relative) have been " caught up " to heaven without *you*; that you have turned a deaf ear to the last

warning the Spirit will ever give you ; heard in unbelief your last gospel preaching, and refused mercy's last call, will be sad and solemn enough. But not less sad will it be for your body to be left beneath the sod in your cold, dark grave while the "thousand years" of millennial blessing shall roll along, when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory (Ps. 72 : 19), and the Prince of Peace shall have "dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. (Zech. 9 : 10.) Oh, yes, to miss all *that* will be a dreadful loss! But there will be ETERNITY to face after that, remember! *You will be raised from the dead* by the voice of the Son of God. (John 5 : 28, 29.) Righteous judgment at the great white throne will follow. Every idle word, every day's history, will have to be accounted for ; and, "as God is true," your certain doom will be an *eternity in the lake of fire!* Treat it not lightly. The door is still open. Jesus

still invites you. His people are still here. But I solemnly warn you of your danger, and earnestly entreat you to flee to the refuge while "yet there is room." *He might even come before you have time to close this little book!* Be in earnest then. Fall down at His feet, and confess your sinful state before Him. He will welcome, bless, and save you just now. Blessed, thrice-blessed Saviour!

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. 1 : 15.)

Once let the Master rise up and "shut to the door," and your doom is settled FOR EVER. Thank God, "YET THERE IS ROOM."

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