

. . The . .

# Coming of the Lord.

---



---

Addresses by J. S. GILES.

---



LONDON :  
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
THE COMING OF THE LORD—	
THE GREATNESS OF IT .. .. .	1
Genesis iii. 14, 15 ; Revelation xxii. 16, 17.	
WHAT IT WILL BE TO CHRIST .. .. .	18
Deuteronomy xxiv. 1-5.	
THE CHURCH DISPLAYED TO GOD'S PRAISE AND GLORY .. .. .	37
Revelation xix. 1-16 ; xx. 4-5 ; xxi. 10, 11 and 24.	
THE PLACE IT SHOULD HAVE IN OUR SOULS AND ITS EFFECTS .. .. .	60
1 THESSALONIANS i. 9, 10 ; ii. 19, 20 ; iii. 11-13 ; iv. 13-18 ; v. 22-24.	
2 Thessalonians iii. 1-5.	

# THE COMING OF THE LORD.

---

## THE GREATNESS OF IT.

(GEN. III. 14, 15 ; REV. XXII. 16, 17.)

I HAVE it on my mind, dear brethren, to call your attention to the subject of the Lord's coming. The scriptures plainly shew that the hope of the return of the Lord Jesus produced a very practical result in the early days, and if we have not the coming of the Lord before us, we shall be lacking in practical life, and not answering to the mind of the Lord concerning us.

The truth has to be placed in order in our souls by the Holy Spirit, and it is as each part is given its proper place by the Spirit of God that our lives are formed by it, and we are here, in measure, according to the will of God. For it is clear we can only live here to God's pleasure as the truth has thus been placed in order in our souls by the Spirit. I think it is a great encouragement, however, that whatever *is* placed in our souls abides for eternity. It may pass

from our minds, for as we grow old in body the memory often gets weak so that we are not able to retain things ; *but nothing passes from the soul when placed there by the Spirit of God.* Then when the body is laid aside, that which is formed by the Spirit alone abides, and when we have our spiritual bodies we shall ever be maintained in vigour and freshness throughout the ages of ages.

Now in connection with the coming of the Lord, I would like you first of all to think of it as one complete whole. What I mean is this—that in the New Testament we read of the *second* coming of our Lord, but in the Old Testament the different comings are not distinguished. Morally there is only one coming, but historically there are different parts of that coming. If this is borne in mind in reading the Old Testament, it is not only helpful, but certain difficulties will entirely disappear. He has actually been here on earth once : He died and rose again, and through grace we know Him as the Living One in the presence of His Father, and the One who will soon shine forth in all His glory.

I think if you examine the passages generally in the Old Testament which speak of the coming of Christ, that you will see they include what has already been accomplished

and also what He will yet bring to pass. The two comings are looked at as *one*, and morally they *are* one, though in point of time separated by a long period. It is important to distinguish them, because the Spirit of God does; but it is also equally important to be able to view His coming as one complete whole. We know that in the death of Christ the foundation was laid on which all was to be built up, and that when He comes in the future it is to make good actually the whole will of God.

The importance of this will be more clearly seen if we look at two or three passages together. Take the one that we read first in Genesis iii. Do you think that has been fulfilled? Would you say that the Lord *has* bruised the serpent's head? Of course, at the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished everything morally, and He is victorious over all; but this passage looks at the complete fulfilment when the Person of Christ will have actually bruised (that is, "crushed" or "overwhelmed," N. T.) the serpent's head.

Then in Zechariah ix. we read of the Lord riding into Jerusalem upon the foal of an ass, having salvation; and again in chapter xii. we read of His feet resting on the mount of Olives. There is no doubt that these passages have not been completely

fulfilled, but has there not been a partial fulfilment? The Lord literally rode into Jerusalem, and His feet actually did rest on the mount of Olives, but salvation was not then brought in for Israel, and the full deliverance of the people has not yet taken place. The Lord was presented to them thus, but on account of their unbelief and rejection of Him the complete fulfilment has not been accomplished. Moreover, Psalm xcvi. 7, which is quoted in Hebrews i. 6, clearly was true at His birth, but the actual fulfilment is yet future. I might mention other passages, but if you go through the Old Testament you will find many that present the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in its entirety, which shews that the full accomplishment of God's purpose was in the mind of the Spirit.

Now I would like to say a little on what I may call *the greatness of the subject*, because when you speak of the coming of the Lord many often think only of *our* part in it, and I am sure we suffer in our souls if we look at it only in that way. First we have to think of what His coming will bring in for God, because wonderful results will be brought to pass for God by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we have to consider what it will bring

in for Christ personally, and then again what it will effect for the church, and for each of the redeemed families ; and further, the result for the whole world and the whole universe of God. This is quite sufficient to shew that it is an immense subject, for through the Lord's coming full blessing will be completely brought in to the delight and glory of God ; and it is of great moment for us to view it thus.

It has been said that the coming of the Lord is not found in the epistles to the Ephesians and Galatians, but I would suggest that is a mistake. You may not have it mentioned by name or unfolded, but to say it is not there is wrong ; for wherever the actual bringing in of what is of God is unfolded the coming of the Lord must be included, for it is by His coming that all will actually be established. In Ephesians we read of "the *hope* of his calling." Now we enter in hope by the power of the Spirit into the calling, but when He comes it will no longer be in *hope*, but in *actuality* and perfect enjoyment. So the truth of the Lord's coming must be in view throughout the scriptures, because everything for God's pleasure and His people's blessing are only fully brought to pass by His coming.

We will now turn for a few minutes to

the passages we have read. The one in the book of Genesis is, I believe, the first in the holy scriptures that definitely speaks of the coming of the Lord, and it is always interesting to consider specially the *words* when any subject is first spoken of in scripture. In chapter i. 16 we have an allusion to the coming of the Lord, but in chapter iii. it is distinctly mentioned. In chapter i. Christ was evidently in the mind of the Spirit when He spoke of the "light to rule the day," but in chapter iii. 15 His coming is announced. Man had fallen under the power of sin and Satan, and God announces the coming of the Deliverer who would crush the serpent's head. There was no promise given to fallen man. All promise must be connected with the Man of God's purpose. Still God does, in His great goodness, allow fallen man to hear the judgment He pronounces on the serpent. Man was privileged to listen to these remarkable words, "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Let us look at these words, because if you think of them they shew the grace and goodness of God, for directly sin came in God announced the final issue—the serpent's head should be bruised, crushed or overwhelmed by the woman's seed. If you think of the human body, the contrast

between the head and heel is easily seen, and it is clear the head is the important part. It is the seat of wisdom and direction, and everything depends on the head. The heel is near to the earth, and that is which you would use if you were going to crush a serpent's head.

The words "head" and "heel" are clearly used here figuratively. The skill of the head of an army is seen in his movements, and if the head was overwhelmed by his opponent's wisdom the complete victory would soon be manifested. Satan is developing a wonderful system where Christ has been rejected, and all his wisdom and power will be seen in it; but Christ is forming the church, and when He shines forth in His saints, Satan's system will disappear for ever, and universal healing and fruitfulness will fill this scene. Still in bruising the serpent's head the heel would be bruised. So Christ took a body in which He could suffer, and His people are now exposed to the enemy's opposition. It may appear now as though Satan is gaining an advantage, but he is only touching the heel, and soon it will be true that his head has been overwhelmed. Then the church will display Christ, and His wisdom and complete victory will be seen in it.

We will now briefly trace the way God brings things to pass. In John i. the person of Christ is presented as the "Light," and in the epistle we read "God is light." Now I understand that to mean that God is the embodiment of every moral perfection. You could only find all moral perfection in God Himself. Therefore when man departed from God he was in darkness, and morally he fell lower and lower. Then God's beloved Son entered the world that was in darkness, and He was "the true Light," for all the moral perfection that was in God was there in Him before the eyes of men. "The true Light" was shining for the good of man; but, alas! man did not perceive it.

The darkness did not disappear. It remained, though the greatest moral light that could shine was there. The darkness comprehended it not, and eventually God was glorified by Christ going into death. In that death the characteristics of God's nature were seen in perfect accord triumphing over sin. The glory to fill God's world was seen there in the world where sin and death had prevailed.

The next thing to notice is—the Lord ascends on high, and the church is formed on the earth where He died. Now the Spirit of

God says, "The darkness is passing and the true light already shines." (1 John ii. 8, N. T.) Notice the difference between the gospel of John and the epistle. In the gospel Christ the true Light shone in the darkness, but in the epistle "The darkness *is* passing and the true light already shines." The heavenly saints are to be the medium through which the light will shine forth in God's world. The true light that abides for God's pleasure already shines, and therefore the darkness is disappearing. The light has been obscured, alas! through our unfaithfulness, but Christ will translate the church and thus fulfil the word: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Then Christ will place the church displayed in *His* glory as the light of the universe of God.

Now I desire to draw your attention to two expressions in Revelation xxi. The church is there looked at as the city—the piece of divine handiwork, "having the glory of God." The glory of God will be seen there. All that God is as expressed in His attributes which were seen to be harmonious in the death of Christ, and with which Christ is now crowned, will in that day shine in the church. "Having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as

crystal." God will then shine in all His radiancy in the church, so that the saved nations will walk in the light of it.

Christ, the true light, having come, and having glorified God in His death, the saints become the true light, and then at the close of the book of Revelation the church sheds forth and perfectly maintains the light which had shone in Christ personally. The light is as clear as crystal, for it is undimmed. Now it is obscured, but then it will be "most precious," for what shone in Christ will ever shine through the church undimmed and in the clearness that it shone in Him, so that the nations will walk in the light of it.

But meanwhile Satan is gradually developing his plans—leading man on to the moment when men will think they have reached the acme of perfection, and Satan's wisdom will have been fully manifested. Then Christ with His church will shine forth; Satan will be entirely overwhelmed and not a trace of his system left, and the church will give a clear, undimmed light, God shining forth in it in unobscured radiancy.

I desire now to pass on to the other passage we read (Rev. xxii. 10) to look at the practical effect upon us if the truth of the Lord's coming has its proper place in our

souls. In verse 16 the Lord gives us His last and closing word. It is not exactly a part of the book, it is like a postscript which the Lord has added for us. The Lord states three things. First, He says, "I Jesus have sent mine angel." I think that is very beautiful; He presents Himself using His personal name—the name He took in humiliation, the name by which He was known when a Man on earth—Jehovah the Saviour. The Lord in these last words would impress us with the fact that in the grace of His person He is unchanged and unchangeable. He is just the same morally as when here on earth; He has the same tender heart, the same grace and goodness. He is just as accessible *now* as when He was here. The ruin and confusion described in the first three chapters of this book has not altered what He is for His people. He would speak to our hearts of His unchangeable grace and love—"I Jesus."

He then adds, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." These words speak of Christ in connection with two distinct orders of blessing—earthly and heavenly. He is the "root"—the One by whom and from whom the blessing comes—and "offspring" because He came of the seed of David after the flesh.

God in mercy chose David and promised him that there should not fail a man to sit on his throne, and that his throne should be established for ever. These promises can only be fulfilled in Christ, and the will of the Father will be done on earth as it is now in heaven.

He is also "the bright and morning star." The morning star is the herald of the coming day; that is, what will characterise that day shines in all its splendour in Him. It is our privilege now to know Him who has entered into the presence of His Father and our Father, to know Him in the nearest circle of intimacy which divine love could desire. Do we believe that God has given us the nearest place to Himself in association with His Son that it was possible to give? Nothing *less than this* is our place, and the "morning star" speaks of that order of blessing which is peculiar to the heavenly saints.

The leading feature of that day will be the perfect revelation of God, and that all will be in the enjoyment of relationship to God as Father. That day will be characterised by all the families being placed in relationship to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, though all will not enjoy the same degree of intimacy.

Then verse 17 gives the response of the saints to Christ's presentation of Himself in verse 16. It is important to remember that the whole truth of God is practical. It is hardly correct to speak of "objective truth," "subjective truth" and "practical truth," because all truth is objective, subjective, and practical. The truth of God can be viewed in these three ways, and God could not reveal what is not practical—that is, what we can work out in practice. There is a great deal presented in Colossians and other epistles that is intensely practical, but the thought is not exactly practice. Many young men have gone to agricultural colleges and have left with wonderful theories, and then have failed in farming; while others who never went to college have been successful in farming. The former were not practical, for they could not develop profitably what they had learned. The whole truth is practical, and therefore it says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." That is, put it to the test in practice, and cling to what links the soul with God.

Now let us look at the effect of having the coming One before us. We might well ask ourselves to-night, Do we believe in Him thus? Do I believe as a positive fact that God's Son is coming to overwhelm the

serpent's head—that in a little while (God only knows how soon) there is not going to be one trace of this world left? If so, is it possible for me (knowing this) to be going on with what comprises this world? There may be what is called “good,” but if it belongs to this world it is not of God, and must disappear. Are we so foolish as to seek what will be entirely removed? May we through grace be found only seeking that which will abide at His coming.

Well, the first clause is, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” What are you expecting? Are you looking for better times? Or for a great revival amongst professing Christians? Or for the conversion of the world? Or the conversion of the heathen? If so, you are making a great mistake. Our hope is *Christ*, and we must look for Him, for the whole blessing will be brought in by Him when He comes. Now the church is being formed, but we await His return when universally everything will be established for God's pleasure and for His glory.

To-day the Spirit is working to draw us into sympathy with the heart of Christ, and to form us that we may be morally fitted to take our place with Him when He comes. If we are under the control of the Spirit our hearts will say to Him—“Come.” Then

we shall not say "Come" to be taken out of a troublous world, or to escape the exercise which He uses to help us, but because we desire Him to have His rightful place, and for all things to be brought into accord with the will of God. The saints love Him, and therefore they think of *His* joy, *His* glory, and what His return will bring in for *Him* to the glory and praise of God, and therefore they cry, "Come."

Now if we say "Come" to Christ, we shall be deeply interested in all His own, and our great desire will be for all to be morally ready for His return, so that each may join in the cry, "Come." Hence the second clause says, "And let him that heareth say, Come."

And then we know the secret cause of His delay. The church is not complete. God is still working in His mercy gathering a people out of this world. Therefore we shall be evangelistic in our desires; our hearts will go after souls in sympathy with the heart of God. The narrow path must be trodden, and all contrary to God refused, yet our hearts lead us to think of those who feel their need around, and therefore the third clause is—"And let him that is athirst come."

Then we still live in the midst of a world

that knows not God, where His character is vilified, where He is misrepresented, and therefore it is our privilege to set forth in life and word the true character of the Saviour God. He wills not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn to Him and live. Therefore His last word to fallen man is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The *first* passage which speaks of the coming of Christ presents His complete victory and the displacement of what is not of God. The saints will then enjoy their full portion which divine love has bestowed upon them, and will shine forth for the praise and glory of God. And the *last* passage speaks of the Lord's coming after the complete failure of the church as the light-bearer has been unfolded, and Christ presents Himself as the unchangeable One. He it is who will actually make everything good to the glory of God, and it is our privilege while waiting for Him to be here in sympathy with His heart, caring for His interests, seeking the welfare of His people, and proclaiming the true character of the Saviour God.

May the Lord in His great goodness stir every one of our hearts up to the reality of His coming, so that we may be truly a

separate people, ready to respond to His voice, and in the meantime doing His will and shewing our love to Him in having a real interest in all that concerns His glory and what He is developing to God's praise and glory.



## WHAT IT WILL BE TO CHRIST.

(DEUT. XXIV. 1-5.)

LAST week we were looking at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I sought to shew that in the Old Testament the coming of the Lord is generally viewed as one great whole. It is, I think, important to look at it in this way, for this will save us from giving undue prominence to one particular part of it, and the greatness and full light of the truth will be missed unless it is viewed thus. To make this clearer for the benefit of those who were not present last week, I will just say that we know there are three distinct parts as to His coming: that is (1) His coming in the past, (2) the catching away of the church, and (3) His manifestation in visible glory when He will actually establish a scene for the satisfaction of the heart of God, and to His praise and glory.

Still we must ever remember that these are three distinct parts of *one* coming, and that they are morally inseparable, though separated as regards time. He has come

and has in His death laid the foundation upon which God's universe can be formed, and at His coming this universe will be actually established according to the eternal purpose of God. These two parts of His coming are morally united, and both are of equal importance in connection with the fulfilment of God's purpose. Psalm xxii. thus links them together. Now the first part—His coming to *die*—is in the past, and the other two parts are yet future.

This evening I desire to distinguish these two parts, and to shew how scripture presents them. Some speak of two comings, but it is of the greatest importance to remember that there is only *one* coming, though it has two distinct parts. The catching away of the church and of the Old Testament saints (1 Thess. iv. 15-18), and then later the translation of the two witnesses (Rev. xi. 12), cannot be called the coming of Christ. These saints are all translated so that they may occupy their particular position in God's universe according to His eternal purpose when the rejected One is manifested. It is also a great mistake and mischievous to say that either part is more important than the other, for in divine things each part is of equal importance, and is also perfect, and yet each is only part,

and has its own proper place in connection with the fulfilment of the purpose of God.

Now there is one thing I will suggest before we look at what I had in my mind, and I would ask you to weigh it in the light of holy scripture, and that is, that the purpose of God is always presented in scripture in connection with the day of manifestation. When scripture unfolds our place *with* God, as in Ephesians i., it also unfolds the place we shall occupy *for* God's glory. It does not present us at the rapture as to our place *with* God, and then at the appearing as to our place *for* God, though this may be how some look at it. In Thessalonians it is "for ever with the Lord," and I do not think you can give me a scripture which shews that any part of God's purpose is fulfilled at the rapture. No doubt when the church is translated it will be placed in the Father's presence, but God's purpose is that the church should not only have the nearest place possible *to* Himself, but that she should occupy the most important place *for* Him in His universe. These two aspects are part of His purpose, and the church can only occupy her full position when Christ has appeared. As regards all the saints, whether viewed individually or collectively, their place in manifestation depends on their

knowledge of God, and when the church is viewed in the scriptures in its place *towards* God, you also find in the same book its position *for* God. At the coming of Christ He will assign each family and each individual his proper place according to God's purpose, and thus the whole purpose of God will be actually completed by the coming of our Lord. The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us the full thought of the Lord's coming, and in chapter i. we have our unspeakably blessed place of relationship with God; but in chapter ii. 7 we get our place *for* God, and in chapter iii. we read, "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages."

Nevertheless, the catching away of the church *has* a very important place, and to understand this we must bear in mind what the church is to Christ. There will be several families named of the Father, but no other family will be to Christ what the church is. It will not simply have a special place in the universe, but it has a very special place in Christ's affections.

The position of the church in God's world and in the affections of Christ is unique. None of the other families will have the Holy Spirit indwelling them, neither will any

other company be brought into such intimacy with Christ, and He will have more response from the church than from the other families. The church knows the love of Christ in a deeper way than the rest. She was called out during His rejection, and has learnt His love whilst He is still refused by the world, and the church will be the only company with intelligence suitable to occupy the special place allotted in God's world. Therefore the church has a very special place in Christ's affections.

In the scripture I have read we find some remarkable principles, but we must ever bear in mind that a figure is only a figure, and we must seek only to see why the Spirit has introduced it. If not we drift into what is fanciful, the natural mind works, the divine thought is missed, and the truth is not understood, for the figure is made to teach what it does not teach, and in this there is a danger of departing from the faith, and an unhealthy state being formed in souls.

In the first part of the chapter I have read a man takes a wife and he is not pleased with her. Surely in principle we can apply this to Christ and Israel. Israel was called out from amongst the nations to have a special place in relationship with Jehovah, but He

was not pleased with Israel, for that nation never answered to His mind, and when Christ came the leaders rejected Him from the beginning, and finally the nation also rejected Him, and then He rejected them. The Lord for the present refuses any special relationship with that nation, and they will never be recovered on the old ground. Israel will be restored, and there will be an earthly bride in the future, but the restoration will be on entirely new ground. Israel was called out in connection with responsibility, but never answered to the heart and mind of God. Therefore the nation has been set aside, but will be taken up again in sovereign mercy by God in grace.

It is clear from the scriptures there will be a heavenly and an earthly bride. You may *apply* the Song of Solomon to the church, but it is the earthly bride and Israel that are referred to in that book. Then the same people are contemplated in the first and second books of the psalms (Psas. i.-xli., xlii.-lxxii.) and probably in Revelation xiv. 1-5.

In the New Testament also, we read, John the Baptist said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." (John iii. 29.) What bride did John know of? What bride *could* he know about? He certainly knew nothing of the church for that was a secret hidden in

the mind of God. So the bride mentioned in the Gospel of John is the *earthly* bride, but in this present period a people are being gathered out to form the *heavenly* bride. We must, as I have already mentioned, remember that a figure must not be carried beyond the object for which it is used in scripture, and the word "bride" is used figuratively to express a divine idea of the place the church will have in the heavenlies, and the place the remnant from Judah and Benjamin will have on earth.

I think the thought of Bridegroom in the scriptures presents Christ, not simply in relation to the church, but to the whole universe of God. Then the thought connected with bride, both heavenly and earthly, is a company formed during His rejection in a pathway of suffering and trial, learning His love in adverse circumstances, and through exercise morally fitted to take a unique place with the Bridegroom. His beauty will specially characterise both brides. (Rev. xiv. 4; xxi. 2.) Note the word "*prepared*." Through the formative work of the Spirit—the church—the heavenly bride is a company divinely formed, and fully displaying His beauty, having divine intelligence and moral fitness for the closest association with the Bridegroom in His re-

lation to all things. The earthly bride will know Christ more intimately than any other earthly company, but her sphere of influence will be limited to the earth, while the heavenly bride's sphere of influence will be both heaven and earth.

The scripture I have read in Deuteronomy speaks of the one wife being set aside, and then "When a man takes a new wife." We may apply this to the church. Israel has lost her special place at present, and the Lord is gathering out of the nations a people for Himself to form the new wife. When the church is complete it will exactly represent Him, in that when He looks at it He will see Himself. Now He is forming it, and when finished the church will be responsive to His great love, and the love of His heart will thus find perfect satisfaction.

Next we must bear in mind that when Israel slighted the love of Christ the church is given to Him, and the leading feature of the church is its appreciation of His love. What a peculiar place this gives to the church in His affections. Israel rejected Him, but the church receives and appreciates His love. What must it have been to Christ to enter this world, to come to His own, but only to find them determined not to receive Him! What was it to His heart

to find no response, no answer to His perfect love! They did not want Him, there was no room for Him in the world He had made, but to the church He is *everything*. His love is appreciated, and He has a circle where He is all and in all. We do well to ask ourselves this practical question—is the love of Christ the one great thing—the treasure which our souls enjoy? We may be very correct, and may have a great deal of light and know a great deal of scripture, but if we are not held by His love, and therefore responsive to it, the first mark of the church is lacking. The Lord *values* the response of His people, and as we come under the influence of His love response to it is produced, and there is not a mark of the true church about us unless we *are* responsive to His love.

Then again we must remember that one divine Person became Man, and this must be specially recognised. Therefore the church, as the body and bride, stands in special relationship to the Man Christ Jesus. The church has a special place according to the purpose of God, as may be seen in the type of Eve (Gen. ii.), and she comes into a peculiar position in the ways of God as His "comfort" when He has been rejected by Israel, as we see in type in Genesis xxiv. 67.

Thus the ways of God and the purpose of God meet, though two distinct lines of truth, and shew the unique place the church has in the affections of Christ.

In our scripture (Deut. xxiv. 5) we read, "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, etc. . . ." Christ will come forth as the Warrior to put down everything contrary to God. This scene is now filled with enemies and rebellion, but God's Son will come forth as the great Warrior with His people and all the holy angels, and subdue every enemy. The war will commence by Satan being cast out of the heavenlies, and end with the last enemy—death, being destroyed. The instruments used is not our subject this evening, but simply the great fact that He, the Lord, will come forth to war, and every enemy must disappear before Him.

Then again, the man must not take up any business for one year. The Lord will not only subdue, but take up the reins of government for God. The whole business of the universe will be in His hands. The world needs *the Man* who can hold the *reins for God*, and maintain everything *rightly amongst men*. There can be no peace without *the Man*, and God's Man only will do, He can rule for God, and will have the universal confidence of God's world.

Christ will come forth as the Warrior (Rev. xix. 11-21), and will also take up the business of the universe. (Rev. xx. 4.) Then it will be seen that there is a Man—God's beloved Son, the Man of God's right hand, the Man God has provided, who is able to hold everything for God and for man. Then, and only then, will there be universal peace. The *Man* is needed, but now the world has refused Him, though the desire of all nations is only found in Him. They desire one capable for the position, and that alone can be found in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Well, "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business; but he shall be free at home one year, and shall gladden (New Trans.) his wife whom he hath taken." This suggests, I think, what will take place during the interval between the catching away of the church, and when Christ subsequently places her with Himself as the centre of God's universe. He will have the church at home with Himself for His own delight and pleasure. Never has the church *fully* appreciated His love, but then His love will be perfectly known and enjoyed, and He will "gladden" the church by making known all that He is. (Luke xii. 37.)

We sometimes hear people say that the translation of the church is all *our* side. I must say that expression always grates on my ear. If we were more under the influence of His love, everything would be looked at by us in connection with how it would affect *Him*. A mark of true love is that the person thinks *first* of the one loved. If when staying with some one you notice that the man always thinks of himself—his own ease and comfort, instead of his wife's, would you not conclude there was not much real love on his part? Or if you see that the woman thinks of herself, does it not shew that her husband has very little place in her affections? True affection always leads the one to think of the other, and divine love always leads us to think of Christ and the good of others, and never leads to self-occupation.

The Lord sought the glory of the Father that sent Him, and He was the servant of all. He thought of the needy and provided them with bread, but He never made bread for Himself when hungry. Then Paul, who followed his Master so closely, was ready to spend and be spent for others. He could say to the Corinthians, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

(2 Cor. xii. 15.) He would love them even if their love waned, and in him we see divine love.

If Christ has His rightful place in our hearts the question will be, What will the translation of the church be to *Him*? What will it be to Him to view His church complete? To see that special company given to Him of His Father, and each responsive to His love and fully answering to His desire for them! What a moment for *Him*! and what a moment for *us* to behold His glory and see the positive delight He has in us! We shall not think then of *their* or of *our* position, but our joy will be full in seeing the joy *He* has in having us there. Our delight will be that great love of His which leads Him to find His satisfaction in having us near to Himself. That love will call forth from us "one loud eternal burst of praise;" and why should it not call it forth *now*?

We will now turn to John xiv., where the Lord says, "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." The Lord desires to have us with Himself, and He will receive us unto Himself. We are His own peculiar treasure. I feel ashamed to speak of His great love,

for one feels how little it has laid hold of one! How little we have drunk of its fullness! May it shine in more that we may be entirely held by it! Still He desires to have us with Him there, to have us in His own presence, and so He will receive us to Himself. I used to think the greatest moment for His heart would be when He sees His church complete, but now I think it will be when He presents us as sons to the Father. What a moment for Him when He takes all the sons conformed to His image according to God's purpose into His Father's presence! There will be no moment like that to Him.

He says, "that *where I am*, there ye may be also." He as Man is in the Father's presence in all the perfection of the Father's love for the Father's delight. And His great desire is to have us there. For that moment He waits, and for that moment He looks, and do we not desire that He may have the joy of having us there?

We will now turn to 1 Thessalonians iv. 18, where the saints are told to comfort one another. Still their comfort comes from the joy Christ will have when the church is complete. The passage states the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout. Why does the Lord shout? Is it not because His

church is complete? He has been waiting while the church has been formed, and when the work is finished He will send forth His shout of joy. Now it is the time of His patience, then will be the time of His joy. He has those on earth who love Him, and they will respond to His shout. The power of archangel's voice and trump of God will accompany His shout of joy, and He will have His own with Himself for ever. May we never forget the moment that is before Him! What it will be to Him to see the purpose of God accomplished regarding the church! What for Him to have that company that He loves and has given Himself for, and that He went through death to obtain, and from which He will find a response to His perfect love.

Now I will refer you to Revelation iii. 10, where we get an allusion to the translation of the church—"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." The little words "keep from" are not used in the sense of preserving, but of translation. (Compare New Trans.) Christ will take the church out of the scene of difficulty. There is a more awful time coming upon this world

than has ever been, because men having refused the truth they will be given up to believe the lie. The pride of man will have reached its zenith, the subtlety and power of Satan its limit, but the Lord loves the church too much to allow it to remain here during that period. He values the fact that they have kept the word of His patience. It may be only a little thing in the eyes of men, but for His own to treasure up His word is very precious to Him. The leading characteristic of the church is that it loves Christ, and if we love Him we shall value, prize and treasure up in our hearts the word of His patience. He desires to have us with Him, He values His word being kept, and those who keep it are translated before the great time of trouble commences.

We have seen three reasons why the Lord will translate the church. First, in order to place it before the Father's face, that "where I am, there ye may be also." Secondly, the moment of His joy will have arrived, because the church is complete according to the purpose of God and He can take it to be for ever with Himself; and thirdly, He so values the church having kept the word of His patience that He translates it before the terrible development of Satanic enmity and human pride bursts on this scene.

Dear brethren, again let us raise the question: "What will it be to Christ when that moment comes?" I do not ask would you rejoice to be there, but I ask would you like to behold His joy in having His own there? There are other families to be gathered, and when the whole work of grace is completed then He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Still it will be a great moment for Him when He can translate the church, the firstfruits of the heavenly families, into His presence.

Do our souls to-night respond to such love? Are we responsive to the love of Christ? Is the one desire of our hearts that His people may be ready for His coming? Are we in the meantime treasuring up the word of His patience, and desiring His coming that He may have the joy of having His people with Him? These are healthy questions for us to raise, beloved brethren, and we do well to raise them in His presence.

To return to the scripture in Deuteronomy. The man was to remain at home twelve months to gladden his wife. Let us in our minds run over the history of the church, and to do this we must think of it as set up on earth in responsibility. Like every other witness it has broken down, and it is, alas!

a history of unfaithfulness to Christ. Little indeed has His love been responded to during the long night of His absence. Alas! how little have *we* responded to it! Let us see that the love of Christ is a deep reality to our own souls—that He has His place in our hearts, so that we do not move on independently, but fulfil Colossians iii. 17, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” May God awaken each of us to the great importance of the present, so that during the little while we have left we may be so held by His love that we may *now* be responsive to it.

When the church is complete, and the Lord has translated it, then all will be held by His love and will be responsive to it, but let us see that this is true of us *now*. *Then* the whole church will fully appreciate His love, then we shall know perfectly that love which passeth knowledge, though ever discovering more and more of its infinitude. *Now* we sometimes know a little of what it is in His presence to enjoy the sweetness of His great love, but what will it be when not only free of every hindrance, but with bodies suitable, and with the whole unhindered power of the Holy Spirit to lead our souls into the apprehension and appreciation of

that wonderful love expressed in Christ giving Himself for the church!

What a moment of cheer that will be, and "one loud, eternal burst of praise" will be the result. What chéer to see His heart satisfied! To see His delight in His own, and for ever to be with Him!

May the Lord, if we are left here a little longer, make His love a deep reality to our souls, that we may now know more of the enjoyment of His love in His presence, that our one desire may be that the moment of His joy may come, when the church will be "gladdened" by entering into the fulness of His love, and give adequate response to it, and thus be in complete readiness to take her place with Him in the universe of God for His honour and praise.



## THE CHURCH DISPLAYED TO GOD'S PRAISE AND GLORY.

(REV. XIX. 1-16; XX. 4, 5; XXI. 10, 11 AND 24.)

LAST week we were looking at the two parts of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—the first part the translation of the church, and the second, the Person of Christ coming into view with His people. To-night my desire is to bring before you the wonderful moral victory which will be achieved by the appearing of our Lord with His saints. The Lord must be victorious, not only in a general sense, but in every detail. Then He will be victorious, not only in putting down His enemies, but in a *moral way*, and He will manifestly *overcome evil with good*. It will not be *merely* an intervention in power, putting down all that exalts itself against God (of course He will do that), but the Lord will then display what He has formed; what is of God will fill the scene, and everything contrary to God will disappear before it. The victory will be gained by the complete triumph of what is of God, and it is very encouraging to have before us how

complete in the most minute detail the victory of our Lord will be.

Now we must first remember that in the holy scriptures there are two distinct lines of truth. It is of great importance to distinguish them and to hold both clearly in our minds. These are, first, the place of relationship that we shall have before God for the satisfaction of His own heart, and secondly, the position we shall hold for God in His universe. The former God in sovereign love has given us, and no failure on our part can affect it; but the latter will be according to the knowledge of God which we have acquired in our responsible life down here.

We read in Ephesians i. 5 (New Trans.): "Having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." God must satisfy His own heart of love, and He does this by having us before Himself in the nearest relationship that He could bring us into. He has given us this place of relationship "according to the good pleasure of his will," but "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Nothing less would satisfy His heart, and He glorifies Himself in blessing His people. Therefore

we can look up to God in the consciousness that He has given us the nearest place that creatures could be brought into, and has given us every blessing which divine love can bestow upon us. We were marked out for this before the world began, and it is God's own desire for us, and entirely for His own satisfaction. He could not do more, and less would not answer the desires of His love.

Now in regard to our life of responsibility down here, we must first consider what is the character of christian responsibility. The creature must be responsible to the Creator, but man being guilty and lost, he cannot fulfil it. The law made known what man ought to *be* and to do, but it gave man no power. Therefore a person having the light of Christianity without the power is only a "wretched man," though he has the desire to please God. One characteristic of Christianity is that God has given His Spirit to those who believe, and therefore the character of responsibility is now entirely different. Christ has fully made known the will of God, and the Spirit is the power and everything necessary for us to fulfil all our obligations, and therefore responsibility, if properly understood, never discourages a Christian.

We may, by way of illustration, suppose a

person who is made responsible to live at the rate of one thousand pounds per annum when he has no income whatever. This would be impossible, for he has not the amount coming in to meet the demands made upon him. But if that man were given an unlimited income he would only have to draw on it to meet all demands, and he could easily carry out his responsibility to live at the rate of one thousand pounds a year.

Now the Christian is responsible to *live Christ*—to do the will of God; but there is an abundance of grace, and he has the power of the Spirit of God within him to enable him to carry out his responsibilities. Therefore, if we are entirely dependent on the Lord, drawing on our infinite resources in Him, then in the power of the Spirit we can easily and cheerfully fulfil the whole of our responsibilities. "The Spirit is life on account of righteousness" (Rom. viii. 10), that we may live here according to the revelation of God in Christ to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. i. 11.)

Now we have the privilege of gaining experimental knowledge of God in connection with His ways—what He is for us in our present state of weakness through being in the body—what it is to be entirely supported by Christ before the power of sin,

the world and Satan are actually removed off the earth; also to learn to distinguish practically between good and evil through exercise; and all knowledge thus gained will enable us to take our place for God in His universe.

Now this is the line which I desire to take up this evening, and I have no hesitation in saying that it has not sufficient place in our souls. We must think of this line also from two sides, because no one can occupy a position *for* God greater than what he is *with* God. Neither can he display as light any more than he enjoys before God. Whatever we are for God must be dependent on what is known and enjoyed in secret with God, and therefore we must think of this experimental knowledge of God in these two connections. That is, whilst here in the body the knowledge of God gained by us will be enjoyed individually between the soul and God, not only throughout the world to come, but throughout eternity, and according to the measure of this knowledge we shall be able to occupy our position for God.

Now before passing on, perhaps I had better just mention a few scriptures to substantiate what I have said. You will remember that the manna that was gathered on the sixth day lasted over the seventh

day. I think we have there a very simple figure shewing that what we gather up during our life here will last us during the seventh day—right through the rest of God. I will refer to one more scripture in the New Testament in a totally different connection, though it will illustrate the same principle. The Lord in the Book of Revelation speaks to the "overcomer," and He says, "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Rev. ii. 17.) I think you will readily see that the force of that is that the Lord will give His approval to the faithful. It does not matter what the world may now say, or even the religious world, the Lord is going to give the overcomer in that day the sign of His approval, but with that approval there will be a secret between that soul and the Lord, and that secret he will enjoy for ever.

Now to-day we have to walk in the midst of a corrupt Christendom where everything is contrary to God. We are, however, privileged to use these very circumstances to gain a personal, real, knowledge of what He is to us in those circumstances; and as we gain that knowledge of Him through the circumstances in which we are found, we are gathering up what we shall enjoy in

secret with Him in His own blessed presence. I will try to give a simple illustration to convey this thought. In a large family all are children alike, but some may be more thoughtful than others, and therefore understand and know the mind of the father better than the less thoughtful. You may perhaps hear the father say, "So-and-so is such a comfort to me." Why is this? It is because he studies the father and knows just what he desires. He gets to understand his wishes, and therefore there is that between him and his father which there is not between the father and the other sons. It is true all are alike sons, but the son who has studied his father's wishes has a knowledge of him, and therefore a capability of acting for him which the others do not possess. Supposing there is something required to be done for the father, who is the one best able to carry this through according to the father's will? Surely the son who has studied his father most. Thus it will be in regard to ourselves in the things of God. God's purposes will all be accomplished and all His own will be constituted sons, but there will be varying degrees of intelligence and intimacy according to what we have gained during our sojourn down here in this scene.

Then there will be according to that in-

telligence ability to occupy our place for God as figuratively set forth in the Lord's words when He speaks of one being set over ten cities and another over five. (Luke xix.) This shews that we shall only be able to influence others according to the degree of the knowledge of God which we have gathered whilst passing through this scene.

The Book of Revelation almost exclusively presents this line of things. We do not get the revelation of the Father there, nor His purposes connected with our place with the Father, as in Ephesians. What we get there is the church as the responsible light-bearer set up upon earth. This was the most wonderful testimony that God could possibly establish. The character of it was different from anything previous. Israel were a people taken up by God in the flesh and separated from the rest of the nations, but we know how they incurred responsibilities which they had no power to fulfil. But when we come to the church we find God the Holy Ghost *dwelling* there, and the power for everything was the Spirit of God. He came to set aside all that God had judged in the cross so that there could be a company on earth which was entirely for God. If we think of this we shall see what a marvellous testimony the church was when first set up

upon this earth, and how great the fall has been. Alas! what has taken place? The church viewed as the light-bearer has completely failed, so much so that the world almost entirely influences the church, and what is of God is hidden and obscured by the work of man. Then again, very few even among the professed people of God are able to form a judgment as to the true value of things. You may see a person who professes to know God preferring the things of this life to the things of God. This shews that such an one has no judgment as to the true moral worth of the things of God.

Then there has been failure on all sides, and the failure of the church which was set up by the Lord to make God known here upon this earth has been greater than that of any previous testimony.

Now in view of the complete failure of the church we will trace the complete triumph and victory of Christ the Faithful One. Read Revelation xix. 8: "And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." (New Trans.) The daily life of the Christian should correspond, by the power of the Spirit, to the righteousness of God, and that is really "fine linen."

Now when the Lord comes with His people into the view of this world He does not bring them clothed in the righteousness of *God* or in the "best robe," but clothed in fine linen which is the righteousnesses of *saints*.

Let us for a moment pause and consider what a wonderful victory this is! Then notice, there is not one saint of God who will not in that day be clothed in "fine linen," and will thus be to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. i. 11.) Now, who could bring this about? *Only One*, because, of course, if it is brought about it must be a real thing, and the Lord only could accomplish that, and He *will* accomplish it to His praise and glory. So in chapter xix. when Christ brings forth His people His triumph is seen in this—that their practical life shines to the glory and praise of God, and there is nothing whatever there but what is absolutely of God and according to His mind.

Then in chapter xx. each one of His people is able to form a judgment according to God. They are able to discriminate and estimate the true moral worth of everything, and therefore in this chapter the Lord has His people placed on thrones. You will remember that in the Book of Daniel there are thrones but no occupants, but when you come to the Book of Revelation we find that

Christ has provided a people who are morally and in every way fitted to sit upon thrones, and to judge according to God. Then they will be able to judge any question that may arise in the universe of God, and are competent even to judge angels. The saints will not only be formed so as to be able to occupy the thrones, as we find in chapter xx., but they will be the medium of moral light to the world. This light will be undimmed and as "clear as crystal," so that "the nations that are saved will walk in the light of it." In that way we see manifested the complete triumph of Christ in connection with His people over everything that man and Satan had brought in. This victory will be publicly demonstrated at the appearing of God's beloved Son.

Now we have to bear in mind that Satan's great object to-day is to corrupt. He knows that he cannot do away with the church, but what he seeks is to nullify and obscure what is of God. Therefore the work of God is now hidden, and its beauty obscured, for Satan has through man's unfaithfulness succeeded in his object. Still Christ, the Faithful One, will bring the saints in display so that they will be to the glory and praise of God. There will not be a trace of anything that the great

corrupter of God's people brought in, and how this is brought about we have unfolded in chapter xix. There first of all we have the celebration in heaven of God's judgment on Babylon. Bábylon is the false bride. The profession of Christianity will go on after the church has been translated. Then the moment will arrive when that false profession is wiped off the face of the earth, and this is celebrated in heaven. They rejoice that the most corrupt thing that ever polluted God's earth has been wiped out. Now following upon that we get a very remarkable word which I want you to especially notice. It says in chapter xix., "Let us be glad and rejoice: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, *and his wife hath made herself ready.*" (Ver. 7.) I will remind you of a remark made last week, that it is very important when scripture gives us a figure to seize the thought that the Spirit of God wishes to present to us in that figure. We must be careful not to reason the thing out from a natural standpoint, because, if we do, we not only miss the thought of the Spirit of God, but we also drift into what is contrary to God. You cannot reason out spiritual things in a natural way. For instance, in the religious world to-day, you often hear this

kind of reasoning—we are children of God because we are born again. But *are* we children of God because we are born again? If you think so, you have made a mistake from reasoning on your own conclusions. Scripture never puts it in that way. You could not be children if you were not born anew, but you are not children *because* you are born anew.

The Old Testament saints never had the place of children of God, yet they were born again. The Son has now revealed the Father, and therefore we read, “But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name.” (John i. 12, New Trans.) “Consider what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God. (1 John iii. 1, New Trans.) That is, you are children by *calling*, by being called into that place, and that is to be laid hold of in the faith of our souls and enjoyed by the power of the Spirit. You must not reason—because I have been born again, so-and-so is true of me. God makes known the blessed place He has given to us, and He gives natural figures to express certain thoughts, but, I repeat, you must not reason it out from the figures.

In the same way we must not reason from

what we know about marriage, but seek to learn the point presented in the figure which scripture has given. In the beginning when God made man, many different animals had been created and brought to Adam and he had named each one, but it says there was not found for Adam a helpmeet for him (Gen. ii. 20), that is, he had no real and suitable companion. You may have a dog which shews great intelligence, but you can have no communion with it; and the same is true in regard to every animal. Thus there was no suited helpmeet for Adam. There was no one fitted to be his companion. But what does God do? He takes a rib out of Adam and with it He builds a woman, thus creating one suited to share everything with him—one with whom Adam could have intercourse. Thus God furnishes at the very outset a type of Christ and the church. In Revelation xix. we read, "His wife hath made herself ready." She is *His wife* and has the very nearest place to Christ that is possible, according to the figure that is seen in Adam and Eve. Marriage in scripture appears to be the public declaration of the relationship formed through divine love.

Now it will be noticed that in Ephesians v. there is a different thought in connection with the church. There we find "Christ also

loved the *church*, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself . . . not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Vers. 25-27.) Now *there* the Lord presents the church to Himself; but *here* (Rev. xix. 7) in view of the world the church displays His own beauty, and so we read "*His wife* hath made herself ready." That raises the question how it is possible that *she* can make herself ready. Now it is very clear that she does not make herself a new creation, because that is God's work and no one else can do it. But it must be remembered that we are considering the line we spoke of as the second line of teaching in scripture, the practical line. So we find that she is made ready by passing before the judgment seat of Christ—and with this result, that the church is brought fully into accord with the mind of God about everything that God has judged at the cross. It must be borne in mind that when we pass before the judgment seat of Christ we shall be already conformed to the image of God's Son, and this manifestation will take place immediately before we come to reign with Christ and to occupy our place for God in His universe.

Now before ever the church can possibly occupy that place she must make herself ready, and she will do that by adding her Amen to everything that God has judged in the cross. I will try to make that as simple and clear as I can for the benefit of the youngest believer present.

We know that the Lord Jesus is the One who has died for us and put our sins away. But we do not know *how many* sins He has put away. Then we shall know perfectly what He has done and the full extent of His work. For the first time in our career we shall know fully what the Son of God did by going down into death, and we shall intelligently add our Amen to all that God judged at the cross of Christ. Besides that, we shall know the wonderful way God has watched over us in our pathway—why God permitted many things to take place which caused us so much exercise, and why perhaps we were suddenly removed to another town, position, or country. Then we shall not only get light in regard to what Christ has done for *us*, but we shall understand God's ways with regard to angels, the world, Israel, the church and ourselves individually; we shall see the wonderful way God took with us, our perverseness and folly, but also the goodness of God in every

detail of life, of which we could have had no conception. This will call forth our hallelujah of praise, not simply because we are cleansed by His blood, not simply on account of the place He has given us, but because of His wonderful goodness and love manifested in every detail of all His ways, and also as to His government of the universe.

Therefore the judgment seat of Christ comes in so that we might be brought into full sympathy with the mind of God in regard to *everything* connected with His ways, and thus we are morally fitted to take our place with Christ, and to be able to sit with Him on the throne of judgment.

Now I will just say, by the way, that God never puts a person in a place to do something for Him unless that person has shewn that he is fitted to occupy that place. I will give you one beautiful passage in connection with God's beloved Son, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated lawlessness; *therefore* God, even thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions." (Heb. i. 9, New Trans.) Why was He anointed above His companions? Because He had shewn that He was the Man to occupy that position. But for us to be fitted to occupy the place for God we have

to pass, as I have said, before the judgment seat, and be thus morally fitted for it.

Now just another word as to the verse we have already noticed (Rev. xix. 8): "And to her was *granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," &c. The fine linen is just as much a favour from God as the forgiveness of sins. All is entirely through divine grace, and therefore, as the Epistle to the Philippians puts it, "being complete as regards the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, *to God's glory and praise.*" (Chap. i. 11, New Trans.) It is that righteousness that has been brought to pass by the Spirit *through* us, and is in that way our own righteousness. There may be a dear saint of God lying on a bed of sickness; she has desires in connection with the Lord's glory, but has never been able, perhaps, to give effect to them. Now every desire and act in that day will come out as "fine linen." So scripture speaks of making manifest the counsels and intents of the heart, and all will be used for our blessing and His glory.

We must notice the word, "To her was *granted.*" Why is it put in that way? Supposing you have a little child that cannot walk alone across the room, and you say, "Now walk across the room," giving the

little child your hand to enable it to do so. Then you reward the child for it as though it had done it without your help. Thus, if we had not the hand of Christ, we could never do one thing that is pleasing to Him. Therefore the fine linen is that which Christ produces through us by the Holy Spirit to the glory of God. The practical life yields that which is *enjoyed Godward*, and which is *expressed manward*. To her is granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. It will be perfectly pure, and all will speak of Christ. We shall then have God's estimate about ourselves individually, also God's thoughts in connection with the work of Christ. We shall understand His ways with us individually, His ways with the church, and further, His ways in the universe. Then "His wife has made herself ready"; and when clothed, heaven opens and God's Son comes with the saints clothed in fine linen.

We do well to remember that there will be no "fine linen" manufactured in that day. We shall come out then with what is gained in this present life. Then will be manifested what we have gathered now for that day by walking in the present light of the judgment seat of Christ in the power of the Spirit. Thus there is that gained which is according to God, to shine for Him in that day. Our

practical life now, so far as it is of God, will form our clothing then.

Now I will once more draw your attention to this fact, because I think it is very precious, that when Christ brings His people into display before the eyes of the world, He will not bring them in that which speaks of His suffering, but as arrayed in that which they have been for Him in the very scene where He and they were rejected. He will say, as it were, to the world: "This is what My people were for Me!"

I will now just add a word in regard to the next chapter. Having been before the judgment seat, the saints are seated on thrones, and they are able to discern. Will there be any question that will arise in the universe of God that the saints will not be able to pronounce a judgment on? *Not a question!* And why? Because, by passing before the judgment seat they have been morally fitted to take up any question for God, and to pass God's judgment upon it. They will all be characterised by a discernment that will be to the glory and praise of God. Yet they are there entirely through *divine grace*, to the eternal praise of the Faithful One.

The church has failed as the light-bearer on earth, but now she is placed as the sun

was placed on the fourth day. (Gen. i. 16.) Then the church will shine "having the glory of God, and her light was *most precious*." It is most precious because the light that will shine forth in that day through the church will speak entirely of what God is, and the nations will therefore be able to walk in the light of God.

I ask again: Who is able to bring that about? No one but the Faithful One. Then when He brings His people it will be manifest that He has gained glory through the very ruin that had come in, because He will place the church in her place in the heavens according to God's eternal purpose. So that it can be said: "Her light is most precious, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal." There is no taint, no darkness, it is entirely according to God. The moral light of the universe will emanate from the church—*His* church, so that "the nations that are saved shall walk in the light of it."

I did not mean to dwell so long on chapter xix., and therefore, had to be very brief in regard to the next two chapters. But in closing I will try to gather up just the main threads so as to emphasise the importance of them in connection with the Book of Revelation.

In chapter xix. the Lord comes with His

people arrayed in what they have been for Him here, and this is seen to be entirely to the praise and glory of God. This could only be, as we have seen, by their passing before the judgment seat, where they will have acquired discernment, so that they are able to sit upon thrones—capable of judging angels, and allotting them their place in the universe of God.

And besides, their light will be “as clear as crystal,” so that the nations will be able to “walk in the light of it.”

But let us remember, dear friends, there are two sides—we shall be before God as sons; thank God! nothing can alter *that*. But do not let us forget the other side that we have been speaking of, namely, that our place *for* God then depends entirely on what we are *with* God whilst passing through this present scene.

Let us ask ourselves now the question, Are we throwing our lives away? For to live for our own pleasure or the world is to waste the only time we shall ever have during which we are trained for that day. How sad to look back and say, “I have lived for the things of time and missed that which is of lasting value.”

Let us then, beloved, use the present life to walk with God, to gain a knowledge of

God, to carry out His will, and even to use the very ruin of the church to gain a personal acquaintance, in all the circumstances of our pathway, with the Lord Jesus Christ—the Faithful One, so that our lives, instead of being wasted, may be spent in gathering up that which will be found to the glory and praise of God in the day that is coming.

May God in the greatness of His mercy give each one of us a deeper sense of the wonderful relationship that is ours through divine grace, and give us to be exercised that our lives may be for God in view of Christ's coming, when He will place the church with Himself in God's universe.



## THE PLACE IT SHOULD HAVE IN OUR SOULS AND ITS EFFECTS.

(1 THESS. I. 9, 10 ; II. 19, 20 ; III. 11-13 ; IV. 13-18 ;  
V. 22-24 ; 2 THESS. III. 1-5.)

DURING the last three Friday evenings we have been looking together at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have been tracing how His coming is the consummation of everything. That is, it is the bringing in actually of everything for God, and everything for the Man Christ Jesus, and everything for God's people. Therefore it has a very important place in the scriptures and should have a very important place in our own souls.

Now I would first like to say a little in regard to the result of entering into present privilege, because I think there is an intimate connection between it and the soul really looking for the return of the Lord Jesus. It appears to me that the more we enter into present privilege the more we shall be really awaiting the coming of the Lord Jesus, because the more we know what it is to taste and enjoy our great privileges the more shall we desire that moment to

come when all will be enjoyed with Him in perfection. Then not only shall we be with Him, and He will have His people with Himself, but the whole scene will be established to the glory and praise of God by the universe of blessing being brought in. I do not think that present privilege being entered into will ever lead a soul to make light of the coming of the Lord Jesus, but it will, on the contrary, increase the desire for His coming.

Now what I desire to bring before you this evening is the proper place that the coming of the Lord Jesus should have in our souls, and its effects. I think any person can easily see from the Epistle to the Thesalonians that the Lord's coming is connected with what I may call every branch of the christian life. The coming of the Lord is not a mere doctrine in scripture, it is a great *hope* which is before the soul, and therefore it must have a practical effect upon us, and if it has its proper place in our souls our hearts will connect everything with the return of God's beloved Son.

In chapter i. of the first epistle it is connected with the affections, and in chapter ii. with what we call "service"—that is, the work of the Lord; then in chapter iii. it is connected with the actual practical *state* of God's people, and in chapter iv. it is con-

nected with the *comfort* of His people—their encouragement; and, lastly, in chapter v. it is linked up with a very important line of things for us, and that is separation—sanctification, but sanctification in the sense of separation. I have thought that the epistles to the Thessalonians are very helpful to us in this connection—that they shew us the real effect of being converted. I think you see in reading these epistles the effect that was produced in their souls by being turned to God, so that if we have been turned to God the effects that are seen here should, through divine grace, be also seen in us. I think that is important because the present is a time of failure, and with even those who are engaged in the Lord's work, there is often very little appreciation of the light of God, and very often the state of soul is not pleasing to the Lord, and all this has an effect upon those who are brought under the power of the word through them; and therefore every one of us in that way should be especially cast upon the Lord Himself. We cannot depend upon servants to-day, but we can depend on the Lord, and it is an important thing for the youngest Christian to be exercised to see that he is really characterised by the true marks of conversion to God. If you think of the difference

between new birth and conversion I think you will see what I mean. The new birth is a work that God does without using any instrument. Therefore there is no failure in connection with being born again. The work of conversion is *also* the work of God, but in this God generally uses an instrument, and the moment you bring in a human instrument, then of course there can be failure. There is no failure with *God's* work but there is often failure when an instrument is used. Therefore we see numbers of persons to-day who are very badly converted, and are not characterised by the marks of conversion to God which are seen in this epistle.

Perhaps a young convert may say to me, "That is very discouraging if the one who was used for my conversion is not in the light of the Lord!" Well, in one sense that may be; but in another sense it is *encouraging*, because that should distinctly turn you to the Lord, and if you do turn to Him you may *count* upon Him that He will work in your soul by His Spirit, so that the true marks of real conversion to God may characterise you. The Lord is faithful; therefore, no matter how great the ruin around, it should be an opportunity for bringing individual souls more into contact

with the Lord Himself, and to cast them more immediately upon Him.

Now the marks that characterise true conversion are very simply set forth in the Thessalonian saints. Take the first chapter: we find they were turned to God, and were awaiting God's Son from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Deliverer from the wrath to come. Not exactly the One who *had* delivered them from the wrath to come, because wrath has not yet fallen on man. The wrath of God is going to fall; but it will not fall upon God's people, for Christ Himself is their Deliverer from coming wrath. Let us note carefully these distinct marks. They were turned to God, they were awaiting His Son, and in the meantime they were serving Him.

Now we may raise a practical question in our souls: Is this true of us? What characterises our lives? Does the world see that through divine grace we are characterised by the marks that the Thessalonian saints were characterised by? I think the question should cause exercise, because if we are not thus characterised, where is the deficiency? I believe that the deficiency arises from a defective apprehension of the gospel of God. If the gospel of God is truly apprehended it has a separating effect; it turns the gaze of the soul

heavenward to the Person of Christ, so that one is awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus. We can very clearly see from this epistle that the Thessalonians did not understand much about the coming of the Lord, but it had laid hold of their souls that for the complete blessing to be brought in, the Lord Jesus Christ *must come*, and their hearts having been won to Him through divine grace, they were awaiting His return.

We will now trace how the gospel brings this about. The gospel is concerning God's Son—the One who is in His presence. It makes known not only what He has done by going down into death, but it also makes known the new order of blessing—all that God is going to establish publicly. Therefore if I have received these glad tidings, the effect must be that I am found here awaiting God's Son from heaven.

If we are exercised that these marks should characterise us, and if there is a real looking to the Lord, the result will be that by the Spirit the Lord will bring Himself so before us that we shall be characterised by them. Thus in chapter i. we have the effect of the reception of the gospel, their hearts being so won to Christ that they were awaiting His return to bring in the full blessing. Then in chapter ii. we have

a very important principle, and that is that the apostle looked at everything in connection with the coming of the Lord Jesus. I do not think that the Spirit of God means that the apostle looked away into the *future* as to the Lord's coming. I think the truth of the Lord's coming, and all that was going to be brought in then, was a *present* reality to his soul, so that every bit of service was taken up in view of that moment. That is, the whole system of blessing was before the apostle's soul, and he was labouring that souls might be practically formed so as to be just ready for the moment of display, and the work of the Lord was taken up in view of that.

Of course we are not apostles, and we cannot do very much in the way of service, but still the privilege of every believer is to be engaged in the service of the Lord. I think damage has been done amongst us by the way "*servants*" have been spoken of as distinguished from others. What I understand scripture teaches is that *every* one is privileged in their measure to take part in the service of the Lord. Few are called to go to the heathen, or to travel about the country, but it is the privilege of one and all to take part in the Lord's work, both brothers and sisters. *What* a service there is in *prayer!* also in

looking to the Lord about His interests; and then all are privileged to speak to individuals and to present Christ to them. There are many ways in which an obscure individual can, under the good hand of God, help on the work of the Lord, and we need to be exercised about it.

There is a great deal of service *left* to those called labourers, and many of God's people are thus missing their opportunity. I remember some years ago going into a place in England, and the morning after I arrived I saw a sister who had been confined to the house for a few years. In a little while, when every one else had left the room and we were alone, she brought out from her Bible a slip of paper on which were sixteen names. "Here," she said, "is a list of persons I have been looking to God about. I have been praying to God for them for years, and I would like to ask you if free at any time to call upon them." I just bring that forward to shew how a sister can be really engaged in the service of the Lord. She also had sent occasionally little books to these souls. I will now mention the result. Under two years the whole of those sixteen were breaking bread. You may say, "Well, but the preacher who went there was the person who was used."

No ; that sister was the one who was most used, and the preacher only gave the final touch to the service.

I much wish every one of us should be exercised that we may all take our part in, and be alive to our privilege in the Lord's service. It is not only in connection with gospel work, but there is also God's work amongst His people, and the youngest and eldest, brother and sister alike, can be engaged in seeking to promote the interests of the Lord Jesus Christ. There has been a wrong and dangerous use made of calling certain ones the Lord's servants, and thus distinguishing a class amongst us. There is properly no class among the Lord's people, and all God's people are the Lord's servants, and for that expression to be used to distinguish certain ones is a great mistake. There is no *glory* in being a servant, though it is a *privilege*, but there is *greater* privilege in being one of His friends ; our privilege is to be of the friends of Christ, and if we enjoy the place of friends we shall be able to serve Him more intelligently.

If we are "constrained" by Christ's love then we are privileged to serve Him, and we should do it in the light of that day. Our object will not be to get people into the meeting, but to get them ready to appear with

the Lord Jesus Christ. In that day each one will occupy his own position, and our privilege is to labour to get the saints formed and ready for that day. You can see, I am sure, that if that is before a servant's mind it will have a great effect upon *how* he labours. It will not be his object to get people to confess or to *say* something, but to get them *formed* so that they can occupy the place which God has allotted them in connection with His beloved Son.

Now in the third chapter of this epistle we have the growth of the soul. When the Lord Jesus comes every one will be "unblameable in *holiness*"—not only in *righteousness*, but in holiness. The difference is this: to be righteous is to act rightly, but a holy person loves what is of God and hates what is not, of God. And growth in holiness is that we grow in the appreciation and delight of what is of God, and correspondingly we abhor evil and unholiness in every shape and form.

Now what the apostle desired was that these dear saints might abound in love, because then they would grow in holiness; for unless there is abounding in love there is not growth in holiness. Thus, as we walk in the enjoyment of God's love, there *is growth* in the divine nature, and the work of God is furthered in our souls. In

that day every one will be established unblameable in holiness before our God at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints, therefore we should be exercised to see that we are walking in the enjoyment of divine love *now*, so that there may be this growth in holiness. In chapter iv. the point is encouragement. We should all be bent on encouraging one another—that should characterise us. We are very deficient in this. When we meet we are not sufficiently exercised to be the means of encouraging each other. We are often together for little profit, and thus we miss opportunities. We need the reality of the return of the Lord and what it will be for Him to have His people in His presence to be more before our souls; if it were we should be used more in the encouragement of one another.

Let us here trace the encouragement given to these saints. I do not think it was simply that those that had departed were not going to miss the blessing. That would put their hearts at rest; but the encouragement went further. They were no doubt disturbed about those that had fallen asleep *through* Jesus. Mark, it is not *in* Jesus, but *through* Jesus. If one of His own falls asleep it is by His intervention. The saint is put to sleep, and THROUGH Jesus. He died and rose again,

and now there are those who are put to sleep through Him. You all know the homely expression of a mother, "I must go and put baby to sleep"; that is the thought here.

What encouragement it is that the Lord Jesus is on high, and His own that have departed have been "put to sleep" by Jesus until that moment when He will awaken them by His own voice. Then those who are living will be changed, and taken into His blessed presence for ever.

But there is still greater encouragement. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." (Ver. 16.) Christ is looking for the moment when He can take the church into His presence. He awaits the moment when He will have His loved ones around Himself; and when the church is complete that moment will have come and He will translate it. If we think of what the church is to Christ we can understand what a special moment it will be for Him when He is able to call it away into His presence for ever. The church will have a unique place distinct from all the other families in His affections and will be especially for the satisfaction of His heart. Therefore the moment the church is completed the Lord will send forth a shout of joy, with archangel's voice and trump of God, "and the dead in

Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Dear brethren, let me ask you, could we have anything more encouraging than this fact? There is a moment coming so precious to the heart of Christ that He will send forth a shout of joy and victory, and all those who love Him will respond to that shout. All His own will hear that shout of joy, and He will have His church so loved, and for which He has waited in patience, with Himself for ever. His church is not yet complete, but when it is complete He will not delay a *second*; He will call all His own into His presence by that assembling shout of joy. The moment is near when His heart will have the joy of presenting the church to Himself perfect in His own beauty without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. *Our* joy will be full in seeing the joy that *He has* in having His church with Himself. What encouragement there is in thinking of what is before our Lord! The encouragement which we so need in a day like the present comes on account of what is before the heart of *Christ* and not through being occupied with our own blessing. Do we "comfort one another with these words"? if we do

not we are missing a grand opportunity which we shall never have again of comforting the saints of God.

Now a few words in regard to the last chapter. There, as I have said, we get separation, and it is a very important thing for us all to understand what is meant by the word "separation." There is an expression often used amongst us that limits the thought in the minds of many, "to separation from system." Separation is a divine principle. When sin came into this world, if a man walked with God he must take a path of separation from *everything* contrary to God. It does not matter what it is, whether religious or irreligious; you cannot walk with God unless you walk in the path of separation. Separation is a divine principle that has come in from the beginning, and it had to be maintained right throughout the whole history of the world with any person who walked with God. To-day, of course, the word separation has to be used in a stronger sense than in any previous period, because the whole mind of God has come to light, and I must be separate from everything that does not answer to the truth of God. Not simply from the religious systems, but from whatever is not of Him, I *must depart from it.*

It is a principle running through scripture, and if we carry it out we are pleasing to God and a help to His people.

Now see this scripture gives us the measure of separation. You often hear people say, "I should be separate from false doctrine"; but that is not how this scripture puts it. I have to be separate from *everything* that will not remain when the Lord Jesus comes. That has to be the standard of our separation. We see that distinctly stated in this word. It says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (Ver. 22.) If there is even the *appearance* of something that is not of God, I must be apart from it. And the apostle goes on to say, "And the very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*." I have to be separated entirely, the whole person has to be separated; and then it continues, "and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now just think for a moment of those words, "I pray God your whole spirit." What is the spirit? It is the innermost part of my being. Not simply have I to be separated so as to avoid things in walk, but in the innermost part of my being I have to be separated from everything that is contrary to God. Then there is the "soul"; that is

the link between the spirit and the body. Spirit, soul and body thus completes the individual. What the apostle desired was that by the power of the Spirit this entire separation might be brought about. This is a very important thing to remember. If we desire to walk in these last days so as to please God, the measure of our separation must be what will be actually true at the coming of the Lord Jesus.

What is doing great damage to young people is the thought so commonly expressed that there must be something special for the young or you will not hold them. Now, dear friends, I will tell you plainly, I think that is simply of the enemy. What will hold them? Something outside of Christ? Then if it is outside of Him it is a miserable thing. Nothing but what is of Christ must be used to hold anybody, and if you present Christ to the young people you will have no difficulty in holding them if there is the desire to please Him. But if you bring in anything else besides Christ, then you are simply training young people to get away from the Lord. Why bring in something else besides Christ to hold them when they are young if you want to hold them when they are ten years older by what is entirely *of* Christ.

The great thing is to live here for the Lord, and to be pleasing to Him, and if we want to get helped in our souls we must have this measure of separation before us—separation from everything that will not abide when the Lord Jesus comes; and anything short of that is a most dangerous principle. To admit for one single moment that anything else must be brought in to help souls, outside of Christ, is ruination and will lead them astray. If we cannot hold young people with Christ, then we had better not hold them at all. In that day everything will be held by Christ, and will abide throughout the ages of eternity. I met a Christian once who was reading a novel, and I said to her, "I don't think that book will help you." But she replied, "I don't think I could live if I did not read them; I am so fond of them!" I just quietly said, "What will you do when you get to heaven? You will not have novels there; for in heaven there will be only Christ." Do we want anything besides Christ now? If so, we are wanting that which we shall have to leave. What folly, then, to go in for that which is of no value; and, moreover, not only of no value, but which is a positive hindrance to our souls, and that which we must leave behind.

Now in the verse we have read in the second epistle we have described the darkest day in this world's history, when the Antichrist declares himself plainly in opposition to the living God. The apostle does not hesitate to put it before the Thessalonians, but it is not to discourage them; on the contrary, he is able to say everything to encourage them. He says, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course." That is, that it might run and accomplish the purpose of God. Then he adds this word, "But the Lord is faithful." Here darkness is coming on apace, the apostasy is in full view, but "the Lord is faithful." It matters not what takes place in the history of the world or amongst God's people. "The Lord is faithful." That being so, He will never fail us, and therefore we have nothing to fear. Neither is there any reason to be discouraged, for we know the Lord is soon going to reign supreme, and meanwhile we have this word—"The Lord is faithful."

Then the Spirit of God goes on to say, "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ." (New Trans.) Let us think of those two expressions, and the importance of them. It is one thing for the Lord's

coming to have its place in my soul, and another thing for it to be maintained. What will really maintain me looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus, so that I connect everything with it, and work in view of it? Surely it is only our hearts being directed into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ. Then there will be more response from us and we shall take up priestly privilege more, and the more we enjoy priestly privilege the more we shall be in separation here and awaiting the coming of the Lord Jesus. If we taste the blessedness of being in God's blessed presence it must make us long for the blessing to be universal when God will be surrounded with His people, and be able to "rest in his love, and rejoice over his people with singing." You must long for that time when Christ will "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

Then He adds this other beautiful word, "and into the patience of the Christ." The person of Christ is at the right hand of God, and how long has He been waiting there? Nearly two thousand years. But what is He waiting for? Where do you think the heart and eyes of Christ are to-day? On the world? No, not on the world at all, but on His own—those who are gathered out of the

world. The Lord is watching with the keenest interest the gathering out of His people for Himself; and His heart is bound up with His saints. Yet He waits in patience for that moment when the purpose of God will be accomplished, and every family placed in their own proper position around Himself according to the purpose of God, to the glory and praise of God.

Directly the church is completed He will send forth His shout of joy and take it into His company for ever. The Lord awaits that moment, and the apostle desires that we may be led into the patience of the Christ, that we may share what is actually true of Him, while He waits for that moment when the whole purpose of God will be completed.

How important this word is, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ." For only the enjoyment of God's love will enable us to tread the path of separation, and sharing His patience promote the true expectancy of His return.

May the Lord in His grace use what we have been looking at to produce exercise and to stir every one of us up so that the coming of the Lord may have its true place in our souls, that it may not be a theory with us, or a mere doctrine, but a living

reality that positively affects our lives. And I am sure that the only way we can be maintained as a waiting people is by the enjoyment of present privilege ; if we do not know what it is to enter into the enjoyment of present privileges the result is that the waiting attitude no longer characterises us, and we begin to settle down in the scene where our Lord is rejected. May the Lord exercise each one of us and work these things in our souls by His Spirit so that we may be really responsive to His love, looking for His coming, not because of anything *we* are going to get, but because of what He will bring in for God's satisfaction, praise and glory.

And may He grant that every one of us may be found so walking before Him that we may be "sanctified wholly, spirit, soul and body, preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and so be pleasing to Him for the little while which remains to us to be here for Him.

"A little while—He'll come again :

Let us the precious hours redeem :

Our only grief to give Him pain,

Our joy to serve and follow Him.

Watching and ready may we be,

As those that wait their Lord to see."