

“SHALL HE FIND THE FAITH IN THE EARTH?”

The time of the coming of the Son of man is to be a time of exceeding small faith, insomuch that he makes it a question whether he shall find “the faith” upon the earth. That there will be an elect people, we know. There will be a people looking for, and by their prayers hastening, the coming of the Son of man; but they will be a poor, despised remnant, who, like Lot and Noah, shall testify to the saving of their own lives, and to the condemnation of the apostate and anti-Christian aggregation of “Names and blasphemy” which fills the world. Those things which the gospel speaks, it speaks to those who are under its dispensation. It is “the church,” not the heathen world, which is described in such terms as are proper to express the state of Sodom, and the world before the flood. How different is this account of the state of “the church” from that which they are daily looking for. They are looking for a great increase of the faith, a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a great conversion of the world!! They pretend they see the signs of it all around them, and to be daily waiting for a wonderful day of grace, a millennium of holiness, without one act of judgment to prepare the way of it; as if there were no tares to be burned up; no bad fish to be separated, and cast into the furnace. The nature of the kingdom, and the very existence of it as a purpose of God, is gathered from those scriptures which speak of the condition of the world after the Son of man is come, and this coming is described to be with judgment upon a secure and faithless church. But this generation says “No!” And why? Because they are lulled asleep into a fatal security, and are given up, as Paul predicted, to “believe a lie.” But, say they again, the coming of the Lord cannot be near at hand, because there is still much faith upon the earth; there never was a time, they say, when there was such a spread of religion in all ranks and classes of the community; and it is the favourite theory of some of them, that religion has been gradually increasing in the world unto this day, and has never been for a moment retrograde. These things would appear incredible if we had not had them stated by the leaders of the “religious world” themselves. Now to all this we answer—What proof would you desire that a wife’s affection had fallen away from her husband, and that her faithfulness had also perished, than that she never desired his presence, nor hoped for his coming again to her any more? Can there be good faith in Christ, the Saviour and Husband of the true church, when a church pretending to be that church desires not his coming, and, when it is spoken of to her, disbelieves, derides, or howls with violent indignation? Can there be any faith, or any love from a wife to her husband long separated, whom she wishes not to see again? Whence arises this instinctive revulsion against any discourse of the Lord’s coming? Whence this aversion to the whole subject? Whence this unwillingness to examine the documents? Whence this hatred and derision of those who do? It is not as if they had studied the subject, and been rooted and grounded in another opinion concerning it: they are indifferent to it altogether. This is a sure proof how little faith there is in Christ. Moreover, ask them what they do believe? They will tell you that they believe he died for sinners. But ask further, Did he die for *your* sins? They reply they *hope* so. But do you *believe* so? It is not about your *hopes*, but about your *faith*, we enquire. Either no answer at all, or a doubting one. Are they at peace with their God, or do they stand in doubt? They stand in doubt. What, then, have they believed? Nothing that can be seen, even in that personal reference to which they exclusively devote themselves. Have they peace of conscience, or joy in the Holy Spirit? Do they believe, with Abraham, that they are heirs of the world as the consequence of obeying the truth as it is in Jesus? Are they striving, like Paul, that if by any means they may attain to the resurrection of the dead? They have not even heard of a resurrection from among the dwellers in the dust, unto which it is any difficulty or any prerogative to attain. What, then, we ask, is the faith of this throng they call “the church?” We ask this, for we can find nothing but a mixture of *opinion* and *doubt*. Men are surely *convinced* of nothing. But opinion is not faith, nor is doubt faith; nor is the belief of Christ’s birth, life, and death, faith; which Paul defines to be, “The substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen.” So that it is manifest that this day is a day of very little faith, when nothing is believed concerning the future. Now, when nothing is believed concerning our own personal benefit in Christ, but is left in doubt; when nothing is believed concerning the ordinances; every doctrine is held only according as it can be demonstrated to the intellect, and discipline observed only as its usefulness can be seen, or the sanction of public opinion obtained for it; where the hope of the Lord’s coming is put off to an indefinite distance; the mention of his kingdom reverently wrapped up in the deepest obscurity,—verily, verily, if the Son of Man were to come this day, would he find the faith upon the earth?—*Quoted in the Herald of the Kingdom.*
