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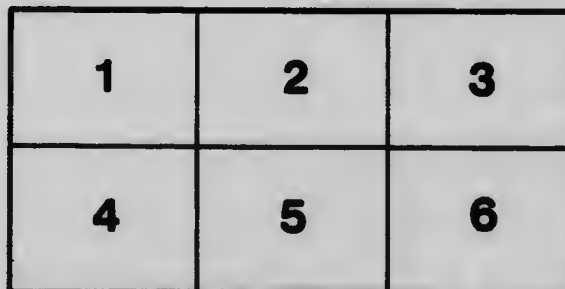
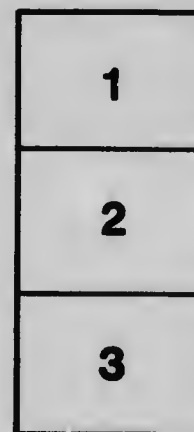
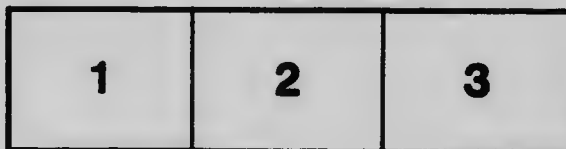
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A Sermon on
The Second Advent of
Our Lord

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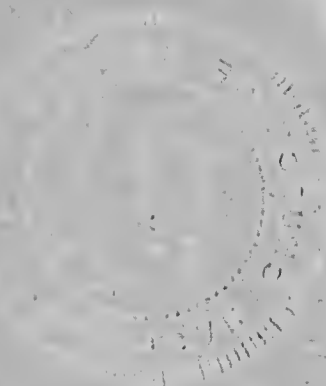
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A Sermon on The Second Advent of Our Lord

"And as they heard these things he added and spake unto them, because he was nigh to Jerusalem; and they thought that the kingdom of God should sooner appear."—Luke 19: 17.

The Jews of our Lord's time were expecting the advent of the promised Messiah—the Saviour of whom so many of the prophets had spoken.

The words of the prophets, from David, in his prophetic psalms, to Malachi, the last of the prophets, had led them to expect a Deliverer who would take the position of a king over Israel, and ultimately over the whole world. And His kingdom was to be a heavenly, everlasting kingdom—the kingdom of God on this earth, under their Messiah, who was to be a descendant of King David.

So far, we must remember, the Jews were perfectly right. In proof of which I call your attention to the prophecy of Jeremiah (ch. 23: 5): "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch; and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, —*The Lord our Righteousness.*”

Certainly the lowly Jesus of Nazareth is the “*Lord our Righteousness.*” And a heavenly messenger—John the Baptist—had lately been sent to the Jewish nation to prepare them for the advent of the Messiah; to warn them that One whose shoe latchet he was not worthy to unloose was soon to make His appearance among them; and that the promised Kingdom of God was at hand. And then the Lord Jesus Himself, when He commenced His ministry, we are told, “Came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God; and, saying, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel”—the good news.

Remembering all this, it is not surprising that the followers of our Lord thought that the glory of the promised kingdom was near at hand. And now that Jesus, after doing many wonderful miracles, was drawing nigh to Jerusalem, the city of the Great King, they thought that the Kingdom of God *should immediately appear.*

But His followers had overlooked those prophecies which alluded to the sufferings of the Messiah; and they had no idea of the necessary preparation for that Kingdom of God; and when they found that Jesus came in lowliness and humility, and required the same spirit in the hearts of His disciples, most of them soon turned

against Him and rejected Him with scorn and hatred, and finally He was put to death at Jerusalem as an impostor.

It was no wonder that the Jewish people did not at once understand the nature of that kingdom; nor that now, when our Lord was approaching Jerusalem, they thought that the promised Kingdom of God should immediately appear. But their sin was that they hardened their hearts against Him who endeavoured to teach them to understand the *nature* of that heavenly Kingdom.

And it was to shew them that though the *preparatory* condition of the kingdom, that is, the Church of Christ, was at hand, yet that His reign in glory as king over the nations of the world was *not* so very near, that He told them this parable of the nobleman who "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return."

To understand the parable, we must remember that it was customary in those days that when the tributary kings under the Emperor and Senate of Rome were appointed to the government of a kingdom they often went up to Rome to receive investiture of the kingdom, and then they returned to their kingdom to reign over it.

• So our Lord said in His parable: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return," and when he went away he

gave certain gifts to his servants for the use of which in his absence they were to give account to him on his return; and then in proportion to their diligence and faithfulness he would reward them.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ taught the Jews that He was *not then* going to reign over His kingdom; and thus also *we* may learn that His triumphant reign over the nations of the world does not commence until He comes again.

Our Lord never taught (as some people imagine) that the Jews were *wrong* in expecting that He would some day reign over the whole world, as Jeremiah and the other prophets have predicted.

The universal reign of Christ on earth as King of Israel and all the nations is predicted in the Bible over and over again, both in the Old and in the New Testament. It would take too much time to refer to all these prophecies now; but surely that one plain prophecy that I have quoted is sufficient if we believe in prophecy at all. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch; and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is His name whereby He shall be called,—The Lord our Righteousness."

Our Lord had taught that before men could enter into the glory of that kingdom they must become

humble-minded and teachable like children; and must have the rule of His kingdom within them; and He now taught them that He would not reign over His kingdom until His return from the far country to which He was about to go.

In the meantime, there was a preparatory work to be done in His kingdom. He must go up to Jerusalem and be scourged and mocked and suffer a cruel death for the sins of the world; and be raised from the dead, and then ascend into heaven; the gospel must be preached among all the nations of the world as a witness of God's truth and mercy; He must send the Holy Ghost with spiritual gifts for the perfecting of the saints and the building up of His Church; and for the use that His servants have made of these gifts during His absence, they will have to give account at His return from that far country to take possession of His kingdom. We therefore still pray: "Thy kingdom come."

How is it then that so many people imagine that *now* is the time of the reign of Christ on earth, or, at any rate, that the glory and perfectness of the Church as the Kingdom of God is to be attained to *before* Christ comes again?

It is because the Church, when the Roman Empire in the 4th century became nominally Christian, fell into the error of supposing that *then* the heavenly King began His reign of judgment and justice upon the earth,

and because the Popes of Rome claimed and still claim to be the viceroys of Christ.

But, oh, when we look back through the centuries which have elapsed since then, and even to the present time, where do we see the predicted characteristics of Christ's reign? The faithful servants of Christ, however numerous they may be, even in these days, are few indeed compared with the multitude in every part of Christendom who are boldly saying: "We will not have this man to reign over us."

What millions have been slain in the wars of Christendom! What murders and robberies and injustice and blasphemies defile this preparatory state of the Kingdom of God! And what confusion and inefficiency even in the household of faith.

The reign of Antichrist is drawing near; and *then* the coming of the Lord and His triumph over His enemies. (2 Thess. 2.)

But even after the second Advent of the Lord, the Church has to be extended over the whole world and perfected in unity before the glory of the Kingdom will have fully come.

And not until a thousand years after the judgment of Antichrist (the Beast) and his followers, will the final Day of Judgment take place, with the resurrection of all that have ever lived, both good and bad, and the passing away of the present heavens and earth—that awful day described by St. Peter in his 2nd Epistle, when he says:

“The heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

And now let me call your attention to another text which throws light upon this subject.

In that chapter of St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians which is used as a part of our Funeral Service, the Apostle thus speaks of the order or sequence of the several resurrections from the dead.

Besides the resurrection of Christ, he mentions two other resurrections. He says: “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits (that resurrection has already taken place), then afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming (i.e., at His second coming).” And in the Book of Revelation this is described and is called the *first* resurrection of the saints. None of the wicked, you will observe, are to rise at that time, but only those that are truly Christ's. “Then (after that) cometh the end”; another and a general resurrection of all the rest who have ever lived, both good and bad; and Christ, having fully accomplished His Father's will, shall then deliver up the Kingdom to the Father. For He must reign, St. Paul says (that is, after His second coming), till He hath put all His enemies under His feet; and then the last enemy, that is death itself, shall

be destroyed. There are, you perceive, three several stages in the Lord's work—the second and third of which include a considerable period of time.

In the first period, that is from the birth of our Lord until His death, He was manifested as the Great *Prophet* predicted by Moses; in the second period, which is from the death of Christ to His second Advent, He is our great High *Priest*; and in the third period He is manifested as the great *King*. And this extended and gradual fulfilment of what the prophets had predicted concerning the Messiah has been and yet is a stumbling-block to the Jews in the first place and in a lesser degree to Christians also.

The Jews thought that all that the prophets had said about the glory of the Kingdom of God would take place at His Advent, for there was nothing said about a second advent; and now many Christians have persuaded themselves that Christ's reign as King has already come to pass, and therefore they expect that at His second Advent the last final judgment of all the living and the dead will immediately begin and be concluded.

But though the Righteous Branch of the House of David has come, whom we Christians acknowledge as "the Lord our Righteousness," His work has not yet prospered so that war has ceased, not even among His own citizens—millions of whom at the present time are preparing for the last great and most terrible war—and

hundreds of thousands scorning the very name of Christ, declaring openly in the very words of the parable: "We will not have this man to reign over us." And Judah is not yet saved as a nation; and Israel does not yet dwell safely, as Holy Scripture tells us will be the case when Christ reigns upon the earth. And yet Rome, and many Protestants also, believe and teach that Christ's reign on earth began centuries ago. Holy Scripture teaches us (Rev. 19 and 20) that when the Lord Jesus comes again He will bring with Him an elect number of His saints from heaven (or rather paradise); and that those faithful ones who at that time remain and are alive upon the earth shall be changed from mortality to immortality, and shall rise to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4: 17); and then Antichrist and his followers shall be destroyed.

This, we are told, is the first resurrection of the saints, and *then*, and *not till then*, comes the glorious reign of Christ upon the earth, when Judah shall be saved, and for at least a thousand years there shall be no wars, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The Church militant here on earth, the spiritual army of Christ, is at present in a woeful state of inefficiency and confusion. It has never yet attained to that perfectness which St. Paul speaks of in the 4th chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians.

It certainly has not yet as a spiritual body "all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The Lord even now saves us by union with Himself in His spiritual body, the Church; and by His Church He will sooner or later establish His reign; but He is now still personally absent in that far country from which He has not yet returned to call us to account for the use or non-use we have made of His several gifts.

We all have, like Israel of old, departed more or less from His ordinances, and are still "like children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Surely I come quickly, the Lord now says. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

But before He comes in visible glory, the present wave of infidelity and agnosticism sweeping over Christendom will have culminated in the "falling away" (apostasy) predicted by St. Paul (2 Thess. 2), and a faithful remnant of the Church militant must be prepared as a well-disciplined, spiritual army to meet the great Commander-in-Chief at His coming. And so He will take possession of His kingdom and extend it. Amen.

