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COMING TWICE

BY

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FOREWORD.

THIS book on the Second Coming of Christ is not written on conventional lines. There is no systematic theology in it. It is practical and illustrative rather than doctrinal. It is certainly no competitor of Blackstone or of Baines. It does not encroach on the functions of the many excellent expositions of this tremendously important subject. Incitement to action, and not the mere imparting of information, is its chief aim.

Yet the book has its explanatory chapters, for accurate knowledge must precede action. The writer has kept this in mind and has given a definite outline of truth. Within this framework he has set his urge. The frequent references to the Scriptures will be noticed. And some readers will readily perceive that whatever sugar there may be in these pages is crystallised about a certain string that runs from cover to cover.

Connected subjects are touched on, but with a light hand. For a fuller treatment of the great theme of the Judgment Seat of Christ the reader is referred to a previous work of the author : " Review and Reward."

May these pages lead to more earnest preparation for the Lord's Coming. For He had something of the utmost seriousness to say as to the servant who, knowing his Lord's will, "prepared not himself." (Luke 12. 47).

Harold P. Barker.

Paignton, Devon.

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Chapter 1.

THE COMPASS PLANT.

Amid the wild luxuriance of the great prairies of North America it is easy to lose one's way. If the unwary traveller steps but a few yards from the track it is difficult, sometimes almost impossible, for him to find it again. But a beautiful provision of nature, or rather of nature's God, is there to help him. There grows a little flower that always bends to the north, known for this reason as the Compass Plant. It answers the same purpose on the prairie as the mariner's needle does on the trackless sea.

Almost as soon as men began to live on the earth, hundreds of years before the beginnings of the Bible were made, God caused something not unlike the Compass Plant to spring up. It was

the Voice of Prophecy.

And it always pointed in a certain direction. It uniformly spoke of a certain Person Who in process of time should come. It spoke first in Eden, and mentioned a Seed of the woman who should bruise the head of the Serpent that had brought sin and a curse

upon God's fair creation. It spoke to Abraham of One in Whom all the nations of earth should be blessed. As the centuries passed, with ever increasing clearness, this wonderful voice made itself heard. The travellers over the desert sands of time saw this Compass Plant pointing steadily in one direction. All the prophets bore witness to Christ.

At last came one who was greater, in point of privilege, than all who had gone before. His predecessors, as it were, had looked out of the window and seen the day of Christ's promised advent drawing nearer. The later ones proclaimed Him as about to come. The latest of them, Malachi, declared: "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple."

But John the Baptist had a greater honour. He did not view the Promised One from afar, or even drawing near. He opened the door to Him and announced Him as present: "Behold the Lamb of God!"

The Compass Plant had pointed true. The many promises that had spoken of the coming of a Saviour were literally fulfilled. Contrary to the expectations of many, He came not in regal pomp or as an armour-clad warrior, but as a Babe. And He received from His people not a Throne, but a manger and a Cross.

" Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown
When Thou camest to earth for me ;
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For Thy holy nativity.

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living word
That should set Thy people free ;
But with mocking scorn and with crown of thorn,
They bore Thee to Calvary."

I ask the reader's very careful attention to this. The promise of Christ's coming as Saviour was fulfilled in the most literal way.

(1) It was not merely a spiritual revival. This followed; but the advent of Christ was the coming into the world of an actual Person.

(2) It was not the extension of Divine influence among men. This resulted; but it must never be confounded with the personal arrival of the promised Saviour.

(3) It was not an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wrought in power, filling and preparing chosen vessels to take their part in the circumstances connected with the coming of Christ into the world. He came upon John, the forerunner, and Mary,

the mother of our Lord in a special way. But this was not the fulfilment of the age-long promise; it was to make the fulfilment of it possible. The fulfilment of the promise was the coming to Bethlehem of the Saviour in flesh and blood.

(4) The promise of a coming Deliverer was **not fulfilled to good men when they died**. On the contrary such men did not want to die, because they would thus miss seeing Christ on earth. The prophecy to Moses: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee" (Deut. 18. 18) was not fulfilled when Moses died on the lonely mountain top. It was fulfilled when Christ came.

The reader will understand later on why I insist so strongly on this. What I say cannot be controverted. The promises concerning the advent of Christ gave the nature, the place and even the approximate time of His birth, many details concerning His life, and many circumstances connected with His death. All were literally and accurately fulfilled.

The Compass Plant had served its end. It had turned the gaze of men forward to the

One who was coming. At last He had come. He stood in their midst : Jesus, the long-promised Seed of the woman, Son of a virgin, but also Son of God. The voice of prophecy had proved to be no will-o'-the-wisp. It had been a true guide.



Chapter 2.

THE PROMISED ONE BECOMES A PROMISER.

The crowds who gathered to listen to the teaching of Christ, and who knew Him simply as Jesus of Nazareth, must often have been astonished at the claims He made for Himself. And to the utmost degree they must have been amazed at what He predicted and promised for the future. Even His chosen disciples found it hard to believe all that He said.

On one occasion, speaking of Himself by His favourite name, the Son of man, He declared: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (Matthew 16. 27). He had previously spoken of the day when He would send the angels (which He claimed as **His**) to arrest evildoers and fling them into a furnace of fire, so that there should be no hindrance to the outshining of the godly in their Father's kingdom. But a year later He added the astonishing statement that He Himself would accompany them.

Another year passed, and the Saviour revealed something further. All the tribes of

earth (not only they of Israel) should "see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24. 30). Far from being converted, or Christianized, the tribes of the earth will "mourn" at the sight. As to the **manner** of His coming He had also something to say. It would be swift, sudden, unexpected. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (verse 27).

The Lord said a great deal more as to His coming again, but it is to the fact that He made these predictions that I just now call attention.

John, who alone gives us the intimate conversation which the Lord had with His loved disciples in that upper room of sacred memories, records a further statement that came from His lips. Surrounded by the men that His Father had given Him out of the world, and knowing the intensity of their sorrow at the thought of His going from them, He made a most precious promise: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14. 3).

The Promised One had indeed become a Promiser. Is it not reasonable to believe that the predictions and promises that He made are to have as literal and actual a fulfilment as those which in former days had foretold His first coming? Does not any other view seem to be utterly illogical?

These promises, made by the Saviour Himself, bring us to the very heart of the subject, "Coming Twice." For He who came to the earth long years ago is assuredly coming a second time. That any one who believes the Bible should have any doubt as to this is very difficult to understand. Its pages teem with references to the fact. In the New Testament alone it is alluded to, directly or indirectly, in something like three hundred verses. Does the reader doubt this? Then let him search for himself and see.



Chapter 3.

THE THREEFOLD CORD.

"A threefold cord is not quickly broken" we are assured. And one of these threefold cords was woven in connection with the coming again of the Saviour from heaven. The three strands are supplied by

- (1) the Saviour Himself ;
- (2) two angels, who appeared as men in white ;
- (3) the Apostles.

First, Christ Himself, in the upper room where He held His last talk with His eleven faithful disciples, sought to comfort their sorrowing hearts with the promise : " 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 " (John 14. 3). Could words be plainer ? The Lord was actually, literally, going away from them to heaven. What could they understand by His promise but that He would actually, literally come again ? His entrance into heaven would be the pledge that they too would be there ; He would in this way prepare a place for them. And in due course He Himself would return to take them there. The meaning of the promise is unmistakable.

Secondly, at the very time of Christ's ascension, while the men whom he had left behind were still gazing upward to the spot where a cloud had hidden Him from their sight, two men in white raiment suddenly stood by their side. With plain and simple words they confirmed the Saviour's promise. They said: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, **shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go.**" How had the eleven disciples seen Him go? Literally, personally, visibly. In like manner the two angels declared that He would come. I trust that we all give credence to the words of these "men in white."

Thirdly, the Apostles add their testimony. Let us remember that the test of our faith, as to whether it is genuine or not, is that we have regard to what the apostles say. Says John: "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us" (1 John 4. 6).

What have the apostles to say on the subject of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ? Let us see.

Take John's testimony first. He speaks of the future, with its certainties and uncertainties. It is not revealed to us just **what** we shall be. "It doth not yet appear what we

shall be." But something is very definitely revealed, namely, that Christ will appear again. "We know that **when He shall appear**, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is " (1 John 3, 2).

Hear what James says. If not actually an apostle, he was an apostolic man, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1. 19), one who was held in high esteem in the church at Jerusalem. His epistle is undoubtedly the earliest of all the epistles. In chapter 5. 7 he exhorts suffering believers to be patient. He does not say : " Be patient, brethren, for you will soon die, and your spirits go to be with Christ." He says : " Be patient, therefore, brethren, **unto the coming of the Lord.**" Again in the following verse he says : " Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts : for **the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.**" Thus James, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, presents the coming again of the Lord, not only as the glad hope of His people, but as a hope the fulfilment of which was imminent. Actually long centuries have come and gone ; but even in those early days (A.D. 60), the Coming of the Lord was presented as drawing nigh. The believers in New Testament times, like those of to-day, were to live in expectation of His coming.

Now turn to Peter. Remember that he was one of the men who heard the wonderful promise from the lips of the Saviour Himself. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise," he declares (2 Peter 3. 9). What promise? Peter leaves us in no uncertainty. **"The promise of His coming,"** he says (verse 4). Some were pouring ridicule upon this hope, materialists who would believe nothing that they could not see. The Apostle exposes their true character as "walking after their own lusts." The story of Christ's coming again was to them a mere fable, but, says Peter, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables." To him, the second coming of the Lord was as great a reality as His first coming, when Peter's own eyes beheld His majesty in "the holy mount" (2 Peter 1. 16-18).

Lastly let us listen to Paul. To reject as a fable the truth of Christ's literal coming again is to brand him as a mere dreamer. For these are his words: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4. 16). We shall consider this Scripture in a later chapter. Here we merely quote the words to show how emphatic is Paul's testimony to the fact that **Jesus is coming again.**

This, then, is the threefold cord, composed of the testimony of Christ, His angels, and His apostles. "The Scripture cannot be broken," nor can this threefold cord which it contains.



Chapter 4.

"LUTANDA."

The late Dan Crawford, of whose devoted labours in the heart of Africa we are sure our readers have heard, tells us a remarkable thing in his book, "Back to the Long Grass." Describing the incidents of a long march, he says that when an early start had to be made the next day, the native carriers, after their evening meal around the camp fire in the forest, would repeat to one another the word "Lutanda," and then fall asleep.

The African word "Lutanda" means "the morning star." The repetition of the word was the reminder that on the morrow they would have to be up with the early star of morning to pack their loads and resume their march.

But with our understanding of what the hope of our Lord's return implies, what a wonderful meaning we can read into the African word. "Joy cometh in the morning," and the morning of our eternal joy draws nigh. **The Morning Star** will soon shine brightly in the firmament of our outlook.

The Christians of early days also used to repeat a word one to another. They used it in their greetings and in their farewells. We can well imagine them repeating it as one after another fell asleep, not indeed round a forest camp fire, but amid the fires of bitter persecution. It was the Bible word "Maran-atha" (1 Corinth. 16. 22). This Aramaic phrase is interpreted as meaning "Lord, come," or "the Lord is coming." It was the watchword of the believers in New Testament days. Like the African "Lutanda," it was a reminder that the Bright and Morning Star would soon appear.

Christ Himself is the Bright and Morning Star. When He presents Himself as such (Rev. 22. 16), His Bride, taught by the Holy Spirit, says "Come." **It is in view of His coming again,** then, that the Lord says He is the Bright and Morning Star. Let us consider what this title means.

A friend of the writer, resident at Minneapolis, U.S.A., having risen very early one morning, noticed, low down near the line where the sky seems to touch the earth, a rather small and reddish-looking star. He did not pay much attention to it at first, but observed that as it rose higher it became brighter. There was no other star to be seen near it, and it looked so beautiful, shining

alone in the early morning, that Mr. A called one or two others to see it. After a while he noticed a light appearing where the star had been when he first espied it. It was the rising sun, and soon the sky was aglow with its bright beams. By and by the sun itself appeared in its majesty and the morning star could no longer be seen ; it was lost in the splendour of the dawning day.

Now the Lord Jesus is spoken of as the Sun, —the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4. 2). When He appears, shining in His glory, it will be to dispel the darkness, to drive away the misery and gloom that are in the world. But before that time He will shine as the Morning Star for those who are truly His. He will call them to meet Him in the air and take them to be with Himself.

Let us remind ourselves and one another of this. It is for the Bright and Morning Star that we look. As the Africans say "Lutanda," and as the Christians of early days greeted one another with "Maran-atha," and as some to-day sign themselves "yours in our soon coming Lord," let us not be slow to speak of our glorious hope.

Chapter 5.

ANGRY JONAHS.

“ It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.” So we are told in the Book of this prophet, in Chapter 4. 1. What was the cause of his displeasure? Why was he so angry? The reason was simply this, that God was too merciful for Jonah’s liking. He had decided to spare Nineveh, and Jonah, patriot as well as prophet, felt sure that the sparing of Nineveh would mean the destruction of the kingdom of Israel. And so eventually it turned out to be.

God has shown Himself to be merciful on many occasions. He is rich in mercy. In mercy He sent His Son to suffer in our stead. In mercy He made us, dead in sins as we were, to **live**. And in the future there is to be another display of rich and undeserved mercy. The Saviour, as we have seen, is coming personally to translate His people from this world where death prevails to the land of life. We who love Him are therefore “ looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ” (Jude 21).

We do not deserve such a glorious translation. We have often been cold and faithless ;

our zeal has slackened, and we have forgotten to be watchful and prayerful. Yet the rich mercy of our Lord will be manifested toward us, and He will descend into the air to extricate us from this world of sin and death, and take us to be for ever with Himself where all is life and joy and glory.

There are Jonahs to-day whom the very mention of such a thing makes angry! It displeases them exceedingly. A friend of mine tells me of such an one. He was travelling in the south of England with a car, on the wind-screen of which a text was neatly painted:

**"THE COMING OF THE LORD
DRAWETH NIGH."**

He had stopped by a roadside garage to obtain some petrol when a man passing by caught sight of the text. Pointing to it he literally yelled: "I don't believe it! I don't believe it! It is all rubbish!" So angry was he that he pulled at his collar with such violence that he tore it from its fastenings. The man who was supplying the petrol exclaimed: "That is the minister of the—Church over there."

At another time my good friend was coming out of a garage at Portsmouth when a clergyman of the Church of England espied the text on the wind-screen. He said: "I like that text. I preach the coming of the Lord. It is a truth that I hold, and it **holds me.**" He, at all events, was not an angry Jonah!

In spite of Jonah's displeasure, God showed mercy to the Ninevites. And in spite of the anger of our modern Jonahs, the mercy that has been promised, and for which we look, will assuredly be shown to us. Our Saviour has said: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." His promise will not fail.

But why should the thought of this make men angry? Possibly some have schemes of their own that they wish to see fulfilled, plans for the betterment of the human race, for the adjustment of social conditions, for the abolition of squalor and vice, and so on. They feel that the coming of the Lord would seriously interfere with all this. So indeed it will. But He can do better for the world than they can. After He has called His people to Himself He will quickly bring things to a head. He will get rid of "all things that offend and them which do iniquity" (Matthew 13. 41). Then He will take to Himself His great power, and will extend His beneficent

sway to the ends of the earth. How much better this will be than the various plans of our twentieth-century Jonahs ! But the idea of being thus superseded seems to make some of them speechless with anger !

It was Charles Wesley who wrote :—

How happy are we
Who in Jesus agree
To expect His return from above !
We shall see Him again
When, with all His bright train,
He descends on the luminous cloud.

We remember the word
Of our crucified Lord,
When He went to prepare us a place ;
“ I will come in that day,
And transport you away,
And admit to a sight of My face.”

With earnest desire
After Thee we aspire,
And long Thy appearing to see ;
Come, Lord, from the skies,
And command us to rise,
Ready made for the mansions above.”

Those who call themselves by Wesley's name, and indeed all the members of the reunited Methodist community, should therefore be among the keenest of those who look

for the Lord to return, and should rejoice to remember that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." May this attitude mark us all !

Another who seems to be annoyed with those who look for the personal return of Christ is Dr. Inge, late Dean of St. Paul's. In an address before the British Science Guild he referred to this blessed hope as an idea "still lingering in some religious circles." He went on to say : "A catastrophe is always possible, but the chances seem to be that our race has a hundred thousand years, perhaps even a million, in which to try every possible and impossible social experiment."

A catastrophe ! Is this what the coming of Christ in power to put "an end to the present world order" will be ? A catastrophe ! The return of the world's rightful Lord and King ! Dr. Inge reminds us of the islanders of Melita who knew so little of God that they spoke of Him as Vengeance (Acts 28. 4).

But whatever men think about it, "yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Not all the angry Jonahs in the world can prevent it. The coming of Christ is a great **fact**. And a fact is something that is not made more true by being believed, nor is it made untrue when men refuse to believe it.

Chapter 6.

FALLERS.

It was during a visit to the fruit growing district of Hampshire that I learned the meaning of the word "fallers." It is used of those apples which fall from the trees before the time comes for the crop to be gathered. There they lie upon the ground. By and by some one will come with a basket and pick them up. But before long the day will come for gathering the crop that remains upon the trees. Hundreds are still there and will reach the storeroom without touching the ground at all.

Do you catch the meaning of my little parable? As the years hasten by, Christian after Christian fades and falls from health and vigour. They become "fallers," and one by one they are laid to rest beneath the sod, while their souls are "comforted" in the presence of Christ. But ere long the day of harvest home will dawn. Then, without "falling asleep," without dying, the saints that are alive on earth when the Lord comes will be gathered up to meet Him in the air.

It is for this we look. It is the Christian's proper hope. We sing :—

“ O Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait ;
The sky, not the grave, is our goal.”

We **may** have to die. Not that this will make any difference to our sharing in the joy and glory of the great translation. We read that when the Lord descends into the air, “ the dead in Christ shall rise first.” A well known and beautiful hymn puts the words into the mouths of those who sing it :—

“ I know not when my Lord may come,
I know not how, nor where ;
If I shall pass the vale of death
Or meet Him in the air.”

But no such alternative is set before us. Whether we pass the vale of death or not, we shall meet Him in the air.

Yes ; we **may** die. But to say that we **must** die would be to contradict the emphatic statement of 1 Corinthians 15. 51 : “ We shall not all sleep.” Our gaze is not a grave-ward, but a skyward one. Our great, grand hope, of which nothing can rob us, is the hope of our Lord's return. What should our attitude be ?

In the New Forest district, in the south of England, there is a village with the curious name of Tiptoe. It derives its name, we are informed, from the muddy state of its lanes, which made it necessary in wet weather to walk on tip-toe. This, of course, was long ago, though even now some of the byways in the old village carry on in winter the traditions of the past.

Is not the world as it exists to-day, speaking from a moral point of view, one great village of Tiptoe? Are not its highways beset with many a snare and pitfall? And do not its byways reek with every imaginable kind of sin and vileness? Surely there never was a time when it was more necessary for the Christian to walk warily and "on tip-toe."

Most of us can recall instances of men and women once in positions of outstanding Christian influence, now moral wrecks. They trod the ways of the world with too firm a foot; they did not walk on tip-toe. Nor is it only those who have fallen so low that failed to do this. Some who continue in the ranks of Christian workers need to give heed to their steps. Their nonconformity to the world is not as pronounced and as striking as it should be. They do not appear to be walking on tip-toe.

We are bidden to "walk circumspectly" (Eph. 5. 15), that is, to keep an eye on our surroundings as we pass along, lest we put our foot into any snare or into filth. Have you ever seen a cat walking on the top of a wall where broken glass is set on edge? How carefully it picks its way! It serves to remind us of how we should walk.

But there is another reason for the "tip-toe" attitude. The familiar phrase: "On the tip-toe of expectation" will explain it. For there is something that we expect, and it is drawing nearer all the while. We say "something," but should we not rather say "Some One"? For it is a Person for whom we look. "Nearer than when we believed" is our salvation, but this is because the coming of our Saviour is nearer. As Saviour we look for Him (Philippians 3. 20), for His coming will mean salvation from all that makes us groan, from the possibility of ever sinning again, from every trace of the first Adam's likeness and from the presence of the "flesh"; salvation out of this "evil age," out of the world altogether.

In the earliest days of Christianity there were things that Spirit-taught men declared must take place before Christ's coming. Peter was emphatic when he said: "knowing that shortly **I must** put off this my taber-

nacle." Moreover, the Lord Himself, speaking to Ananias of Damascus concerning the stricken persecutor, said: "I will show him how great things he **must** suffer for My name's sake." On the sinking ship, too, Paul received a message from God: "Fear not, Paul, thou **must** be brought before Cæsar." Of course all these "musts" had to be fulfilled before Christ would come.

But we search the Scriptures in vain for any "must" that yet awaits fulfilment. From our reading of the New Testament it appears abundantly clear that the next thing to be expected is the descent of the Lord from heaven, according to 1 Thessalonians 4. 16, and the translation of His saints to meet Him in the air.

This bright anticipation is consistent with truest Christian sanity. What can be more sane and wholesome than the counsel with which Paul leads up to his presentation of the hope in 1 Thess. 4? "Study to be quiet and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you, that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." This is the very opposite of unbalanced enthusiasm and visionary insobriety!

This then is the Christian's immediate hope. For this we look. God help us, while politicians are busy with their well-meant schemes for the betterment of a world that is so soon to be judged, to be walking on the tip-toe of expectancy, as men that wait for their Lord.

How paltry, how insignificant do the things of earth appear in comparison with the glory that awaits us! God grant that the fleeting moments may find us living **for eternity**, with the coming of the Lord ever in view.

David Brainerd, the devoted missionary to the Red Indians, wrote, "Oh, to live on the verge of Eternity! Would that I could continually dwell on its borders, in studying and following out every avocation."

Another God-honoured missionary, David Sandeman, of China, wrote in his notebook in large letters, "Eternity! Eternity!" and afterwards, "Let me act more as if I were now in the next world, looking back to see how I should have acted for the glory of the Lord Jesus."

Chapter 7.

THE IONIC COLUMN.

It is now time to make certain explanations as to the future Coming of the Lord. But let me revert for a moment to the Old Testament. We find therein predictions about a King who should reign in glory, and others about One who should suffer an ignominious death.

The old-time Rabbis found themselves in a difficulty. All these prophecies evidently had reference to the promised Messiah. But how could the apparent discrepancies be explained? How could He come both as a Sufferer and as a glorious King? Finally the Rabbis concluded that there would be two Messiahs. One, Messiah-ben-Joseph would be the Sufferer; the other, Messiah-ben-David would be the King. But we know better!

The two sides of an Ionic column, as it lies on the ground, appear to be parallel. But if their planes be prolonged far enough they converge and eventually meet. Even so, the two sets of predictions, concerning a Suffering and a Reigning Messiah, when carried on through the centuries are seen to meet in

one and the same Person. The prophecies concerning the sufferings of Christ have been fulfilled to the letter; those concerning His future royal glory will assuredly be also fulfilled.

There is something similar in connection with the promised Coming of our Lord. There are passages which speak of His coming to the air for the gathering of His people, His coming as Saviour and Bridegroom. Other passages speak of His coming to the earth, followed by armies already in heaven, clad in white robes.

These two stages of His future Advent are often referred to as "His coming for His saints" and "His coming with His saints." The description is trite, but it has become somewhat hackneyed and is better, perhaps, avoided. The truth, however, remains. The Lord is coming as Saviour, to gather us to Himself and transform us to His likeness; then to bring us with Him to share the triumph of His glorious Appearing.

I was walking in Newcastle-on-Tyne with a friend when he pointed across the river to a high hill on the other side. "That is Sheriff's Hill," he said, "and it is so called for this reason. In the olden days, when the Judges came from Durham to hold the Assizes in this

city, the Sheriffs of Newcastle rode out to meet them on that hill, to accompany them in their coming to Newcastle."

An illuminating picture, I thought. It is similar to what is to happen when Christ comes again. He will call His redeemed ones to meet Him in the air. That will be His Sheriff's Hill. Then He will return with His glorified saints to take possession of the earth, to rid it of His adversaries and to establish His throne. Paul reminds us of this when he says : " When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory " (Colossians 3. 4).

Then the earth, once "filled with violence" and corruption (Geresis 6. 11, 12), will be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Habakkuk 2. 14).

" And when He comes in bright array
And leads the conquering line,
It will be glory then to say
That He's a Friend of mine."

Chapter 6.

A THIRD COMING.

We have given the title "Coming Twice" to this book, and we believe it to be a suitable one. He came once; He is coming again. But there is another Coming of the Lord, to which we must now refer: His coming to us.

Both the ninety-sixth and the ninety-eighth Psalms end with a majestic, poetic acclamation of the Second Advent. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar and the fulness thereof: let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, **for He cometh, for He cometh** Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, **for He cometh** to judge (rule) the earth."

But a little further on David cries: "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" (Psa. 101. 2). It is as if he said: "My heart rejoices at the thought of Thy future Advent. But I am not satisfied with that. I want the joy of Thy company **now.**"

I was talking to an old lady about the Coming of the Lord. Brought up in a denomination where the truth as to this event foretold so abundantly in Scripture is seldom preached, she looked at me in bewilderment. Then a happy smile broke over her face. Laying her hand upon her heart, she replied : **"He comes to me every day."**

Was the old lady right or wrong ? She was wrong in supposing that that is what the Lord's Coming means. But she was right, oh, so right, in declaring that there is such a thing as **the Lord's coming to us.**

I may be pardoned if I am somewhat sceptical as to the genuineness of a professed longing for His future coming if there is no enthusiasm for His present coming. If there is no great desire for His company now, why should it be thought so desirable by and by ?

Which verse in John 14 gives the promise of His coming ? Verse 3 : "I will come again." Yes, but this is followed by another promise in verse 23 : "If a man love Me, he will keep My words and My Father will love Him, and We will come unto him." Should we not revel in this second promise as much as in the first ?

Take another instance. "Behold, I come quickly" is the stirring promise of Revela-

tion 3. 11. But leap over eight verses and read another promise: "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, **I will come in to him**, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Does not this second promise make your heart throb a little more intensely and utter a longing desire for its fulfilment?

Analyse it. To what door does the verse refer? Not the door of the sinner's heart, though an application may, of course, be made in that way. Not the door of a backsliding church, for even though Christ be outside of it, neither you nor I can open that door. The door we can open is the door of our own heart, a heart that trusts and loves Him.

If we open this door, what is the promise of Christ? A threefold one:

1. He will come in to us.
2. He will sup with us.
3. We shall sup with Him.

What is meant by His coming in to us? Years ago there lived in a busy northern industrial town an aged and indigent couple, a man and his wife. There was no government provision, outside the workhouse, for old age in those days, and the only support which this poor couple had was the weekly gift of

twenty shillings from a Christian gentleman who worshipped at the same place and showed them many kindnesses.

One Sunday, after the usual morning service, there was to be a special one in the afternoon. The gentleman, having driven in from his home in the country, some miles away (there were no motor cars then) wished to remain for it. He said to the old couple: "I am coming to have dinner with you, if I may."

You should have seen their faces, especially the woman's. Her thoughts went off to half a loaf of stale bread, a scraping of butter in a saucer, and a thin heel of Dutch cheese in the cupboard. And their kind friend was coming to "dine" with them! Imagine the poor old lady's relief when the gentleman continued: "I have brought a basket of things with me; there will be plenty for all of us."

When they reached the poor, bare cottage the basket was unpacked, and soon upon the table were seen a nicely cooked chicken, slices of ham, an apple pie, a loaf of home made bread, and some delicious country butter; also some eggs that could be reserved for a future occasion. The gentleman had come to

them to "sup" with them, and he had brought all the materials for the feast with him.

It is easy to see how this sort of thing works out, when we open the door of our hearts and the Lord comes in to us and sups with us. He comes to us in our spiritual poverty, our meagre understanding, our dwarfed life and outlook. He "sups" with us in our circumstances, and **He brings all the materials for the feast**: His love, His patient grace, His readiness to forgive, His tender sympathy and effectual succour. All these delightful things fill us with thanksgiving and joy. We sing with Mary: "He that is mighty hath done to me great things He hath filled the hungry with good things" (Luke 1. 49, 53).

To return to the story of the old couple. For years they lived on the bounty of their benefactor. Week by week he made provision for their need, and occasionally he would visit them (always with a supply of good things), and would sit with them at their humble board, and "sup" with them. But all this while they had never been to their kind friend's house. They had never seen him **in his own surroundings**. They had never gone to "sup" with him.

The day came, however, when they were to do this. Their friend sent his carriage for them to spend the day with him. They were received with the warmest of welcomes. They rested in comfortable chairs, talking to the gentleman, and at dinner sat at his table, not merely enjoying his bounty, but getting to know him in a new way, making acquaintance with him **in his own home**. They were now "supping" with him.

Does not this show very clearly that for Christ to come and sup with us in our surroundings is one thing, but that to carry us in thought and affection to His own surroundings in heaven **to sup with Him** is a more wonderful thing still? And for both these objects He wants to come to us: (1) to comfort us with His mercies in our low estate; and (2) to make us at home with Himself **where He is**.

While discussing the Lord's return for His people, and then **with His people**, do not let us lose the inestimable joy of His coming to His people, with its wonderful twofold result.

Chapter 9.**THE PROPRIETOR OF THE EARTH.**

We have seen from Scripture what the coming of the Lord, first to the air, then to the earth, will mean to His redeemed ones. What will it mean to the world at large ?

In a certain city there was a vacant plot of ground. A merchant purchased it for the purpose of erecting a hoarding on which he might display an electrically illuminated advertisement.

The hoarding did not prevent the boys of the neighbourhood making a playground of the place. They treated the ground as if it were their own. They played their games, planned football matches, erected flimsy huts of sticks and old canvas, held picnic parties and even lit fires and cooked odds and ends of fish.

The owner of the ground was very tolerant. The boys did not interfere with his immediate plans. But one day two policemen turned them off. The wooden hoarding was taken down, and builders' men arrived to lay the foundations of a permanent structure that was to occupy the whole site.

The boys were indignant. They were being deprived of long established "rights." But the police kept them in awe. They had no option ; they were finally dispossessed of the privileges which they had abused.

Herein lies a lesson. This world has its Purchaser. He Who died upon the cross paid by His blood the price of it. He is its sole Proprietor.

In the midst of it He has erected, as it were, a great advertisement. For that is what the Gospel is. It is the means by which God **commends** His love to men, inducing them to receive it. Meanwhile men play around with their politics and social schemes, their games, entertainments and crimes. They treat the world as if it were their own.

But the day is drawing near when men will receive a rude awakening—they will be dispossessed ; for the Owner will arrive with His mighty angels who, at His bidding, will fling out of the purchased property (1) all **things** which are offensive to the Purchaser and (2) the **persons** who commit offences (Matthew 13. 41).

Men and women who thought the world was theirs, will find themselves outcasts. No protests will avail. The Proprietor of the earth will assert His rights. The continents

and islands are His. Whether He will destroy the cities that men have built will be for Him to decide, and from His decision there will be no appeal.

If anyone disagrees with the interpretation implied herein of the parable of the man who purchased the field, it makes no difference to my thesis. The One Whom the world cast out and crucified is "appointed Heir of all things" (Hebrews 1. 2). All things are put under His feet (1 Corinth. 15. 27). The "uttermost parts of the earth" are His possession (Psalm 2. 8).

Oh, the folly of asserting proprietorship in the face of His superior claim! "Kings" and "judges," that is, men who are in present possession, are bidden to be wise, and to "kiss the Son" (Psalm 2. 10, 12); that is, to submit to Him, to own Him as Lord, to put themselves into His hands for the merciful treatment that He has promised to all who do this.

Let all remember that they are but sojourners on the earth, here on sufferance alone. Their truest wisdom (and this applies to us all) is to yield willing allegiance to the God-appointed Heir, the true Owner of the world.

Chapter 10.

A COLONY OF HEAVEN.

The hope of which we have been speaking, the hope of seeing the Lord at His coming and being with Him for ever, is one that links our hearts with heaven. Paul calls it "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (Colossians 1. 5). The Gospel, when rightly received and understood, disengages our thoughts from the things of earth, its pleasures, its politics, its problems and its future, and fixes them upon heaven. We are converted to wait for God's Son **from heaven** (I Thess. 1. 10). And in speaking of the Saviour's coming, the Apostle reminds us that it is **from heaven** that we look for Him to come (Philippians 3. 20). He is our treasure, and where the treasure is the heart assuredly will be.

Already we **belong** there. Our names are enrolled there as its citizens (Heb. 12. 23), and in the passage already quoted from Philippians 3, we are told, in the words of the Revised Version, that "our citizenship is in heaven." It is important that we should be true to this character of ours while awaiting

the coming of the Lord, and that we should display the heavenly colours.

"Our citizenship is in heaven." A New Translation vividly represents this saying of the apostle's, by the words: "We are a colony of heaven." That is just what we Christians, by the grace of God, are. Not a colony in the sense that Jamaica and Kenya are colonies of Britain, but in the sense in which we use the word when we speak of "the British colony" in any foreign capital, or "the Italian colony" in London.

We are a colony of heaven in that we do not belong to earth. We are but sojourners here; **strangers** because our home is elsewhere; **pilgrims** because we are in movement towards our own country. Our Sovereign, our politics, our attachments, our headquarters, our interests, are **there**.

The English in Madrid do not mix themselves up with Spanish politics. Nor do Spaniards in England march to the polling booths on election days. They are foreigners in a land that is not theirs. Even so it is with us Christians.

We are a colony of heaven in that Heaven is our fatherland. We are "burgesses of the skies" as a French version puts it ("nous

sommes bourgeois des cieux"). Our names are on the register there as native born citizens.

At least one member of the British colony in a foreign capital is his country's ambassador.

Heaven, too, has had its ambassadors on earth. The Apostles were pre-eminently such. Perhaps none to-day can claim as emphatically as Paul did to be an "ambassador for Christ," but Heaven's embassy is still here, and we may regard ourselves as "attached to the Embassy," or employed in connection therewith. An honoured position indeed !

" Born from above, and heavenly men by birth,
Who once were but the citizens of earth ;
We are but strangers here, we do not crave
A home on earth, which gave Thee but a grave."

In a foreign capital may sometimes be seen, early in the morning, a fair haired, rosy cheeked English lad with a green baize apron girt around him, diligently polishing the brass fittings on the front door of the British Embassy. He fills but a minor post, but he works away at his task as if he found special pleasure in keeping the brasses bright, and were serving his country by so doing. Sometimes he gets laughed at for his energy by passers-by whose methods are more leisurely, but he smiles, and rubs away, and if one says

"You seem busy, my lad," he replies, "Yes, I am **doing my bit.**"

Our position in connection with Heaven's Embassy here may be a very minor one. We may hardly rank as attachés. But if it be no more exalted than that of our young friend of the green baize apron, God help us, at least to be doing our bit, and filling our niche, as those who belong to Heaven !

Let us remember that though one of our leading ambassadors has, contrary to the recognised law of nations, been most outrageously treated here, and even loaded with chains (see Eph. 6. 20), the Embassy is instructed by our Sovereign still to pursue a policy of goodwill to the men of this nether country. And we are all to deport ourselves accordingly. Every member of Heaven's colony on earth is to aim at giving a true impression here of our gracious Sovereign, whose very name is "love."

The Embassy is not to remain here indefinitely. All will be withdrawn at the coming of the Lord. The colony will cease to exist, and those who constitute it will have been recalled to the homeland.

With God's help let us be in practice and manner of life the heavenly men that His

grace has made us (I Cor. 15. 48), so that those among whom we move may perceive that we are not of their race and nation, but "a colony of heaven."



Chapter 11.

**“ WHY TARRY THE WHEELS OF HIS
CHARIOT ? ”**

An aged Christian lady, confined to her bed by great bodily weakness, said to the writer : “ More than sixty years ago I began looking for the Lord to come. I never imagined for a moment that I should live to reach this age. Why, oh why, does He not come ? ”

A great many Christians, if they put the innermost feelings of their hearts into words, would frame a question much on the lines of these words. We have heard ever since we can remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming. We have read it again and again in the Scriptures, but He has not come yet. We have been told again and again that we are in the last times, and that the Lord may be here at any moment ; but He is still tarrying. Why does He tarry ? Why does He not come ?

If He loves us with so great love, and if we can look up into His blessed face, and feel

that we are speaking truly when we say, "And we love Thee, blest Lord" ; if His church is so dear to Him, and if He is so dear to us ; if He really wants us, and God wants us up there in that bright scene of effulgent glory, where in the Father's presence, without any hindrance or reserve, we shall share in all the joy of the unveiled mystery ; if everything there is ready, except that we are not there, and if it is the one great desire of the Father and the Son to have us there, that we should fill the place that the purpose of God has marked out for us ; if God wants us there, the Lord Jesus wants us there, and the Spirit joins with the bride in saying, "Come" ; if the Spirit works that response, and we ourselves want to go : why does not the Lord Jesus come ? Why are the days of His tarrying so prolonged ?

Why tarry the wheels of His chariot ? As to Sisera, to whom the question primarily refers, the answer is a very easy one. His mother looks out of the window, and says, "Why does he not come ?" She returns answer to herself. She has some plausible explanation. Her wise ladies would say to her, "Don't you know your son is a warrior ? Most surely he has won a magnificent victory, and is long in gathering up the spoils, but he will soon be here." Such an answer would be

altogether false. Sisera had met with a crushing defeat instead of an overwhelming victory, and he lay dead in Jael's tent, with an iron tent peg through his dishonoured head. He would never return.

With the Lord Jesus Christ no explanation of His delay like that is possible. He is the mighty Victor. He has come triumphant from the field of conflict. He is the gatherer indeed of the spoils. There is no reason like that to delay His chariot wheels. Why then do we not hear Him at the gate ?

There are not a few passages of Scripture which would lead the reader to believe that the Lord Jesus was on the very verge of coming when those scriptures were written long centuries ago. At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, the Lord Jesus Christ went about the hillsides of Galilee, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." People would naturally think that in a few more months it would be established. Then when you come to the Epistles, it very distinctly says in Hebrews 10 : "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Christians are told that the day is so near that they can positively see it approaching. Four times over in the Book of Revelation the Lord says, "I come

quickly." Perhaps the most remarkable thing of all is the contrast between the last chapter of Revelation and the last of Daniel. After all his wonderful visions Daniel was told to seal up the book, because the time was not yet; but John, after his Apocalyptic visions, is distinctly told not to seal the book, because the time was ripe for fulfilment.

How do we explain it all, when the Word of God says these things? We remember that "God has magnified His word above all His Name." He would rather let all the glories of His Name perish than be false to the least of His promises. Every one of them shall be fulfilled. Then why does not the Lord come quickly?

It is easy to offer **some** explanations which will show that it is quite consistent with the words of Scripture that there should be this long period of tarrying. We read, for instance, in 2 Peter 3, that God does not reckon time as we do. A thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years, so that in God's reckoning it is not yet two days since the Lord Jesus was here, and since all these promises were made.

But to us His word seems long of fulfilment, and there must be some immense reason for

the Saviour tarrying so long. Yet we must not allow the hope of it to wane in our souls. We read in Matthew 24. 48: "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants." Forgetfulness of the imminence of the Lord's return has led to the terrible smiting of His servants through the centuries. Think of the awful butcheries of which the children of God have been the victims, first at the hands of pagan Rome, and in a far larger degree of papal Rome, all of which they might have been spared if the Lord had come.

What can be the reason for His tarrying? Why do we not hear His chariot at the gate? Why has the patient waiting of Christ been prolonged through all these centuries?

For the divine answer to the question let us turn to 2 Peter 3. First of all note the fact—for, thank God, it is a fact—that His own word does not fail. It is true that the tarrying has given rise to the scoffing of scornful men, who say: "Where is the promise of His coming?" They are willingly ignorant that on momentous occasions God's word came true. God said: "Let the waters be gathered together . . . and let the dry land appear," and it was so. He said again

"Behold I, even I, do send a flood of waters on the earth," and it came to pass. The word of God, which came true against all appearances on those two occasions, will surely come true again. Though men our hope deride, nevertheless it is going to come to pass. The Apostle says we are not to be ignorant of the way the Lord reckons time. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise" (ver. 9). He has not forgotten it. Slackness on the part of the Lord is not the explanation. Some men might say He has forgotten the fulfilment of His word. That is certainly not the reason. "He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Again, in the fifteenth verse, "account that the long-suffering of our God is salvation."

The answer is, the long-suffering of God to the world. We quote John 3. 16, but not one of us has ever fathomed the vastness of God's love. No human mind or heart can understand the love and long-suffering of God towards this world, which led Him to give His beloved Son to die for it, and which allows Him to put off the day of Christ's return while fifty to sixty million of His beloved saints are done to death. God has

allowed all this to happen, rather than cut short this world's day of salvation.

What a tremendous thing must be the long-suffering love of God towards the world! I do not think we let it act upon us as powerfully as we should. If it has moved God to prolong the day of Christ's tarrying so that the world's day of grace might be extended, it is something altogether too stupendous for words.

But surely, when we speak of God's long-suffering, we must not only think of the world, and His long-suffering towards it. There is His long-suffering towards His slow-moving children. If we were quicker to learn our lessons, if we were more diligent students in the school of experience, if we, like Mary, were more attentive to the things He has to say to us, He would not have to be so long-suffering towards us, and He would not for our sakes, for our spiritual education, have to delay so long our transference to heaven.

God is long-suffering towards us, as well as to the world. He knows that our time of sojourn here is our education and preparation for all those joys that are yet to be our portion. It is open for us to do what the twelfth verse says, " Looking for and hasting

unto the coming of the day of God." It is open to us to make better speed towards it. We have had reminders that the Lord Jesus is really coming, and we are getting nearer and nearer to the day of His advent. Things that are happening in the world show the great prophetic crisis is at the very doors, and if we are to be caught clean out of this world before it comes, then the Lord's coming must indeed be very near. God grant that this exhortation may have weight with us.

Peter seems to let himself go in his love and earnest desire for the saints. I do not know any other chapter in the New Testament where the saints are addressed four times over as "beloved." The Apostle seems to be unloosing his affections towards his brethren in order to give urgency to his exhortations, in view of the long-suffering of God coming suddenly to an end.

We sometimes sing :

"Whosoever will for ever shall endure."

That is hardly true. " Whosoever will " is soon coming to an end. In view of the time when " whosoever will " will no longer be sounded in the ears of sinful men, the Apostle,

with all the urgency of God-wrought affection, exhorts these beloved saints. He says in verse 11, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?" Read also verses 14 and 17. He exhorts them in the second verse to be mindful; in the eighth verse not to be ignorant; in the fourteenth verse to be diligent; and in the seventeenth verse to beware lest they fall from their own steadfastness. We have to lay these exhortations to heart, and in view of the coming of the eternal day of God and the fact that we are indeed in the last times, we have this tremendously powerful lever to move us. The long-suffering of God waits not only for the salvation of sinners, but that we may make better progress in our education. He wants us to have to the full, opportunities of learning of Him here which will make us much better able to enjoy Him there. He wants lessons to be learned by us now that we shall have no opportunity of learning in heaven, because they can be only learned amid scenes of sin, sorrow and suffering. He wants us to learn lessons of His grace, lessons of His power, lessons of Christ's priestly ministry, lessons of what He can do for us amid circumstances of need and suffering. If only we were quicker to learn these lessons, if only we went in for

our Christianity in a more whole-hearted way, I believe the Lord would soon come, the days of His tarrying would be ended, and we should be for ever with the Lord.



Chapter 12.

"PERHAPS TO-DAY."

Shewn into the private office of a country bank manager, I see a device in blue and gold over his mahogany roll-top desk. It consists of two words only: "Perhaps To-day." I know what they mean, and a reference to them brings a happy smile to the manager's face, and he gives me an extra squeeze of the hand when I take my departure.

In a large drawing-room in the West of London, where an evangelical clergyman is speaking on behalf of missionary work in India, the words again appear. This time they are neatly framed in oak, and hang in a conspicuous place over the speaker's head. The eyes of several in the audience are raised towards them. A lady touches her friend and points to the motto. The responsive smile shews that both ladies understand the meaning of the words, and that their understanding is a source of happiness to them.

In the study of the headmaster of a school where boys are prepared for a university course I see the words once more, hand-

painted on a scroll which surmounts the doorway. The master observes that I am looking at them and smilingly remarks : " Those words are a daily inspiration to me " and nods his head when I reply : " And well they may be."

Later in the day I pay a visit to an elderly lady suffering from an incurable disease. She is reclining in an invalid chair wheeled up to the open window. Over a small bookshelf, in poker work upon white wood, I see the now familiar words : " Perhaps to-day." I make a remark as I look at them, and the invalid's face brightens. " Those words take the sting from much of my suffering," she says as she turns her gaze to the window and towards the sky. A wistful look comes into her eyes as she whispers, " How glorious if it were to-day ! "

The reader of these pages will have no difficulty in understanding to what the words refer. They are a reminder that He Who has tarried long **may** be returning, even to-day.

In a previous chapter we have given reasons for thinking that Christians in New Testament times could hardly say " Perhaps to-day " as we can. Various minor events had to happen first. But these things are

past and gone. Nothing, we believe, remains to prevent our inscribing the words : " Perhaps to-day " upon our walls ; we can use them in conversation with Christian friends ; we may gather comfort and courage from them when in sorrow or suffering ; we can carry them about in our hearts as the expression of a living, glorious hope, for the fulfilment of which we may look at any moment.

Is it not pertinent, then, to enquire what the hope means to us ? Is it a mere doctrine that we hold ? Or is it a lever that gets underneath our souls and moves them to fresh devotion and a larger measure of loyal discipleship ? Does it help to make the things of the world seem tawdry and unattractive ? Does it fix our gaze more stedfastly on what lies ahead, and make it easier for us to press toward the goal as men and women who are foreigners here, whose fatherland is in heaven ?

Let us lay to heart once more the stimulating words, and remind one another that it may really be **to-day** that we shall hear the shout which will gather us to the great reunion. Let the hope have its due effect on us, helping to make us earnest, practical, working, and devoted Christians, with the glory of our Lord as the consuming aim of our lives.

Chapter 13.

FIRST CLASS PEOPLE.

On the great central plateau of Spain it is sometimes extremely cold. It was so on a day that has fixed itself indelibly in my memory.

I was waiting at a small railway junction for the train to Madrid. No one could tell when it would come. For a train to be six hours late was in those days by no means unusual. There was nothing for it but to exercise patience, an unlimited amount of which is necessary for travellers in the Peninsula.

In Spanish railway stations one cannot walk into any waiting room, as one pleases. One has to show one's ticket at the entrance and third class passengers are strictly confined to the third class waiting-room. I was travelling third class, and had to go to the third class room. What a dismal, uncomfortable place it was! A couple of semi-intoxicated men were sprawling upon the hard and dirty benches. The light was dim; the fire in the grate was nothing but a "had been", and the general atmosphere was one of utter discomfort.

Through an unwashed window I could look into the first class waiting-room. The light there was brilliant, and a bright fire blazed upon the hearth. The windows were curtained and the floors carpeted. The seats were cushioned, and the waiting passengers seemed to be most comfortable, even to the point of enjoyment.

What a contrast between the two rooms ! But whether in the first class or in the third class room, we were all waiting for the same train. At last it came, not much more than an hour late. And now mark what happened. The door leading from the first class room was opened and the occupants flocked out on to the platform. Then the door of the third class room was unbolted, and we who had been waiting in such discomfort were released. We joined the others on the platform. All got into the same train, for we were all bound for the same destination, and all arrived there at the same moment !

This exactly illustrates what will take place at the descent of the Lord into the air, according to 1 Thessalonians 4. 16.

Some of us have loved ones who are no longer with us on earth. Absent from the body, they are "present with the Lord" (2 Corinth. 5. 8). It is not that they have yet

reached the fulness of the glorified state, but they are "with Christ" (Philippians 1. 23) in His safe keeping and in the serene calm of His presence, where they are "comforted" (Luke 16. 25). They have, as it were, passed into **the first class waiting room**. There amid undistracted peace and abundant comfort they are waiting the day of resurrection.

We, meanwhile, are still in this uncomfortable, dingy third class waiting-room of a world. Sickness and sorrow are here; trials of many kinds; violence and wrong-doing; selfishness and sin. We are waiting, even as our loved ones who have "gone before" are waiting, for the coming of the Lord.

Assuredly the glorious day will dawn. It is drawing nearer all the time and has never been so near as it is at this moment. What will happen when He comes?

The first class people will be let out of their waiting-room first. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." The resurrection day will have come for them. The "ancient graves" will be stirred; the sleeping bodies of the saints will be raised to be reunited with their happy spirits. Then "we which are alive and remain" will be released. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," we

shall be changed (1 Corinth. 15. 52), and "together with them" who have been raised, shall be "caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air." And in this manner we shall go to "ever be with the Lord."



Chapter 14.

ORDINARY PINS.

In the last chapter we have spoken of two classes. To give them Scriptural names, they are (1) those "which are fallen asleep in Christ" and (2) those "which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." Both will share in the joy of the translation that will then take place.

But there are those that belong to neither class. They are not numbered among the redeemed at all. I refer to "men of the world, which have their portion in this life" (Psalm 17. 14). They may be quite decent-living people. But they have never come to Christ for salvation. Perhaps they are hardly prepared to admit that they need saving. How will the coming of the Lord affect them?

I was writing one morning in the house where I was staying for a few days when the eldest daughter of my kind host entered the room.

"I hope I am not disturbing you, for there is something that I want to show you," she said.

I noticed that as she spoke she was holding her right hand rather mysteriously behind her. In her left hand she held a small lidless cardboard box containing two or three dozen pins.

"I want you to examine these pins," said my young friend, "and tell me if you think they are all exactly alike."

Emptying the box out upon the table, I turned over the pins with my finger. I could see no difference whatever between them, and said so.

Thereupon the young lady produced what she had been concealing in her right hand, a rather powerful magnet. Holding it down to within about an inch of the heap of pins, an immediate result followed. A number of pins, drawn by an invisible force, sprang up and stuck to the magnet. The others remained on the table unaffected.

"Thank you, Miss ———," I said, "you have given me a fine illustration of what will take place when the Lord comes."

His redeemed ones are like the steel pins. In outward appearance they may not differ from others. But they have something that gives them, so to speak, an affinity with the magnet. They have been quickened from a

state of spiritual death and are sharers of the risen life of Christ (Ephesians 2. 5). He is the Magnet that attracts them. When He comes, like the steel pins, they will rise to meet Him in the air, to go out from His presence no more.

Like the pins that were left on the table, multitudes will be left behind. The unaffected pins were not of steel ; they were **just ordinary pins**. Useful in their place, no doubt, but they had no affinity with the magnet ; there was nothing in them that responded to its attraction.

The men and women of whom we speak are not criminals, nor outrageous sinners. They are **just ordinary men and women**. They are no worse than others, but it must be said of them that they have not seen Christ, nor known Him (1 John 3. 6). They have never heard His quickening voice (John 5. 21, 25). They are not " alive unto God through Jesus Christ " (Romans 6. 11).

When the Lord comes there will be no response on their part to His shout ; they are " of the earth, earthy," a call from heaven leaves them unmoved. " They that are Christ's at His coming " will be caught up to meet Him. **They that are not Christ's,**

no matter how respectable, and even religious, they may have been, will be left behind to face the awful storm of judgment that will thereafter break upon the world to which they belong.

They may have experienced a "change." Some of them after plunging deeply into sin may have been "reformed." But it cannot be said too plainly and emphatically that reformation is not conversion, and that no change is of any spiritual value unless it is based upon the atoning blood of Christ. The only kind of change that will make people ready for the coming of the Lord is the kind that is described in Ephesians 2. 13: "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Let me press home a personal enquiry. Are you indebted for anything that you have to the blood of Christ? Have you been "made nigh" to God by its means? If not, you are just one of the ordinary pins, unaffected by the magnet, to be left behind when the great meeting of the Saviour and His blood-bought ones takes place in the air.

Your truest wisdom will be to seek something without delay which will give you a link with Him, a title to be numbered among those "that are Christ's."

Chapter 15.

CLAIMING HIS PROPERTY.

The question is sometimes asked : " How may I be certain that I shall be among those who are caught up when Jesus comes ? "

It is not asked jauntily. The moistened eye and the quivering lip show how concerned the questioner is. When I am asked as to this, I usually enquire as to **why** the question is put ; what lies behind it. In many cases a Scripture like Hebrews 9. 28 is quoted : "**Unto them that look for Him shall He appear.**" There is evident concern lest one should not be found among the watching ones, and thus lose the joy that will come to such.

It is the word " look for " that is the crux of the difficulty. The very same word, however, is used in Philippians 3. 20 as generally descriptive of Christians. " We look for the Saviour." It is the Christian attitude. The same word is used, but in a very different connection, in Hebrews 10. 27. There are those for whom nothing remains but " a certain fearful looking for of judgment." It is not that they are actively looking for

and expecting this terrible doom ; it is what awaits them, the thing that they have to look for.

But while they have only judgment for which to look, we have the Saviour to look for. We, Christians, look not for the conversion of the world, nor for an appearance before the great white throne for it to be decided whether we are to go to heaven or hell, but for a Saviour, whose love we know, and whose saving grace and power we have experienced.

When Christ descends into the air, the question will not be: are these people watching? are they faithful? are they zealous? but, "**Are they Christ's?** Do they belong to Him?" For He is coming to **claim His property**, those whom He has redeemed from sin and from the world by His precious blood. Whether alive or dead, "they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corin. 15. 23) will be caught up to meet Him.

It is not that fidelity, watchfulness and diligence are things of no account. In the great day of review and reward it will make a tremendous difference to us whether we have been faithful in our lives and service or not. There are those who, because they are

Christ's, will have been caught up, but who will see all that they have done burnt to ashes and they themselves ("saved, yet so as by fire") suffering loss (1 Corinth. 3. 15), the loss of the bright reward that might have been theirs.

We must never forget that Christ is not only our Saviour, but our Lord. And it is as a Lord coming to take account of His servants that He speaks of His advent in Matthew 18. 23 and other Scriptures. The relationship that secures us a place in the Father's house when Jesus comes does not entitle us to a reward.

We are left uncertain as to the time of the Lord's coming in order that we may prove our fidelity. In ordinary matters knowing the time when a thing is to happen and watching go together. As Christ Himself said: "**If the goodman of the house had known what hour... he would have watched**" (Luke 12. 39). In such a case watching is no evidence of fidelity. The date of our Lord's return, therefore, is purposely concealed from us that we may prove our fidelity by watching for His coming. May He graciously help us in this !

" Watching and ready may we be,
As those that wait their Lord to see."

Whatever we do, particularly in connection with the Lord's service, objections may be raised by some, even by some whom we love and esteem. But, as an old hymn puts it, "we've now to please but One." If we succeeded in pleasing all, it would only prove that we are not servants of Christ at all (Gal. 1. 10).

As a matter of fact, there is only one Man that can truly please and serve God, and that is Christ. What! cannot I please and serve God? Only in the measure in which Christ is formed in me. Only when the motives, the affections, the ways, the dependence, the devotion, the meekness, the unselfishness and other traits of that blessed holy, perfect One are reproduced in us can we be for God's pleasure and serve Him in a way that shall be agreeable to Him.

May He grant in increasing measure that Christ may be **formed in us**, as the Apostle desired for the Galatian believers (Gal. 4. 19). Then indeed will there be seen in us something that pleases God, and that will be "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1.7).

Chapter 16.

"THE CROWNING DAY THAT'S COMING."

Very few people in Jerusalem knew that Joash was alive. The wicked queen, Athaliah, had made a clean sweep of the heirs of David's line. She had "destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah."

But Jehoshabeath, the wife of the high priest (herself of royal blood), hid the young king, who was but a baby. For six years he remained hidden. In his seventh year the high priest Jehoiada "strengthened himself," and gathered certain trusted men together, revealed the fact that the true heir of David was alive, and declared :

"the king's son shall reign."

Read the story in 2 Chronicles 22. 10 to 23. 11.

It came to pass as Jehoiada said. "They brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown." And they cried: "God save the king!"

Still more certain is the coming triumph of our rejected Lord. People name Him as if He were a mere historic personage that lived

and died long centuries ago. They do not realise, even if they believe, that **He is alive to-day**. He is hidden from the eyes of men just as Joash was, but He is assuredly going to reign in the place where He has been set at naught. God Himself will set a crown of gold upon His head (Psalm 21. 3). He shall have dominion from sea to sea (Psalm 72. 8). He shall be King over all the earth (Zechariah 14. 9).

We sometimes sing :—

“Oh, the crowning day is coming by-and-by !”

and as the words pass our lips we think of **our** crowning day that is coming. But there will be no crowning day for us till the rejected King gets His crowning day.

Perhaps my readers have seen pictures of the gorgeous scene in Westminster Abbey at the coronation of a sovereign. Princes and dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts and barons fill the building, all holding their coronets in their hands, and waiting. Waiting for what ? For the moment when the crown is placed on the head of the king. Then they all put on their coronets.

The king must get his crown first. It would be construed as an act of gross discourtesy

to His Majesty for one of the lordly company to put his coronet on his brow before the crowning of the king.

It is even so with us. It would be more than discourtesy ; it would be positive disloyalty, to seek our crown before the King gets His. Yet this is what some of the Christians at Corinth were doing ! Paul says to them : " You have reigned as kings without us " (1 Cor. 4. 8). The apostles were loyal ; they were deemed " the filth of the world," " the offscouring of all things." But the Corinthian Christians whom Paul addresses were " rich " and " honourable." They were seeking a good time where their Lord and Master had such a hard time.

They were, so to speak, ante-dating the crowning day. They were not content to wait for their glory till the King was crowned. Do we cry shame upon them ? What about ourselves ?

In the story of Joash we read that of those who were let into the secret of his life and of his coming coronation, some had access to him in the place of his concealment : " they shall go in." Others had the privilege of rendering loyal service outside, where his sway was not yet established : they " shall keep the watch of the Lord."

Both privileges are ours. We have access to the rejected One in the place where He sits to-day. And it is ours to "keep His watch" in the place of His rejection. In the measure in which we avail ourselves of these privileges we prove our loyal allegiance to the One whose crowning day is at hand.



Chapter 17.

THE CROWN OF GLORY.

One sometimes reads in the obituary notice of some servant of Christ that has departed this life, that he has "gone to his reward." But no intelligent person would write thus. The Christian, when he dies, departs to be "with Christ," but the day of reward is still future. We read that "the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and **then** He shall reward every man according to His works" (Matt. 16. 27). Again, the Lord says: "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22. 12).

These two Scriptures are decisive. They teach us beyond all doubt that the time when the Christian gets his reward is not when he dies, but when the Lord comes.

This truth is confirmed to us in the verse from which we quote the words at the head of this chapter. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, (and not before), ye shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5. 4).

The time of reward, then, is coming, when even a cup of cold water, given for Christ's sake, will not be forgotten.

The sheep of Christ are very dear to Him, and to those who have loved them and cared for them during the years of His absence He has promised a fadeless crown of glory. For what else is a bright reward held out? We might mention many things, but perhaps the reader will prefer to search them out for himself. They are not hard to find, either in the Old Testament or the New.

They may be summed up, however, as **Christlike** deeds. In whatever word or action Christ is reproduced in any of us, that word or action will assuredly come up for recognition and reward by-and-by.

Let me suggest two or three things.

There will undoubtedly be a wonderful reward for **self-effacement**. During the American war between the North and the South certain changes were made in the commands, and General Howard was placed at the head of a special division. After the war, a grand review was to be held. Commander-in-Chief Sherman said to General Howard: "The political friends of the Officer whom you succeeded are determined

that he shall ride at the head of the division, and I want you to help me out."

"It is my command," said Howard, "and I am entitled to ride at its head."

"Of course; but, Howard, you are a man that can stand a disappointment."

"Oh, if you put it on that ground, there is but one answer. Let him have the honour."

"Thank you," said the Commander-in-Chief, "and you will ride by my side at the head of the whole army!"

What would General Howard have lost if he had stood for his undoubted rights! By his willing self-effacement he won a place of honour of which he had not dreamed. If this can be so in earthly things, how much more certainly will it be so in the things which Christ controls! Self-advertisement now will mean loss by-and-by; Christlike self-effacement will bring its wonderful reward in the future.

Another thing to gain a reward when Christ appears is the quiet but decisive victory won over self and sin when no eye is looking on. When David overcame the lion and the bear in the desert, who was there to see? And those hidden victories in which we

prove the conquering might of our Saviour are things which bring honour to Him. He will not forget them in the day of His glory.

Napoleon had medals struck with the words: "I was there" inscribed on them, with the names of the various battles he had won. Those who fought in those battles were counted as having helped to gain the victory. It was an honour to them to have been there. And the victories which Christ has won through us will be remembered, and the fact that **we were there** will bring its glorious reward.

What an honour it will be to be acknowledged and rewarded by the King! A Findochty wife once showed me, with evident pleasure and pride, a photograph of her husband (the captain of a mine-sweeper during the great war) shaking hands with the King in the presence of Admiral Beatty and all the crew. It is natural that such a picture should be framed and given a conspicuous place on the wall of the house.

But can this be compared for a moment with the supreme honour of being acknowledged by the King of kings as His loyal servant, a confessor of His Name, one whom He delights to call His friend?

But if there is to be this glorious "then," there must be its present counterpart in a

"now" of fidelity and loyal service. May God help us to lay to heart how much our future will be affected by the way we spend our time to-day!

There is, however, something further to be said with regard to the reward of the servants of Christ. Much depends on the conduct of those whom they have led to the Saviour, or those over whom they exercise loving pastoral care.

John says (in a verse where the A.V. rendering is to be preferred to the R.V.): "Look to yourselves that **we** (preachers, pastors, elders) lose not those things which **we** have wrought, but that **we** receive a full reward" (2 John 8). Would John's reward, then, be not as "full" as it might be if his converts, and those for whose souls he watched, did not walk in the truth? It would seem so.

In 1 John 2. 28 there is a similar suggestion "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear **we** may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at the coming."

With this agree the words of Paul in Philipians 2. 14-16: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings . . . holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

How earnestly then should the ministers of Christ pray for those among whom they labour, lest through their defect the labourer be shorn of his full reward !



Chapter 18.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

The question is sometimes asked: Are there any indications that the day of the Lord's Coming is near?

In seeking an answer to this enquiry, we must bear in mind that it is a subject that necessarily has its limitations. There are times and seasons which we may know, but there are others "which the Father hath put in His own power," and which are not revealed to us. To pry into them would be a dangerous and unseemly occupation.

On the other hand, there are things which we are distinctly invited to know and understand. "It is given unto you," said the Lord Jesus, "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." And then He proceeded to expound these mysteries in a series of illuminating parables that sketch the development and end of Christian profession. See Matthew 13.

Another thing that we must remember is that we are Christians, not Jews. The Jews attached an undue importance to signs. Certain of their number said to the Lord Jesus:

"Master, we would see a sign from Thee" (Matthew 12. 38). The request caused the Lord to "sigh deeply in His spirit" (Mark 8. 12). The same propensity, so characteristic of the Jew, is noticed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1. 22: "The Jews require a sign."

We Christians must beware of this snare. It is well that we should have some understanding of what Christianity really is. It is utterly different from Judaism. Moses and Elijah were shining saints of God, but they were not Christians. Christianity depends upon the fact of the Saviour, who died for our sins, having risen, and being seated at God's right hand, while the Holy Spirit is on earth, dwelling in us, and uniting each one of us, as members of one body, to our glorious Head, and to all our fellow-members of that body.

This is really the "mystery" of which the epistles of Paul speak: Christ the Head of a body formed of all believers, whether Jew or Gentile. It is the very kernel of Christianity.

What is brought to light in Christianity is the fruit of God's eternal purpose, and it will abide for ever. It does not, properly speaking, come within the scope of prophecy at all. It belongs to a region with which times and seasons have nothing to do.

It is impossible to be intelligent as to the "word of prophecy" and to have "understanding of the times" unless we see the unique character of Christianity and the special position of the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ, outside all dispensations, and not belonging to the course of this world at all.

The present period, during which God is active in His grace on the lines indicated in Acts 15. 14 (visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name), is really **an interval** in the course of His dealings with the world. Many a prophecy, as we have seen, foretold "the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow," but prophecy is silent as to the interval between the two. It takes no account of the centuries during which this **new thing**, the mystery kept secret since the world began, but now revealed, is being developed.

Look, for instance, at the angel's wonderful prediction of the sixty-nine weeks and the one week in Daniel 9. Dr. Moffatt translates the word for weeks "weeks of years," and this is undoubtedly correct. At the close of the sixty-ninth week of years (483 years from the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem) Messiah was to be cut off, we are told. This is what came to pass at the Cross. The **final**

week of the seventy is to be marked by the forming of a covenant, or pact, between the prince of the people that should destroy the city (the Romans) and the "many," the mass of the Jewish nation.

But does the seventieth week of years follow hard upon the heels of the sixty-ninth? No; in between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of the prophecy **the whole of the present period intervenes.** When the saints are translated at the coming of the Lord the course of God's dealings with Israel will be resumed, and the way cleared for the seventieth week of years to begin.

To make this quite clear let me borrow an illustration. A farmer possesses a considerable stock of a certain kind of seed, which he has stored away in one of his barns. He is making no present use of it, but is reserving it for future use. The field in which he intends to sow it has another crop maturing, and it is this growing crop that engages the farmer's present attention. When it is reaped and removed from the field, he will bring out the seed that he is reserving, and sow it on the land.

Israel is the seed in reserve. Christianity occupies the ground at present, but when the the saints of the present era (living and dead)

are removed to heaven, the chosen nation will again be the pivot and centre of God's resumed dealings. And again times and seasons, signs and events, will have their place.

This being the case, the question naturally arises, why should Christians give any consideration to the Signs of the Times? Why devote two chapters in this book to the subject? In doing so, are we not transgressing the bounds set for us? Are we not attempting to speak of things that do not lie within our province? And of what help can they be to us?

Let me explain by means of an illustration. An elderly woman, who has kept house for herself during the greater part of a long life, finds that it is beyond her failing strength to do so any longer. A kind friend offers her a home in her own mansion, which the old lady gratefully accepts. She is told that any day the car may be sent to take her to her new home, so that she must be prepared for the move at any time.

She is further informed that her kind friend has bought the whole row of cottages adjoining that in which she has lived so long, and that they are to be pulled down, to make room for some purposed improvements to the property. The old lady is assured, however,

that the work of destruction will not be commenced till she is safe in the house of her friend.

The days pass, and the car does not come for the poor old lady. There is some good reason for the delay, she is sure. So she waits, and watches, and works away as far as she is able, in view of the time when she will leave her present surroundings. One morning she notices that three ladders have been laid on the ground near the end cottage. Further down there is a pile of planks and half a dozen wheelbarrows. During the day a cart arrives with a score or more of picks and spades. What is happening? It is evident that preparations are being made for the impending destruction of the cottages.

These preparations have nothing whatever to do with the old lady's removal to the promised home of refuge. That promise stands firm, whether the cottages are cleared off the ground or not. But it appears that the workmen are just about to begin their work of clearance. The ladders, planks, barrows, picks and spades are **signs of the times**. Though they have nothing to do with the old lady's removal, they show that what is to **follow** her removal is about to take place. She concludes, therefore, that the car which is to fetch her will not be long in coming now.

Do you catch the idea of my illustration ? We Christians are to live in daily expectation of the great translation that is promised, the coming of our Lord to take us to His Father's house. All sorts of things are to happen in the world after we are gone, but we have, in such a passage as 2 Thess. 1. 7, the assurance that they will not take place until the Lord has gathered us to Himself.

But what if we can already see the preparations being made for the speedy coming to pass of those things ? May we not regard such preparations as evidence that we are indeed upon the verge of our translation to heaven ?

Let the reader bear in mind, then, that what we refer to as " signs of the times " are really preparatory to the events of the last days, when Christians are no longer on earth.



Chapter XIX.**WHAT ARE THE SIGNS ?**

We shall enumerate seven, though there are certainly others.

1. The Return of the Jews to their Country.

It is astonishing that any Christians can be blind to the fact, so clearly stated in Scripture, that the Jews are to be gathered again from the countries where they have dwelt as strangers, and settled once more in their God-given land. The incredulity on this subject is such that, in calling attention to the present remarkable movement of the Jews to Palestine, it cannot be taken for granted that it will be generally recognised as a fulfilment of prophecy. It will be necessary to quote some Scripture passages which declare in the plainest terms that a national return of the Jews is to be expected. Among many references that may be given, we will select five.

“The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall as-

semble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Isaiah 11. 11,12.

That this prophecy cannot refer to the recovery of the remnant in the days of Cyrus is proved by the **universal** restoration promised ("from the four corners of the earth") and by the fact of miraculous deeds being wrought in connection with it. See verse 15.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land." Isaiah 14. 1.

"It shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither He had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers." Jeremiah 16. 14,15.

"I will take you from among the heathen and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land." Ezekiel 36. 24.

"Behold, I will save My people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." Zechariah 8. 7,8.

In view of what is foretold in these and many other similar prophecies, is it not highly significant that during the present half century, and especially since the great war, there has been an ever-increasing tide of Jewish immigration to the land of their fathers? More

have returned in a single year than the whole number that accompanied Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. New Jewish cities like Tel-Aviv are hives of industry and count their inhabitants by tens of thousands. There is a Hebrew University in Jerusalem ; roads and harbours are being built ; the resources of the country are being developed.

Zionism is but one of the forces that work in this direction. The policy of the mandatory Power (Britain) is favourable to making Palestine the national home of the Jews once more. The unfavourable conditions that exist for Jews in Russia and Germany are driving them out from these countries in multitudes, and the urge in their hearts is toward the land of their fathers.

The return of the Jews to Palestine is not to be fully and finally brought to pass till the Christian era is over. It will **then** be accompanied by a spiritual revival, and a turning of heart on the part of many to God. But the preliminaries of this national movement have already taken place. None can gainsay the significance of what is happening under our very eyes. It is the most portentous sign of the times, and may surely lead us to look for the coming of the Lord in the near future.

2. The Fast-developing Apostacy in Christendom.

We are told in 2 Thessalonians 2. 3 that before the day of Christ shall come there shall be a **falling away**, which will evidently prepare the way for, and culminate in, the advent of "the man of sin."

Let us clearly understand what is foretold here. It is not a state of general apathy, declension and vice that is predicted, such as has come upon Christendom again and again. As far back as the fifth century there existed a state such as is described in the following extract, quoted in the "Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London," Volume xii., No. 3 :—

"The passion for amusement has destroyed the spirit of religion. The churches of God are forsaken, while the circuses are crammed with sight-seers. Men love the gibes of the actor more than the Word of God."

How applicable is this quotation, from a fifth century document, to the day in which we live ! But it is no new thing.

Then consider the state of Christian profession in England when Wesley and Whitefield began their labours. Dr. Ryle, in his **Christian Leaders of the Last Century**, tells us that the majority of the clergy of those days

"... were sunk in worldliness, and neither knew nor cared anything about their profession. They neither did good themselves nor liked any one else to do it for them. They hunted, they shot, they farmed, they swore, they drank, they gambled. They seemed determined to know everything except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. When assembled it was generally to toast Church and King, and to build one another up in earthly-mindedness, prejudice, ignorance and formality . . . And when they did preach, their sermons were so unspeakably and indescribably bad, that it is comforting to reflect that they generally preached to empty benches."

In dissenting circles much the same state of things prevailed. Dr. Watts declared that there was "a general decay of vital religion." The ease and freedom from persecution enjoyed at last by Nonconformists proved, from a spiritual point of view, to be their undoing. Cold morality, natural theology and barren orthodoxy formed their staple teaching. Their sermons were miserable essays, utterly devoid of anything likely to awaken or to save souls.

But such a terrible condition is not **apostacy**. Apostacy is a deliberate abandonment of the Christian faith. We do not see that yet, except in the case of individuals here and there. But we see the beginnings of it, the rapidly increasing drift towards it in all directions. The **name** of "Christian" is not relinquished, but the very foundations of the faith are undermined in the souls of multitudes. The deity of Christ and His holy

humanity, as born of a Virgin ; the atoning efficacy of His sacrifice on the Cross ; the divine origin of the Scriptures ; the necessity for the new birth ; personal salvation by faith in Christ,—all these great verities are jettisoned by an increasing number of men who, far from gambling and drinking like the parsons of a hundred and fifty years ago, assail these and other evil practices with voice and pen. Such men are leaders in the present drift toward the open “falling away” that is predicted.

The tendency is by no means a local one ; it is well-nigh universal. It has invaded the mission fields and blighted many a promising work. One might quote testimonies to this from all quarters of the world. Here is one, from a missionary in Burma :—

“ We don't feel any lack of apostacy out here. The leaven has permeated the whole lump. The downward drag of surrounding heathenism is heavy, but I sometimes feel more discouraged when I look about upon those who stand in positions of great responsibility, and deny Him in word and deed. I knew I would see it wherever I went, but I am shocked beyond all expectation. I have not the heart to write in detail of this feature of mission experience . . . It is a most sobering state of affairs to all thoughtful Christians.”

In Russia the very idea of God is flouted. But it is the political authorities rather than

the ecclesiastical leaders who take this position. When the open apostacy arrives, the unsaved leaders in the ecclesiastical sphere will be at its head.

But before the **falling away** comes definitely to pass the **catching away** of the Bride, the true church, will take place. Surely it will not be long now before we hear the shout that will call us home !

3. The Revival of Demonology.

There is recorded for us in 1 Timothy 4. 1-3 an express utterance of the Holy Spirit to the effect that the predicted apostacy from the faith would, **in the latter times**, be accompanied by a turning to seducing spirits and demon-doctrines. That there has been, since the dawn of the present century, a widespread revival of activity on the part of seducing spirits and a determined propaganda of certain doctrines connected therewith is only too manifest. Proofs of it are to be found on every hand.

The poor Czar Nicholas, who met his end in such a tragic way, is said to have made all important decisions of State under the guidance of a spiritist medium. America is flooded with it. In out-of-the-way villages in Spain, once strongholds of Romanism, there

are sometimes more spiritists than Catholics. The same is true in many parts of South America.

The esoteric doctrines promulgated by the spirits when once the confidence of their dupes is gained are precisely those mentioned in 1 Timothy 4. Particularly is the divine institution of marriage assailed and a substitute for it advocated that would, if adopted, result in horrible and universal depravity.

What makes all this so significant is that the Holy Spirit expressly foretold that it would come to pass **in the latter times**. Does it not look as if **these** days must be the "latter times"?

No doubt the influence of the seducing spirits will spread. Probably it will be the means used by Satan to secure world-wide credence for the lie with which he will deceive those "who believed not the truth" (2 Thess. 2. 11,12). And it would seem that spiritistic activity will reach its height in the "signs and lying wonders" which will attend the coming of Antichrist. The full development of this evil power has therefore not yet been attained. But already it has reached gigantic proportions. Does not the fact assure us, with clarion voice, that the hour, long

waited for, is now at hand when the Lord will call us to meet Him in the air ?

4. The Rise of Democracy to a Place of Government and Power.

The vision of a great image, given to Nebuchadnezzar, set forth the course, climax and final destruction of Gentile supremacy in the earth. Four world-empires were to succeed one another. Babylon, of course, was the first, for into her hand the sceptre passed when the rebellious sons of David were driven from the throne of their fathers. The next two empires are named in Daniel 8. The dual Government of Media and Persia took the place of Babylon, and was in her turn superseded by Greece. Then came the terrible fourth empire, "strong as iron," breaking in pieces and bruising everything with which it came in contact. This was Rome.

In the days of this empire's supremacy the Lord Jesus was born and was crucified. We have already seen that the centuries following the terrible deed at Calvary have formed **an interval** in the ways of God. When the Christian era has closed God will pick up the thread of His dealings with Jew and Gentile where He dropped it, and the Roman Empire will be in existence again and receive the full

weight of God's judgment of the Gentile power for its iniquity.

The final form of the Roman sovereignty seems to be indicated in the feet and toes of the image in Daniel 2, and it is highly significant that into the composition of this part of the image a material enters that is not metallic like the head, breast and arms, belly and thighs, and legs. The feet and toes were partly iron and **partly clay**. That is, I take it, that side by side with the strong, imperialistic, militarist element there would exist in the place of government and authority a very different element, and that the two should "not cleave one to another" (verse 43). What can the brittle clay represent but the democratic, socialistic, or, if you please, communistic and bolshevist, element? Has not this, during the last few decades especially, been coming to the front? If in certain countries it has received a set-back through the establishment of strong personal rule, the element is still there and will surely reassert itself, especially in countries like England, France, Spain, Italy, etc., that formed part of the Roman dominions.

In the course of the vision Nebuchadnezzar saw the great image smitten on its feet, the feet that "were of iron and clay," and the stone that smote it "became a great mountain

and filled the whole earth." This is interpreted in verse 44 to be the kingdom which God will set up and which will break to pieces and supersede the kingdoms of the Gentiles.

Let us consider. Does not the clay show itself side by side with the iron in the feet of the image to-day? If so, is it not clear that the final form of Gentile supremacy is getting ready for its manifestation after the translation of the saints? In this case must not the coming of the Lord be very, very near?

5. The Tendency to Confederate among the Nations.

Referring again to the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's vision, it is to be noted that the final form of Gentile government that it sets forth is to be found in its ten toes. These stand for ten kings, or kingdoms, for we read that "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall . . . consume all these kingdoms" (Daniel 2. 44). That these ten kingdoms will be confederate and will form the revived Roman empire of the last days is abundantly clear from other passages of Scripture, especially in Revelation 13 and 17. The latter chapter speaks of ten kings which "have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the Beast"

(verse 13). They will therefore be united in a League, or confederacy.

But what of the nations that are outside the revived Empire such as Russia, Germany, etc.? The Scriptures show, clearly enough, that there will be **another** League, a rival union, the leading power of which will be Russia, easily identified as such in Ezekiel 38. 2, especially when we learn that the true rendering is not "chief prince of" but "prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal," names which in their modern form are manifestly Russia and her European and Asiatic capitals. Whether Germany will be part of this northern confederacy is not, as far as I am aware, indicated; but it cannot be said to be unlikely.

There will also be a lesser league, a "little entente" of peoples in the immediate neighbourhood of Palestine, under the leadership of "the king of the north," otherwise known as "the Assyrian." The 83rd Psalm describes the formation of this league and its wicked aims.

Still another pact, or alliance, of the last days is hinted at in Revelation 16. 12, where we read of "the kings of the East," probably Japan, China, India, etc. These will sweep

westward to take their share, and meet with their overthrow, in "the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Thus we have four different confederacies of nations set before us as existing in the days that immediately precede the Appearing of Christ.

Do we not live in the days of at least one "League of Nations"? Its formation was sudden and unexpected. The other leagues may come into being with equal rapidity. The League that already exists is a sufficient indication of the tendency to confederation. It is a fingerpost pointing to the conditions that are to exist at the period known as "the end of the age."

6. Russia.

The description given of Russia in Ezekiel 38 was no doubt a surprising one to those who only knew the Russia of the Czars. That was a great empire, this in Ezekiel a group of countries. Gomer is thought to be Ukraine; Togarmah probably Armenia. In any case the Russia of the last days is to be a collection of countries. It is the Russia of the Soviets! Do not we at once perceive the significance of the Russia of the last days being the Russia as we know it to-day? It is another testimony to the fact that the end of the age is at hand.

7. Egypt.

In the latter part of Daniel 11 a personage called "the king of the south" is said to come upon the world's stage and play a not unimportant part in the events of the last days. "The south" is, of course, Egypt, which lies to the south of Palestine. But the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies have long ago ceased to reign, and Egypt, with no king of her own, became a mere province of the once powerful Ottoman Empire. In course of time she came under the sovereignty of Britain, but her native ruler was a mere Khedive, a provincial governor. As the result of the great War, however, a change has taken place in the status of Egypt. It is a kingdom once more, and has its own native Sultan or King. After all these centuries there is again a "King of the south," just as the prophecy of Daniel 11 would lead us to anticipate at the close of the age.

Depend upon it, dear Christian friend, we live in wonderful days. Things are shaping, plans are developing, persons are being put in necessary places, all to be ready for the fulfilment of prophecy when the time arrives. But He for whom we look will come first. How very near His coming must be !

Chapter XX.**BRINGING THE KING BACK.**

In the earlier chapters of this book we have spoken mostly of the coming of the Lord as our Saviour and Bridegroom. But He is also coming as King to reign not merely as Son of David, but as Son of man, and extend His sway "from the river to the ends of the earth." This will be the subject of this chapter.

Will the reader please turn to 2 Samuel 19, and refresh his memory with the narrative from verse 9 to verse 30 ?

The subjects of King David had done an ill turn both to themselves and their country in lending their support to Absalom in his usurpation of the throne. The happy times for which they had hoped had vanished like a phantom and, instead of peace and prosperity, "all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel."

The thoughts of men began to turn increasingly to the exiled king. His grace and power for good were once again remembered with gratitude. "The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies," they said, and at last the rekindled affections of their hearts for

their dethroned and rejected sovereign framed themselves into the utterance with which one questioned another : " Why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back ? "

Did they realize at last that in this lay their only hope ; that there could be no righteousness, no peace, no contentment, no stable government, no deliverance from eager foes, no glory for their nation, till the true king came back to His own ?

History repeats itself, and necessarily so when the things that happened in the days of long ago enshrined within them prophecies of things yet future. For " great David's greater Son " was yet to come, and the rejection and exile of Israel's King were to be re-enacted on a larger and more serious scale.

And so it has been. Jesus has been " disallowed of men." Their choice fell on another, and their emphatic declaration was : " We will not have this Man to reign over us." So He has gone away, and Satan holds sway as the prince of this world (John 14. 30).

In the absence of the true King men try to make the world a tolerable place to live in. They pass laws for the better government of the nations. They employ policemen to suppress crime. They endeavour to improve social conditions. They establish courts of

arbitration and strive for the abolition of war. They confer about disarmament and hope for the coming of a world-wide and durable peace.

But in spite of everything the strife and turmoil continue, and the efforts of well-meaning men to introduce the millennium seem to be farther than ever from success. Does it never occur to them that the one thing needed is the return of the King? Why do they not speak a word of bringing Him back?

When men began to ask themselves this question as to David, there was resident at Jerusalem a young prince whom the king had adopted into his family circle. The grandson of Saul, David's predecessor and bitter enemy, he had had little reason to expect such kindness. But David's generosity sought the young man and welcomed him to the city, where he was surrounded with lavish kindness.

Prevented by lameness from following his benefactor into exile, he remained in Jerusalem, mourning the absence of his sovereign. How grateful to his ear would be the first whisper of the suggestion of bringing back the King!

Slandered, misrepresented, and very probably neglected and reviled, Mephibosheth had every reason to long for the King's return.

And when at last the message came : " He is here ! " his joy would know no bounds. " My lord the king is come again ! " were his jubilant words. Nothing mattered but that. His interests, his prospects, his happiness, all were wrapped up in the king. His possessions were of little account in his eyes ; others might have them now that the king had returned.

There are Mephibosheths in the world to-day ; men and women who have been forgiven and welcomed by their Saviour-King. The rebellion of their hearts has given place to grateful love. They have been treated with illimitable kindness ; the very grace of God Himself has been poured into their bosoms.

Unable to follow their Lord to the place whither He has gone (John 13. 33,36), they mourn His absence and sing :

" Lord Jesus, come !
Thine absence here we mourn ;
No joy we know apart from Thee,
No sorrow in Thy presence see ;
Lord Jesus, come ! "

His coming will be a personal and a glorious one : " this same Jesus " (Acts 1. 11). " And the Lord shall be King over all the earth " (Zechariah 14. 9). " All kings shall fall down

before Him ; all nations shall serve Him ”
(Psalm 72. 11).

When He comes thus with “ salvation and strength,” with power and majesty, He will be followed by warrior hosts from heaven, who accompany Him to share the honours of His triumph, and to reflect His glory far and wide (2 Thess. 1. 10).

How came those hosts to be in heaven ? Why are they not on earth to welcome the King at His coming as Mephibosheth welcomed David ? 1 Thessalonians 4. 15-17 gives us the answer. They will already have been caught up to meet the Lord and be for ever with Him.

Will it gladden our eyes to see our beloved Lord enthroned and honoured, the centre of adoring multitudes ? Surely. But will it not much more gladden our **hearts** to hear His voice, to see Him face to face, to be in His presence for ever, and to have all the joy of His love, and His Father’s love, flooding our souls ? **This** is the rapture that lies immediately ahead. After this will come the glories of the Kingdom.

We continue to pray, then, with ever increasing earnestness : “ Thy kingdom come.” But with a still intenser longing we pray :

“ Come, Lord Jesus.”

“ I ne’er can see His like below
Until He comes again ;
And in the interval I’d live
To glorify His Name.”

When the King comes, what a change of conditions will take place ! Haughty officials will give place to meek men, who will then inherit the earth. Psalm 72 describes the happy days that follow the advent of the King. Shall we try to sing with the Psalmist his lofty song of anticipation in our own English language ?

O God, bestow Thy judgments
Upon Thy chosen King
When to Thy stricken people
He righteousness shall bring ;
When peace shall widely echo
From every lofty height,
And ages of oppression
Be ended by His might.

Long as the moon endureth,
Long as doth shine the sun,
Men’s hearts shall rise in worship
To Thee, the Holy One ;
And as the rain descendeth
Upon the thirsty land,
The King shall come from heaven
With blessings in His hand.

By dwellers in the desert
His Name shall be adored ;
The rulers of the islands
Shall own Him as their Lord ;
Yea, kings shall render homage
And peoples do His will ;
His mercy and His goodness
Shall every bosom fill.

The needy, when he crieth,
Shall never cry in vain ;
And he that hath no helper
Shall mighty help obtain.
Their souls, from wrong redeemed,
Shall gladsome praises bring ;
And they, of old downtrodden,
Be precious to the King.

For Him shall grateful millions
Their intercessions make,
And day by day His praises
Their swelling songs shall wake ;
His fame shall wide be chanted
By men of every race,
And all the earth re-echo
The glories of His grace.

His Name shall never perish,
For ever it shall stand,
While tides of richest blessing
Roll out to every strand ;

The God who doeth wonders
Shall do this wondrous thing,
And Israel's great Redeemer
Be Israel's glorious King !

Then let His Name be honoured,
With glory let it shine ;
And let the earth be covered
With glory all divine ;
This King of kings is JESUS,
The One Whose love we know ;
To Him be endless glory ;
Amen ! Lord, be it so !

But be it ever remembered that this glorious state of things will not be brought about by missionary effort or the preaching of the gospel. Why a beautiful hymn like " Jesus shall reign where'er the sun " should be placed in the **missionary** section of a book passes our comprehension. It is hardly a suitable hymn to sing at a missionary meeting, but eminently suitable to sing after an address on the coming of the King. For the happiness that is celebrated in Psalm 72 and in other glowing passages of Scripture will be ushered in by the Advent of the One to Whom all the glories of the Kingdom belong.

Chapter 19.

SHALL WE EXPECT A REVIVAL ?

The question is sometimes asked : Is there any Scripture warrant for expecting, or praying for, a revival just before the coming of the Lord ?

In view of His first coming, long centuries ago, John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way. And it was promised that "many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord." In other words, in order to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord," many, hitherto disobedient and sinful, should be converted. They should be turned to "the wisdom of the just." Especially should the fathers turn to their children with hearts longing for their eternal blessing (see Luke 1. 16, 17).

In a word, there should be a true revival, a wave of blessing from on high resulting in the conversion of many, particularly of the sons and daughters of God-fearing parents.

May we expect anything similar just before the **Second** Coming of the Lord ? Perhaps we are hardly entitled to reason from analogy, and to conclude that it must be so again

because it was so in the past. But we may assuredly say that it would be according to our knowledge of the infinite mercy of God to expect such a wave of blessing just before the return of His Son from heaven.

Nearly four centuries ago England experienced a great deliverance. Spain, the mightiest empire of those days, had threatened to destroy her, and had launched the terrible Armada (named "Invincible" because it was really deemed to be so) against her coasts. By the hand of God, who bade His stormy winds blow, the Armada was shattered. There were stalwart saints in England in those days, men and women of faith and courage, who had, with God's help, shaken off the iron yoke of Rome. We have no record of the prevailing cries which went up from their hearts to God. But we have a record of the result. Great blessing was given from on high, and it was in the days of the Armada that the first servants of Christ left these shores as missionaries to preach the Gospel in the first of the British Colonies.

Two centuries passed and more. Again this country was faced with a crisis. Napoleon, with the whole of western Europe at his feet, was threatening Britain with invasion. A vast fleet of transports was to bring his armies across the channel. Again there was a

turning of men's thoughts to God. Mighty, prevailing, intercessory prayer ascended from the hearts of many. And God hearkened and heard. The answer was given, not in temporal deliverance merely, but in blessing being sent to many. It was immediately after the Napoleonic wars that the labours of pioneer missionaries in South Africa, the Indies, the islands of the southern seas, and indeed throughout the world, were so abundantly blessed of God.

Once again the clouds of trouble gathered thick in the sky. The Crimean War and the war of the Indian Mutiny covered the land with a pall of darkness and mourning. But again the Lord of hosts, the God of infinite resource, shewed that He is still able to bring meat out of the eater. A great wave of blessing, beginning in Ireland in 1859, spread far and wide on both sides of the Atlantic. Thousands were converted to God. The savour of that gracious movement remains to this day.

Then came the Boer conflict, and Britain waged a war five thousand miles from her shores, and again the gloomy clouds of sorrow and suffering settled upon the nation. But there were some who "heard the rod" and set themselves to seek God's presence and enquire of Him. Almost immediately there

followed the great Welsh revival when, in spite of much that was merely casual, there was a real work of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the conversion of thousands. The revival spread to other lands. In far-off Manchuria seasons of blessing were witnessed that seemed Pentecostal in their scope and intensity. In China, India, and many another land, the reflex of that gracious visitation from God was felt.

Once more the war-clouds gathered, and in 1914 began the most titanic struggle that the world has ever seen. From the first a few gave themselves here and there to prayer. As the seriousness of the situation became more and more manifest, the volume of prayer increased, and before the end there was a mighty crying to God from one end of the land to the other. **And God heard. Again He mercifully sent deliverance.**

But is that **all** that we prayed for? Is it **all** that we expected? Did we not pray that God in infinite mercy would move once again by His Spirit, and cause His voice to be heard in power amid the spiritual apathy, the love of pleasure, the forgetfulness of God, the drift toward open apostacy, that are so characteristic of the present day? And because the answer is not yet given shall we cease to expect it, and pray for it?

Further, let us raise the question thoughtfully, and without undue haste to find an answer :

Upon what does the possibility of such a revival depend ?

If it depends in the remotest degree upon us, God's children, then it becomes us to give ourselves to prayer and fasting, to earnest seeking of God's face, to humiliation and self-judgment, to determined renunciation of selfishness, worldliness, indifference, and every form of sin.

Brethren and sisters, shall we do it ? Shall we set ourselves to intercede with God for another merciful visitation, another awakening for saint and sinner before the Lord comes ? Fellow-Christians in America, in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand, in India, in all lands where this book finds its readers, shall we not join in earnest, expectant, believing, importunate prayer that God would grant us this boon ?

We do not deserve it. We have been cold and self-satisfied, inclined to indulge in spiritual pride and to live in the past rather than to avail ourselves of all the **present** resources which God has given to His people. Let us confess it with shame of face. Have we

confessed it already? Let us do so again, in private and with others like-minded.

And it may be that God, for Christ's sake, will in this matter, too, do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we either ask or think.



Chapter 22.

THE AIR.

Why is it, we are sometimes asked, that the appointed meeting-place between Christ and His redeemed ones is the air? We are to "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4. 17). May the reason be connected with the fact that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air"? See Ephesians 2. 2.

When an enemy has been completely vanquished in battle, the victorious power can do just what it pleases in the enemy's territory. Our glorious Lord has won a great victory over Satan, and can do just as He pleases in his territory.

What is He pleased to do? To gather to Himself those who are the trophies of His redemption work, and to demonstrate in the very teeth of the enemy that we are **His**.

Moreover, the "wolf" has caught the sheep (John 10. 12) again and again; he has damaged them, scattered and divided them, and brought dishonour on the Name of Christ through them. But his success has only been temporary. In the air the Lord will demonstrate not only that we are **His**, but that, after all, we are **one**, and that we are

like Christ. At Calvary Satan was bruised under the feet of the mighty Victor. By means of the reunion in the air he will be bruised under **our** feet shortly. (Romans 16. 20).

Thank God, neither the power of the prince of darkness nor any other power, can hinder our reaching our home. The doors of hades can present no obstacle.

The Lord has never promised that the power of Satan and of evil men shall not prevail against His Church. As a matter of fact, the might of evil has prevailed against the saints in many places, at Ephesus, Smyrna, Philadelphia and scores of cities in Northern Africa, so that from these places, where once there were thriving assemblies and a bright testimony to Christ's name, every vestige of Christianity has been swept away.

In the brief dispensation to follow the present one, it will be the same. There will be those who overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Rev. 12. 11). But, none the less, the powers of evil will **prevail against them** (Rev. 13.7), and they will be slain.

What the Lord has promised is not that the powers of evil shall never prevail, but that

the **Gates of Hades** shall not prevail against His church. We must not, therefore, identify the gates of hades with the powers of evil. Hades is simply the unseen world, the state into which saved and unsaved pass when their lives on earth are ended. For those who are Christ's it means the paradise of His own presence. For those who die in their sins it means torment (Luke 16. 23).

There is no tribe, nation, fraternity or corporation on earth that can pass the gates that lead to the unseen world. They prevail against all. No **nation** exists on the other side of them : there is no Britain, France, China, or Australia, in the unseen world. No **fraternity** prolongs its existence beyond those gates. The great fellowship of Freemasonry (that deadly rival of Christianity in that it aims at purveying the same kind of goods : mutual help, charity, etc.), comes to a dead stop at the gates. It belongs entirely to this world.

But there is one great assembly that is **not** stopped at the gates. The Church—not the church of Rome, nor any church of man's building—the Church that Christ builds, passes those gates as if they did not exist. They make no difference to it ; they do not for a moment prevail against it.

You have watched the sand trickle through an hour glass. Grain by grain it passes till the bulk of it has gone through. At last not a grain remains. Even so it is with the Church. Saint by saint, millions have passed the gates. Comparatively few remain.

I do not mean to affirm that those who remain must necessarily pass the gates. The summoning shout of the Saviour may translate us without dying to His presence. It makes no difference. The gates of hades never have prevailed, never can prevail, against the Church that Christ builds. For what He builds is **of Himself**. No alien material ever finds a place in His building. His Church is His bride, His "pearl of great price," the sharer of His profoundest joys for ever.

Shut your eyes for a moment. Think forward into the future of that "glorious Church" (Eph. 5. 27). Think of those you have known on earth in suffering, reproach and poverty being **there** !

You see them from Rome and from Russia ; from lands
Where Satan unhindered has reigned ;
They come from the dungeon, the knout and the sword,
Each one has a victor's crown gained ;
The days of their sorrow and anguish are past,
They stand with the Lamb and His chosen at last.

They come from the Islands of frond and of palm
Where Christ was proclaimed and adored,
Where thousands whose fathers were African slaves
Owned Jesus as Saviour and Lord ;
With radiant faces, alight with His love,
They share in the joys of the ransomed above.

O glorious day, when the Saviour shall see
The millions who loved Him below
United in glory, to be for His praise,
His deepest affections to know :
The joy and rejoicing of Jesus for ever ;
No power from His love shall His ransomed e'er sever.

The gates of hades will never prevent that
glorious consummation, when "the great
Church victorious shall be the Church at
rest." And the great consummation will be
reached at the Meeting in the Air.



Chapter 23.

“ BEFORE HIS TRANSLATION.”

The Old Testament abounds with wonderful pictures which, with the light that the New Testament affords, may be interpreted without much difficulty. Enoch, who was taken to heaven without dying, has been regarded, rightly we believe, as a picture of the many who also will be taken there without dying. His translation is a foreshadowing of our own.

But the Spirit of God has been pleased to call our attention to what marked Enoch “before his translation.” It was simply this, that he “pleased God.” Let us note that this was a testimony, not an epitaph!

If epitaphs on tombstones are to be trusted, they must have been wonderful people who lie buried beneath! In the case of the majority of them, we have no means of comparing the inscriptions with the opinions of their contemporaries while they were still alive. Which perhaps is as well, or we might have to modify our admiration of these departed heroes.

Possibly, in spite of the fact that Enoch did not die, a stone of some sort was erected to commemorate his translation. Such a stone would almost certainly bear an inscription that we may call an "epitaph." But in Hebrews 11. 5 we do not read that "**after his translation he had this epitaph**, that he pleased God." The passage tells us that "**before his translation he had this testimony**, that he pleased God." Which is a vastly different thing !

It is, after all, of very little importance what loving friends may cause to be inscribed upon the grave-stones of their departed relatives. The important thing is that the whole of our lives, as Christians, should be framed on the desire to be pleasing to God. Is it not a thing to be coveted, that God should be able to look down upon us and say : " There is a life that pleases Me " ?

If our great object is to please God, let us beware of mixed motives. Love of applause ; the fear of man ; the thought of what others will think, say, or do ; self-interest and the desire for self-advertisement,—all these are motives that, if allowed, will hinder our pleasing God.

Chapter 24.

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST.

We now come to the question of whether there can be on our part anything in the way of preparation for the coming of the Lord, or whether God is Himself working in the world in view of it.

We are bidden to be "ready", and a terrible thing is said of one who takes the place of a servant, yet "prepared not himself" (Luke 12. 40, 47). For one can be, as Judas was, a "servant" without being a true child of God. And according to the place that a man assumes shall his judgment be.

But let us enquire if God is preparing people in any way for Christ's coming again.

In a previous chapter we suggested that the lines on which John the Baptist was to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1. 17) may indicate the lines on which we may expect God to work by His Spirit and His servants in view of this great future event.

Three distinct features were predicted of John's mission in Luke 1. 16, 17 :—

1. He should turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.
2. He should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.
3. He should turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

These three things answer, it would seem, to the following :—

1. Sinners should be converted. For it was sadly possible to be one of the children of Israel without being a child of God in the true sense of the word.
2. Godly parents should be made concerned about the salvation of their sons and daughters.
3. Disobedient children of God, backsliders, should be restored to the ways of true wisdom.

It is more than possible that our eyes will be gladdened with the sight of these three things taking place on a large scale, as the result of the work of God, “ to make ready a people prepared for the Lord ” at His coming.

But there was a fourth thing that took place by way of preparation, and it is to this that we call special attention. **There was a remarkable and unprecedented activity**

of the Holy Spirit, coming upon, filling and empowering chosen vessels that had to do with the coming of Christ into the world.

John the Baptist, His herald and forerunner was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1. 15).

Upon Mary, the mother of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came (Luke 1. 35), so that what was conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1. 20).

Elisabeth, when visited by Mary, was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke of the yet unborn Saviour as her Lord (Luke 1. 41, 42).

Zacharias, the father of the forerunner, was filled with the Holy Spirit and broke out into a lofty strain of prophecy, bearing testimony to Christ as "the Dayspring from on high," come "to give light to them that sit in darkness" (Luke 1. 67, 78, 79).

Upon Simeon the Holy Spirit came, revealing to him that he should not see death till he had seen Christ. By the Spirit he went to the temple just when the infant Jesus was brought there, and he spoke of Him as God's salvation, "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2. 25-32).

I verily believe that in view of the coming again of our Lord, and by way of preparation

for that event, we may expect to see similar evidences of special activity on the part of the Holy Spirit. It is He who forms bridal affections in the heart of the waiting Bride and leads her to say "Come" in response to her Bridegroom's presentation of Himself as "the Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22. 16, 17). We may expect to see Him filling and energizing servants of Christ, enshrining Him in their hearts and reproducing Him in their lives.

The difficulty, in referring to this matter, is that one is confronted by an attitude of theological superiority that tends to brand as a fanatic one who speaks of the necessity and blessing of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is right and good that we should always carefully distinguish between this and being **sealed** with the Holy Spirit, on the ground of our redemption, which marks us as the property of Christ. It is important, too, that we should not talk loosely about a baptism of the Spirit, but adhere to the New Testament teaching on this subject, regarding it as an historical event (never even in early times an **individual** experience) rather than as something to be prayed for to-day. But the filling with the Spirit is a thing that we are exhorted

to go in for (Ephesians 5. 18). What is it? What does it really imply?

Turn to the Acts of the Apostles and see what it implied in the first years of Christianity.

1. **PETER** was "filled with the Holy Ghost" (chap. 4. 8) and immediately bore courageous testimony to the fact that Christ, raised from the dead, is the sole source of salvation. It is always **to Him** that one filled with the Holy Spirit bears witness.

2. **THE SEVEN** (chap. 6. 3) were men "full of the Holy Ghost." This was necessary even for service in connection with material things. The task to which these seven servants of Christ were called was not an easy one. Jealousy and prejudice were at work, and they would need abundant wisdom and tact. Men filled with the Spirit are the men for a task like this.

3. **STEPHEN**, one of the seven, is specially mentioned as being "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (chap. 6. 5). The result was that his testimony was with power. In chapter 7. 55 he is again said to be "full of the Holy Ghost," and he looked up to heaven and saw Jesus. That is where a man filled with the Spirit looks, and that is what he sees.

4. **BARNABAS** was "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (chap. 11. 24). The result was that he rejoiced at what he saw of the work of God, though he had had no part in it. A man full of the Holy Spirit is just as delighted to hear of people being converted to God through the preaching of others as through his own. Barnabas sought no place of honour amongst the converts at Antioch but exhorted them to cleave to **the Lord**. This is what a man full of the Holy Spirit does. And God has put tremendous honour upon this dear servant of His in that there has never been a Barnabasite.

5. **PAUL** was converted, he was told, in order that he might "be filled with the Holy Ghost" (chap. 9. 17). Anything less than this comes short of God's desire for us. His plan for our lives is that we should be controlled, energized, and instructed by His Spirit. In chapter 13. 9 Paul is again said to be "filled with the Holy Ghost" as he uses language of the utmost sternness towards the false prophet, Bar-jesus. He calls him "a child of the devil" and an "enemy of all righteousness." People who live in the atmosphere of modern indifference to evil, misnamed "charity," and who seem to have been inoculated with a mild form of Christianity that makes them immune from an

attack of the genuine thing, would cry shame upon the use of such language. But a man filled with the Holy Ghost calls things by their right names and is uncompromising in his attitude towards evil.

6. THE DISCIPLES AT PISIDIAN ANTIOCH (chap. 13. 52) were "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." We know the names of none of them ; they were men and women of the rank and file. But they were filled with the Holy Spirit as truly as Paul and Peter, Stephen and Barnabas were. There is no disciple who may not be filled with the Holy Spirit. And in view of the Coming of the Lord we may expect to hear of an increasing number of places of which it may be said that the disciples who live there are full of the Spirit of God.

When the Holy Spirit came on the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19. 6), the evidence of what had taken place was that "they spake with tongues." We are not to look for anything of this sort to-day in those that are filled with the Spirit. Ten years later Paul, writing during his confinement at Rome, speaks of those who are filled with the Spirit as "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things." This is the evidence

we must look for. They who are filled with the Spirit (1) are joyful people ; (2) they sing **to the Lord** ; and (3) instead of grumbling and worrying they are **always** and **for all things** grateful to God.

Let me add that we are not filled **from the outside**. The Holy Spirit already dwells in us if we belong to Christ (2 Timothy 1. 14). One may dwell in a house, yet only occupy two rooms. Others occupy other rooms, but a time may come when they leave. Then one may occupy the whole house. One does not come in from outside ; one was there already, but now one **fills** the house. In like manner the Holy Spirit may be in possession of part of the establishment of our being. He may occupy two rooms as it were. But He wants to possess and control the whole, to fill us on behalf of Christ, that we may be Christ-centred, Christ-occupied men and women.

In view of our Lord's anticipated speedy return, shall we, humbly but importunately seek this from God ? It will be the best possible preparation for the Coming of Christ.

Father, Thy child am I, saved and made nigh ;
Sealed with Thy Spirit, too, sent from on high :
But more than this I ask, praying of Thee
That with Thy Spirit now **filled** I may be.

Filled that, like Stephen, my eyes may behold
Visions of holy things, glories untold,
Jesus, my Saviour, there throned above all,
Thousands before His feet worshipping fall.

Filled as was Barnabas, that I may be
Glad when my eyes behold fruit unto Thee ;
Praising for victories won by Thy Word,
Seeking that all may cleave fast to the Lord.

Filled, too, like Peter, that I may proclaim
To sinners far and near Christ's precious Name;
Jesus the crucified, raised from the dead,
Once set at nought by men, o'er all now Head.

Filled that, like Paul, amid those who oppose
I may my witness bear, as one who knows
Jesus, the humbled One, glorified now,
Worthy that every knee to Him should bow.

Filled like the saints of old, filled too with joy,
That in Thy praise my lips I may employ ;
Filled with Thy Spirit thus, may there through
me

Rivers of water flow, coming from Thee.



Chapter 25.

FEET, EYES, HANDS, HEART.

The four Gospels all bear witness to the fact of the coming again of the Lord, but from different standpoints and with different objects in view. All the objects are of a very practical nature. The truth of the Lord's return is brought before us not merely that we might know and understand, but that we might be powerfully moved to action.

1. Matthew presents the Coming of the Lord in a way to affect our FEET.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, an awakening cry is heard : " Behold the Bridegroom ; **go ye out to meet Him** " (Matt. 25. 6). Feet are to be set in movement by the announcement of the Bridegroom's approach.

We are called to " go out " to meet our coming Lord. Out from what ? From every known sin in our lives, from worldly companionships and compromising associations, from apathy and sloth, from undue absorption with the things of this life, from waste of our precious time, from neglect of God-given

opportunities, and from all that would make us feel "ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2. 28).

2. Mark presents the Coming of the Lord in a way to affect our EYES.

Many Christians seem to be sleepy, if not actually asleep, listen to the way they talk! Did you ever hear anyone talk in his sleep? What stupid things he says! And by the way, some Christians talk we judge that they are very fast asleep. Imagine two young men coming out from an exceedingly happy and precious meeting on Sunday morning and beginning to talk about—football! How fast asleep they must have been!

The Lord's words to such, and indeed to all of us, are found in Mark 13. 37: "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Our eyes are to be affected; we are to seek deliverance from spiritual sleepiness.

After a terrible railway collision, a man was found sleeping in the corner of a coach that had been wrecked. He was quite uninjured, but fast asleep. A newspaper comment on the case was: "It is extraordinary what some people will sleep through!"

We may say the same. Surrounded by the wonderful "signs" that have been dealt with

in a previous chapter, with many things pointing to the imminent coming of the Lord, how many Christians wrap themselves round with the things that pertain to this present life and sleep their years away !

It is possible that the Lord, when He comes, may find them still sleeping (Mark 13. 36) though He desires to find us all watching.

3. Luke presents the Coming of the Lord in a way to affect our HANDS.

In the Parable of the Pounds (chap. 19. 12-27) the Lord likens Himself to a nobleman going away to receive a kingdom, leaving his servants to trade in his interests, bidding them : " Occupy till I come." Their hands were to be diligent in His service during the time of His absence.

When we think how soon our opportunities for serving the Lord here on earth will be gone we shall surely be on our guard lest our hands slacken. Diligence should mark us, so that even the people of the world shall be impressed with the evident fact that we are expecting someone to come, or something to happen.

I remember reading of a wealthy gentleman who had two large houses, one in London and the other in the country. Toward the end of

the London season he would send a message to the caretaker at his country house, saying that he and the family would be returning on such and such a day. The caretaker and other servants would immediately set to work to get everything ready, so that even the dogs about the place got to know that the master was returning by seeing the activities of the servants. Even thus may we, by our diligence in our Master's business, show that we, at least, believe His promise to come again. Who can tell what impression others may derive from witnessing our demeanour!

4. John presents the Coming of the Lord in a way to affect our HEARTS.

The eleven true disciples were sorely troubled because the Saviour was going away to heaven. How they would miss Him! He had enshrined Himself in their hearts; He had taken their warmest and tenderest affections and clustered them around Himself. And now He was going to leave them.

But He says: "Let not your heart be troubled" (chap. 14. 1). Then He utters the precious promise that we have already quoted more than once: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." The promise was intended to be for the comfort of their troubled and sorrowing hearts.

For the one who truly loves Christ, and mourns His absence, what comfort can there be like the anticipation of seeing Him again? It must have been something like this that was in Paul's mind when, after telling the believers at Thessalonica about the coming of the Lord, he said: "Comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4. 18). Do we ever have to write a letter of condolence, or offer sympathy to those in bereavement? Then let us not forget the Apostle's words. Let some reminder of the fact that Christ is coming again be interwoven with our message. For therein lies a wonderful balm for stricken and sorrowing hearts.

Thus the "blessed hope" is to affect us in many practical ways. God grant that it may do so!

The Lord is coming! And with eager **FEET**
We must "go out" the Lord Himself to meet,
Out from the world, from sloth and evil ways,
Walking while here for His eternal praise.

The Lord is coming! And with eager **EYES**
We watch to see the Morning Star arise;
Beyond the world's dark night of woe and sin
We look for Him who brings the glory in.

The Lord is coming! And with eager **HANDS**
Instant we'd be in doing His commands;
Lord, give us grace to "occupy" for Thee
Till we Thy face in yonder glory see.

The Lord is coming! Let our **HEARTS** rejoice;
We soon shall hear the accents of His voice ;
In His eternal home He'll bid us rest,
Like Him and with Him, all supremely blest.



Chapter 26.**“ALL WAITING FOR HIM.”**

The words that form the title of this chapter are taken from Luke 8. 40. What an agreeable picture they present !

The Saviour had been in the country of the Gadarenes and the inhabitants had plainly shown that they did not want Him. “The whole multitude . . . besought Him to depart.” So He took ship and recrossed the sea, where He found the whole population awaiting Him. How this must have delighted His heart !

This world, like the country of the Gadarenes, has rejected Christ. How delightful to Him it will be, then, when He comes again, though the world is still hostile, if His people are “all waiting for Him.”

This does not mean merely that we shall rejoice to welcome Him at His coming, but that there will be care on our part to be well-pleasing to Him.

The writer was in Jamaica during a visit to the island by the Prince of Wales. Days before his arrival the Mayor of Kingston, the capital, appealed to the people to have a

“clean-up and brighten-up campaign” in view of his coming. There was a great response. People got busy with scrubbing brushes. Walls were whitewashed; fences and gates were painted; garden paths were weeded. The city began to take on a spick and span appearance.

Why should we not have a “clean-up and brighten-up” campaign in view of Christ’s coming again, and show in this way that we are indeed “all waiting for Him”? Is there not that in our lives which needs cleaning-up? Is it not time to cease our grumbling and discontent and brighten up?

In Italy the gardens of the Villa Areconati are quite a sight. People come from far and near to see them. A visitor, after going there, wrote :—

“I arrived at the Villa Areconati on the banks of Lake Como, one of the most beautiful spots in that lovely region. A gardener opened the gate and conducted me through the exquisite garden.

‘How long have you been here?’ I asked.

‘Twenty-five years.’

‘And how often has the owner been to see the estate?’

‘ Four times.’

‘ When did he come last ? ’

‘ Twelve years ago.’

‘ He writes to you, I suppose ? ’

‘ Never.’

‘ From whom then do you get your orders ? ’

‘ From the steward in Milan.’

‘ Does he come here often ? ’

‘ Never.’

‘ Who comes, then, to look after things ? ’

‘ I am left pretty much alone ; very seldom do I see any stranger.’

‘ Yet you keep the garden so spick and span that one would think you were expecting the owner to-morrow.’

‘ **To-day, Sir, to-day,**’ was the old man’s reply.”

And so it should surely be with us. If we are “ waiting for Him ” we shall seek to order our lives as if we were expecting Him to come this very day.

In order that we may ever have the coming of our Lord in mind it is brought before us in connection with many different things in the New Testament.

1. It has its place in connection with the Gospel message.

In the beautiful Parable of the Good Samaritan, which sets forth Christ as the One who came from heaven to be the great, good and much-needed Neighbour to perishing men, He is represented as leaving the one whom He befriends at an inn. An eastern caravanserai is a filthy, uncomfortable place, a fit description of what the world becomes to those who have been befriended by the Saviour. But the man was only to remain there for a short time, a time to be covered by the "twopence," or perhaps a little more. The kind Benefactor departed saying: "When I come again" (Luke 10. 35).

The Gospel message does not offer to make the world a more comfortable place for those who believe it. It is but an "inn", a temporary sojourning place, and material comforts are not guaranteed to us. Some of God's most shining saints have had to go short of food and raiment (2 Cor. 11. 27; Phil. 4. 12.) But it is only for a little while. He who has saved us has gone away to heaven promising to come again. It is the distinctive hope set before the believer. We are converted to God "to wait for His Son from heaven" (1. Thess. 1. 10).

2. It is mentioned as a stimulus to our diligence in service.

We have already referred to the passage : " Occupy till I come " (Luke 19. 13). We are told sometimes that " this doctrine of Christ's coming again takes the heart out of all endeavour." This could only be true in the case of those who have a false objective before them, and who imagine that God's programme for the present time is to convert the world, or make it better. The clear teaching of the New Testament is that when the Lord comes " all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him " (Rev. 1. 7). This does not look like the world being converted ! Again we read : " As the days of Noe (Noah) were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be " (Matt. 24. 37-39). The world will be still the same sin-filled, careless, godless world when Jesus comes again.

Meanwhile, it is for us, as His servants, to seek to rescue as many as possible **from** the world, to link them with heaven. And when the Lord comes it will be to reward His

faithful servants (Matt. 16. 27 ; Rev. 22. 12). What an incentive is this to fidelity and diligence in His service !

3. It is set before us as helping to keep us calm amid the wrongs that abound.

The Lord knows all, and He will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness." The *time for putting things in their true light* has not come yet. We are to suffer wrong, even as He did. We are not to sit in the judgment seat as if the issues of life belonged to us. Nor are we to expect praise from men for doing right. Our praise will come from God, and we shall have it when the Lord comes.

This is how Paul puts it : " Therefore judge nothing before the time **until the Lord come**, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts ; and **then** shall every man have praise of God " (1 Corinth. 4. 5).

We can sing, therefore, and will continue to do so :—

" We can suffer now ; He will know us then."

4. It is introduced in connection with our remembrance of the Lord in His Supper.

How delightfully simple, and how free from anything like rigid form, the account of the Supper and its institution is! Its very name, "the Lord's Supper," or "the breaking of bread" suggests something intimate. It is not viewed in Scripture as a "means of grace" but as an act whereby those redeemed by the Saviour's precious blood express their gratitude and love to Him. And in eating of the one loaf and drinking of the cup, we "shew the Lord's death **till He come**" (1 Corinth. 11. 26).

We partake of His Supper in loving remembrance of Himself, realising His presence in our midst even when our number does not exceed two or three (Matt. 18. 20), and we do it in view of His coming again. This is why, when we have partaken of the elements, a hymn reminding us of the "blessed hope" is often felt to be so suitable. We finish our meeting, and bid one another farewell, as it were, with the Maran-atha watchword:—
"the Lord cometh."

"See the feast of love is spread,
Drink the wine and break the bread;
Sweet memorials till the Lord
Calls us round His heavenly board;
Some from earth, from glory some,
Severed only **till He come.**"

Chapter 27.

“ SURELY.”

The reader will remember that in our second chapter we insisted on the evident fact that our Lord's coming into the world long centuries ago was in fulfilment of many prophecies and that it was an actual, literal, historical, personal coming.

Because of false and misleading ideas that find currency in some quarters it is necessary to insist that the future coming of Christ will also be a literal and personal one. The pronoun in His last recorded message is emphatic: “ Surely I come quickly.”

1. It does not mean death.

When death comes to the Christian it does not “ descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God.” But the **Lord Himself** when He comes will do this.

2. It does not mean the end of the world.

The world will go on for a long time after the coming of Christ. Its golden age will

dawn. After He has purged it of "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" He will establish His throne in Zion and reign with His saints for ten centuries. "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His Name one" (Zechariah 14. 9). "And He shall judge among the nations . . . and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2. 4).

3. It does not mean the conversion of the world.

We are distinctly told that wicked men will "wax worse and worse" and that "in the last days" men will be desperately bad, selfish, dissolute, blasphemous, treacherous, frivolous, scornful and hypocritical (2 Timothy 3. 1-13). Then will the Gospel have failed? By no means. For the object of the Gospel is that a people for God's name may be gathered out from among the nations (Acts 15. 14). People sing "England for Christ," "India for Christ" and so forth. The truth, however, is that God, by His gospel, is visiting the nations, not to convert England, India, or any other, but to take out of England, out of India, and out of every other country, those who

should belong to Him, and be the companions of Christ in His house of many mansions.

4. It does not mean the gradual and successful permeation of the world by Christian principles.

To read this into the Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13. 33) is to miss its meaning altogether. Apart from the fact that leaven is invariably used in Scripture as an emblem of something evil, we must interpret the parable in the light of its setting. It goes with the parables of the Tares and the Mustard Seed. The interpretation of the Tares is given us, and that of the Mustard Seed is evident. The monstrous growth that became a "tree," so that it gave shelter to the birds of the air is surely a picture of what the Kingdom of heaven has become in the hands of men, who have developed it into a great worldly establishment, giving shelter to all manner of evil principles and powers.

5. It is not, as some strangely teach, the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D.

The Book of Revelation was written subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem. Yet in it the coming of the Lord is spoken of as something still future, still to be expected. "That which ye have already hold fast till I come"

says our blessed Lord (Rev. 2. 25). How could He have said this if He had already come ?

6. It is not a spiritual coming.

That the Lord does come to His people spiritually is beyond doubt. We have dwelt upon this precious truth. But when He says "Surely I come quickly," He means something quite different from this. He said, in the days when He was here, that He would send to His disciples "another Comforter," the Holy Spirit. He referred to His coming as a definite event : "When the Comforter is come" (John 15. 26). On the day of Pentecost the promise was fulfilled ; the Holy Spirit personally descended, with visible and audible evidence of His presence. Even so will it be with the coming again of the Saviour.

There are not many things in this life of which we can use the word "Surely." We cannot say : "Surely I shall reach the end of this day" or "Surely I shall wake to-morrow morning."

But, thank God, there are two or three things as to which we may, with all certainty, say "Surely."

We may say "surely the Lord will be with us" (Judges 6.16). We may say "**surely** God's goodness and mercy will follow me all

the days of my life, without missing a single day " (Psalm 23. 6). And we may say "surely the Lord is coming quickly." For He Himself has said it (Rev. 22. 20), and He emphasizes the fact that it is He Himself who is coming. Jesus Himself is coming, surely coming, coming quickly.

We have seen many wonderful things. We have seen our many sins swept away by mercy flowing at flood-tide. We have seen blessing after blessing heaped on our undeserving heads. But we have never yet seen His Face. We are going to see it! That face once so marred; those cheeks down which rolled tears of love and sympathy; those lips that uttered words of mercy and compassion. "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face" (Rev. 22. 4). Could any promise be sweeter?

Our powers of comprehension are painfully dull. We see, as it were, through a glass darkly ("baffling reflections in a mirror") "but then face to face" (1 Corinth. 13. 12).

Does not your heart, dear Christian friend, throb with joy when you think of this? It is not merely that at the Saviour's coming you will be taken from a scene of suffering, trouble, disappointment and tears, but that you will "see Him as He is," and be with

Him and like Him for ever, one of His chosen and cherished companions. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is an important principle that when we are told in Scripture of what we shall be in the future it is that we may seek to be, in measure, that same thing **now**. When we are told that we shall be like Christ, it is that we may go in for being Christlike **now**. To cherish a glorious hope without letting it have a present effect upon our lives is to misuse the precious promise that sets the hope before us.



CONCLUSION.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter," says the royal preacher at the close of his mysterious book, Ecclesiastes. And what is the conclusion of the matter of which we have been treating?

The conclusion surely is that if Christ is coming again, and if the day is drawing near, we should see to it that we are *ready*. When He comes, the one question will, as we have seen, be: "To whom do these people belong?" It will not primarily be a question of character, service or intelligence. These things have their important place, but the "ready" ones will be "they that are Christ's at His Coming" (1 Corinth. 15. 23).

Permit a personal question. Is Christ your Owner? Do those words of His, "ye belong to Christ" (Mark 9. 41) include you? The great opportunity is afforded to-day to "who-soever will." You may definitely leave the world's side and enlist under the banner of Christ by coming to Him as a needy suppliant. Confess your sinfulness, your lost condition, the hardness of your heart. Remember that "Christ died for the ungodly." He had such as you in view when He gave Himself, a sacrifice for sin, upon the Cross. In virtue of

that great atoning, substitutionary sacrifice salvation is made available for all. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

One Apostle asks the question: "What shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4. 17). Another Apostle gives the answer: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that **obey not the Gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, **when He shall come**" (2 Thess. 1. 7-10).

"Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12. 40).

THE END.

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