

COMING !

“ *What I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH.*” —
Mark. xiii. 37.

It may be in the evening ;
 When the work of day is done,
 And you've time to sit in the twilight
 And watch the setting sun,
 While the long bright day dies slowly
 Over the sea,—
 And the hour grows quiet and holy
 With thoughts of Me,—
 When you hear the village children
 Passing along the street,
 Among the thronging footsteps,
 May come the sound of My feet.
 Therefore I tell you “ Watch !”
 Let the door be on the latch
 In your home—
 For it may be through the gloaming
I will come !

It may be in the midnight :
 When 'tis heavy on the land,
 And the black waves lying dumbly
 Along the sand ;
 When the moonless night draws close,
 And the lights are out in the house ;
 When the fire burns low and red,
 And the watch is ticking slowly
 Beside the bed ;—
 Though you sleep tired on your couch,
 Yet your heart must wake and watch
 In the dark room,—
 For it may be that at midnight
I will come !

It may be at the cockcrow :
 When the night is dying slowly
 In the sky ;—
 And the sea looks calm and holy,
 Waiting for the dawn of the golden sun
 Which draweth nigh ;
 When the mists are on the valleys shading
 The rivers chill,
 And my morning-star is fading, fading
 Over the hill :—
 Behold I say unto you " Watch !"
 Let the door be on the latch
 In your home,—
 In the chill before the dawning
 I may come !

It may be in the morning :
 When the sun is bright and strong,
 And the dew is glistening sharply
 Over the little lawn ;
 When the waves are laughing loudly
 Along the shore ;
 And the little birds are singing sweetly
 About the door ;
 With the long day's work before you,
 You are up with the sun,
 And the neighbours come to talk a little
 Of all that must be done ;
 But remember, I may be the next
 To come in at the door,
 To call you from your busy work
 For evermore !
 As you work your hearts must watch,
 For the door is on the latch
 In your room—
 And it may be in the morning
 I will come !

So I am watching quietly
 Every day :
 Whenever the sun shines brightly
 I rise and say,
 " Surely it is the shining of His face "—
 And look unto the portals of His High Place
 Beyond the sea ;
 For I know He is coming shortly
 To summon me.
 And when the shadow falls across
 The window of the room
 Where I am working my appointed task,
 I lift my head to watch the door and ask
 If He is come—
 And the spirit answers softly,
 In my room :
 " Only a few more shadows
 And He will come ! "



THE COMING OF THE LORD THAT WHICH CHARACTERIZES THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

I purpose to take up a subject which I feel to be deeply important—the coming of the Lord Jesus ; and to take it up, not proving it as a doctrine, but showing that it was originally a substantial part of Christianity itself. The groundwork is Christ's first coming, and His atoning death ; but when we look beyond the foundation, then we see that the coming of the Lord Jesus is not merely a bit of knowledge, but a substantive part of the faith of the church of God, and that on which the moral state of the saints, and indeed of

the church of God, depends. You will see, in going through the passages which I will now quote, that it connects itself and is mixed with every part of Christianity, characterizes it, and connects itself with every thought and feeling of the Christian. A person could not read the Scriptures with an unprejudiced mind without seeing it.

I take conversion : people say, what has that to do with the Lord's coming ? That is part of what they were converted to : "to wait for God's Son from heaven." This waiting for God's Son from heaven characterized their conversion ; they were converted to serve God, surely ; but, also, "to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 10).

There are two subjects with which Scripture is occupied, when personal salvation is settled : one is the sovereign grace, which makes us, redeemed from sin, like Christ in the glory : this is the blessed portion of the church of God ; and the other is the government of God in this world. (Deut. xxxii. 8.) "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people[s], according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." There we get, in the government of the world, Israel as the centre. Israel would not have Christ, and so was set aside for the time. God's throne was taken from Jerusalem at the Babylonish captivity, but a remnant was spared and brought back, that the king

might be presented to them ; but Him they refused, and are now set aside till His return. There are only sixty-nine weeks of Daniel definitely* fulfilled. The last week is not fulfilled ; it is not come. So as to the great feasts. You have got the Passover fulfilled : " Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us ;" and the feast of Pentecost has its fulfilment in the descent of the Holy Ghost ; but the feast of Tabernacles is not fulfilled at all : you have no antitype yet whatever. But here the other blessed work of God comes in, that meanwhile God is calling out poor sinners to have a part with His Son, and be like His Son ; for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the First-born among many brethren. He has taken us poor sinners to have us in the same glory as His Son. That is another thing from prophecy, which gives us the portion of this world and the Jewish people. When He shall appear, we shall appear with Him, in glory.

The Christian's position as to the coming of the Lord is, that he is waiting for Christ to come according to His promise. People say He comes at death. I reply, Do you make death the same as Christ ? If this were the case we should have him coming hundreds and hundreds of times, whereas

*Christians know that half the last week is passed, comprising the time of the ministry of Christ. But for unbelief only sixty-nine are passed. Hence the covenant is made for a week. But God only counts from the beginning of the last half week, a time, times, and half a time.

we only read of His coming twice. (Heb. ix. 28.) Shall I tell you what will happen when Christ comes? Resurrection! This is quite a different thing from death. The coming of Christ is, for the saint, to be the end of death—exactly the opposite. I believe nobody can find a trace of the thought in Scripture that Christ comes at death. Instead of Christ's coming being death, it is resurrection; we go to Christ at death, it is not Christ who comes to us. Blessed it is "to depart and be with Christ;" "absent from the body, present with the Lord." But I am to show that this thought of the coming of Christ mixes itself with and characterizes every part of Christian life.

In the first place we have it in *conversion*, as already said. They were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. I will turn to other passages in support of it, but I will go through Thessalonians first. In the 2nd chapter of the 1st epistle, at the end, the apostle speaks of what his comfort and joy in service were. He had been driven away by persecution from the midst of the Thessalonians, and writing to them speaks of his comfort in thinking of them. But how? "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" He cannot speak of his interest in them and joy without bringing in the coming of the Lord Jesus. Again, as regards holiness (chap. iii. 12, 13): "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love . . . to the end

He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." As to the death of a saint, they were so thoroughly looking for the Lord that if a person died they thought he would not be there, ready to go to meet Him. They were wrong in this, and the apostle corrects their mistake. But now people say, when a saint dies, we shall go after him, we shall follow him. Here there is not a word about it. Suppose I were to go and say to a Christian now, who had lost some one dear to him, "Do not be uneasy, Christ will bring him with Him," he would think me wild, or find it utterly unintelligible; and yet that is the way the apostle does comfort them: "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (chap. iv). He then shows the way He will do it: "We which are alive . . . shall not prevent them which are asleep." "Prevent" is an old word for anticipate or go before. The first thing the Lord will do when He descends is to raise the sleeping saints. He is going to bring them with Him. If they have fallen asleep in Him, their spirits will have been with Him meanwhile; but then they will receive glory, be raised in glory, be like Him, and, going to meet Him in the air, will be for ever with Him; and when He appears He will bring them with Him, and they will appear with Him in glory. You get it in a general way in the 5th chapter, where he desires their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto

the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This hope, then, is a part of the Christian state in every aspect. Conversion, joy in service, holiness, a believer's death, the goal of blamelessness, all are connected with the coming of the Lord.

Turn now to Matthew xxv. The wise virgins take oil in their vessels, but they all go to sleep and forget that the Bridegroom was coming. But what I have specially to inquire here is, What was the original calling? The statement, clear and positive, is, that they went forth to meet the Bridegroom, but while He tarried they "*all*" slumbered and slept—they all forgot His coming, the wise as well as the foolish. They got into some comfortable place; bivouacking in the open air is not comfortable to the flesh. But at midnight the cry is heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" The thing that roused them up from their sleep was the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom!" The original object then of the church was to go to meet Him who came; but even true believers forgot it. And, further, what awakes them from their sleep is their being again called out to meet Him at His coming. Then you get in "the talents" the same thing in regard to service and responsibility: He takes His journey and tells them, "Occupy till I come."

Another very striking fact as to this truth is, it is always presented as a present operative expectation. You will never find the Lord nor the apostles speaking of the Lord's coming, with the

supposition that it would be delayed beyond the life of those to whom they spoke. It might be at cock-crowing, or in the morning; but they were to be waiting for God's Son from heaven. In the parables referred to, the virgins who went to sleep were the same virgins as those who woke up; the servants to whom the talents were entrusted, were the servants who rendered an account of them at His return. We know centuries have passed, but He will not allow any thought of delay. "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." Again, what was the cause of the church's ruin? It was, "My Lord delayeth His coming." It was not saying, "He will not come;" but "He delayeth His coming." Then the servant began to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; and this brings on his judgment. If the bride loves the Bridegroom, she cannot but wish to see Him. Her heart is where He is. When the church lost this, she settled down to enjoyment where she was; she got worldly; she did not care about the Lord's return.

Turn now to Luke xii., and you will find how his waiting for Christ characterizes the Christian, and therewith the serving Him while He is away. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." They were to have their loins girded, their lights burning. Such was the characteristic of a Christian. They were to be as men that waited

for their Lord, to open to Him immediately ; their affections in order and full profession of Christ, but watching for their Lord's return. It is not merely having the Lord's coming as a doctrine. The blessing rests on those who are *watching*, "like men that wait for their Lord." "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find *watching*." They must be girded, and have their lights bright while He is away, and *watch* for His return ; and then He makes them sit down to meat, and girds Himself, and comes forth and serves them. *Now* they must be girded and watch ; our rest is not here. "But," says the Lord, "when I have things all My own way, you shall sit down to meat, and I will gird Myself and come forth and serve you. I will make you enjoy all the best that I have in heaven, and I will minister it to you ; only be found *watching*."

Christ is for ever in grace a servant according to the form He has taken. He is girded now according to John xiii. They would naturally think that if He were gone to heaven in glory there was an end of His service to them ; but He tells them, "I am going away ; I cannot stay here with you, yet I cannot give you up ; but as I cannot remain on earth with you, I must make you fit for Me in heaven. 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me .'" It is water here, not blood. "He that is washed (or, more correctly 'bathed') needeth not, save to wash his feet." Life giving conversion, as well as salvation, is fully wrought ; but

if we pick up dirt in the way, even as to communion and the walk, grace and advocacy are there to wash our feet and have us practically fit for being with God where Christ has gone. Growth there is, or ought to be ; and, as to the unchangeable cleanness of the new man, this is certain. But if I have not been watchful, I shall pick up dirt in my path. I cannot have this in heaven, nor in communion with what is there ; and the Lord says in effect, "I am not going to give you up because I am going to God and glory, and so I must have you in a state suitable to that, and washed as you are (though not all, for Judas was there), keep you fit, restoring you when you fall. But you must be watching while I am away."

It is a comfort to me to know that all the virgins woke up in time, and I believe all His saints will wake up before the Lord comes. The difficulty to the heart in looking around is that so many do not receive it. But the true service of the Lord is connected with watching. That is the state to which the blessing and the heavenly feast are attached. Then you find another thing—serving while He is away ; and the result of this is, "Of a truth I will make him ruler over all I have." It is far better to eat, as is said of Israel, of the finest of the wheat, and that in the Father's house ; but if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. With the serving in His absence, I get the ruling ; as the heavenly feast with watching. The Lord then goes on to what we

had in Matthew, the saying, "My Lord delayeth His coming."

What the Lord is pressing as to *watching* and *servicing* is, "I am coming again. You must be watching for Me, as men that wait for their lord." That was to be their character as Christians. Supposing all the people in this town were actually watching, waiting for the Lord from heaven, not knowing the moment He would come, do you think the whole town would not be changed? A person once said to me that if everybody believed that, the world could not go on at all; and the Christian cannot, in a worldly way.

If people were waiting for the Lord from heaven, the whole tone and character of their life would be changed. I may have the doctrine of Christ's coming, when I am really not looking for Him; but I should not like to be heaping money together when the Lord comes. I should, if possible, huddle it away out of His sight.

Turn now to Philippians iii. Paul was running a race. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark (or 'goal') for the prize of the high calling (or rather 'calling on high') of God in Christ Jesus." And how does he speak of Christ at the close of that chapter? "Brethren, be followers together of me . . . for our conversation" (our living association) "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," etc. He had

seen Christ, and would not be content till he was like Him in glory. To be with Him then, was, no doubt, far better ; but it was not the goal of his heart. People talk of going to glory when they die. There is no such thought in Scripture as being in glory, when we depart to be with Christ. Most blessed and happy to be with Him ! This I would surely press ; but it is when He comes that He will change these vile bodies (or rather 'bodies of humiliation') and fashion them like unto His glorious body (or rather 'His body of glory'). I am waiting till I get my body changed, to be like Christ in glory ; and, what is more, Christ is waiting too.

The Lord's coming affects all the truths of Christianity. Christ is not now on His own throne at all. He is sitting now, according to the word in Heb. x. (and also in Psalm cx.), at God's right hand, sitting on the Father's throne, as He says Himself in the promise in Laodicea. He has settled the question of sin for them at His first coming, and they have no more conscience of sins ; they are perfected for ever. And to them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation. He is expecting in the heavens *till* His enemies be made His footstool. Why does He say "His enemies" ? Because He is sitting down after He has finished all for His friends ; that is, those that believe in Him. Have all your sins been put away out of God's sight ? If not, when will it be done ? That you grow in hatred

of them all—all right ! But if they are not borne and put away on the cross, when will it be done ? Can you get Christ to die again ? Can you get anyone else to do it ? If it is not done, it will never be done at all. Beloved friends, if the work is not finished, it will never be done at all. But it is done, and therefore He says, the worshippers once purged “ have no more conscience of sins . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews x. 2, 14.)

If you look now at Col. iii., you will find the same thing in its full result held out as our hope. “ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” The first promise He gave the disciples when going away was His coming again. Do not be troubled (as they naturally would be on losing the One for whom they had given up all), I am not going to be all alone in My Father’s house. There, there are many mansions, I am going to prepare a place for you. Do not be uneasy, I cannot stay with you, so I must have you up there with Me ; and the first thing is, “ I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.” It is not one by one by death, but by resurrection for the dead, and change for the living, His actual coming to receive them, raised or changed, to be with Himself where He was gone, and like Himself, that we shall be in glory with Him.

Again, at His departing from His disciples left down here, what was the last they saw of Him ?

They saw Him go up before their eyes, and the angel said to them, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner." His coming is wrought into the whole texture of the Christian life.

What is Scripture's last word? "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." In the same way you get it at the beginning (of Revelation), with warning and threatening, Jesus Christ, Faithful Witness, the First-begotten, etc. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." Then at the end (prophetic instructions are over, I do not enter into them), "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel," etc. "I am . . . the bright and morning star." Now I get what these saints who were watching, and those only, see. There is no star to be seen when the sun is risen; they see the morning star while it is yet early dawning, for the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Here He calls Himself "the root and offspring of David; the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." If the bride has got the sense of being the bride of Christ, she must desire to be with the Bridegroom; there is not proper love to Christ unless she wants to be with Him. Abram said of his wife, "She is my sister;" then the Egyptians—the world—took her into their house.

I just add that you get here the whole circle of the church's affections. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come" (this is to the Bridegroom); "and

let him that heareth say, Come." That is, the Christian who has heard the word of his salvation joins in the cry. Then those who thirst for some living water are called to come. The saints of the church can say, though they have not yet the Bridegroom in glory, that they have the living water, and so call, "Let him that is athirst, come," and then address the call universally, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This they have, though not the Bridegroom. What I find then is, that in the word of God the thoughts and feelings and conduct and doings and affections of Christians are identified with the coming of Christ. Take all these things, and you will find that they are all identified with the coming of the Lord.

Take the first epistle of John, chapter iii., "Behold, what manner of love," etc. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (that is settled), "and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Beloved friends, we are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." This is what God has purposed for us. When are we to be like Christ in the glory? When He comes. It is not when a person dies, and the spirit goes to be with Christ; for then he is like Christ when Christ was in the grave; and I do not want to be like Christ when Christ was in the grave. But if I die I shall be like Christ as to that, but this is not what I want,

though blessed in itself. I want to be like Him in the glory. When will that be? When He comes He will change our vile bodies (or 'bodies of humiliation'), and fashion them like to His glorious body (or, 'body of glory'); so here it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear we shall be like Him. Now mark the practical consequences upon the man that has been in his faith brought up to God's purposes: "He that hath *this* hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." I know I am going to be perfectly like Christ in the glory, therefore I want to be as like Him as possible down here. You find here again what the Holy Scriptures are explicit in teaching, that holiness also is always referred to conformity to Christ in glory. I shall have that likeness to Christ in glory, and nothing else is my standard. You will find one passage already quoted, "To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." The perfection of the Christian is to be like Him when He comes. What again I find as to Christians in 1 Cor. xv. is, "It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory." We have the blessed assurance that accompanies true assured hope of the first resurrection and its results.

We shall be perfectly like Christ when we are raised from the dead. We give an account of ourselves, but it is when we are like the Person to

whom we are to give an account. The full efficacy of His first coming has been lost, and therefore people are not comfortable when thinking of His second coming. But for the saint "Christ is the first-fruits, then they that are Christ's at His coming." Is Christ the first-fruits of the wicked? Surely not. Just as Christ's resurrection was the public testimony of God's approval of Himself and His work, the resurrection of the saints will be a testimony of God's approval of them as in Him. As we find in Luke xx. 35, 36. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection *from* the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: but are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection?"

Could anybody show me a single passage about a general resurrection? There is no such thought in Scripture. You get the 25th chapter of Matthew quoted for it, that the goats and sheep represent the two classes; but He has come in His glory down here. He is not sitting on the great white throne, before which heaven and earth flee away. Here He is come, and sits on His throne. When He does come, and sits there, He gathers all the Gentiles—the nations—to judge them. It is the judgment of the quick or the living. You have three sets of people, not two; and you have nothing of resurrection. You have sheep, goats, and brethren. (Matt. xxv. 40.) So far from its being

a general resurrection, there is no reference to resurrection at all ; it is quite a different subject. Further, the only question is, How have they treated his brethren? The ground of judgment does not apply to ninety-nine out of a hundred of those who are to be judged, if it were a general judgment. Those that have had the testimony of the kingdom before He comes to judge the quick will be treated according as they have received God's messengers, but such only are in judgment.

And now the point I return to is, that the coming of the Lord influences and forms the whole life of the Christian. You cannot separate anything in the whole course and ways of the Christian from the coming of the Lord Jesus ; and there are but the first coming, and the second coming. He has appeared once in the end of the world, and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time unto salvation. It is true that He comes and dwells in us ; but we speak with Scripture of actual coming. If you take holiness, or service, or conversion, or ministry, or a person who has died, they are all connected with Christ's coming. He warns them to be found *watching*.

I might quote other passages, but I have quoted enough to show that the Lord's coming is connected with everything in the Christian life. When we see Him as He is, then, and then only, shall we be like Him, according to God's purpose. And now I only ask, Are you waiting for God's Son from heaven ?

His bearing the sins of many is the only ground of hope for any sinner ; that is, the finished work which enables us, through faith, to look for Him when sealed by the Holy Ghost. Then, I say, what am I waiting for? I am waiting for God's Son from heaven. Can you say, "I am watching for Christ"? I do not know when He will come. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." I do not ask you, "Do you understand about the coming of the Lord?" To wait for Him was the thing they were converted to. The thing that woke the virgins up was, "Behold, the Bridegroom!" Are you actually waiting for God's Son from heaven? Would you like Him to come to-night? Peter explains the delay. He says His long-suffering is salvation, not willing that any should perish. What would you think if He were to come to-night? Would it just be what your soul was looking for? I am going to sit down to table, and He is going to gird Himself and come forth and serve me. People think that it would stop the gospel to be waiting for God's Son from heaven. Did the acceptance by Noah of God's testimony about the deluge stop his preaching? Far from hindering, it was what gave edge to all. May the Lord give us to be ready when He comes—found *WATCHING FOR HIM.*
