

THE
SECOND COMING
OF CHRIST

THE ONLY CHRISTIAN HOPE

A LECTURE

BY THE LATE
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OF BIRMINGHAM.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF LECTURE XIII. IN THE BOOK
"CHRISTENDOM ASTRAY."

- " I will come again and receive you unto myself " (John 14 : 3).
" This same Jesus shall so come " (Acts 1 : 11).
" Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him " (Rev. 1 : 7).
" Yea, I come quickly " (Rev. 22 : 12. R.V.).

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THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

THE ONLY CHRISTIAN HOPE

HOPE is the peculiar feature of the Gospel. Other systems boast of ethical principles which it is expected the judgment will sanction, and the enlightenment will apply to the formation of character ; but the gospel excels these in its power to produce the results aimed at by them, through the power of an element of which all systems of human wisdom are necessarily destitute.

Theoretical morality may practically influence superior minds ; but it is powerless to raise the fallen, or develop moral fructification in naturally barren minds. Its appeals are to trained intellect and moral aspiration ; and for that reason, it is impotent with the vast majority of mankind.

The gospel approaches human nature, not with hard reasonings and lifeless aphorisms, but with personal love and inspiring promises. Laden with tenderness and cheer, it subdues the obduracy, and dissipates the lethargy, of human hearts, and bears them upward to moral perfection by the influence of its affections and hopes. It is exactly adapted to the necessities of human nature, present and prospective. It only requires to be received with full assurance of faith ; and then, unlike human systems of philosophy, it satisfies the heart while enlightening the intellect, and tranquilises the spirit, which can elsewhere find no rest in this world of anxiety and care.

Nevertheless, it develops these results by an intelligent process. There is nothing unaccountable in its mode of operation. Its love is a matter of specific assurance, to be realised by faith, and not a mysterious influence stealing miraculously over the heart. Its hopes grow out of definite promises, understood and assuredly believed, and are not shapeless ecstasies of incomprehensible origin. Its operations are altogether effected on truly rational principles. Designed for human nature, it is adapted to its mental constitution

and powerful on natural methods, to elevate and purify all who submit themselves to its teachings, and give earnest heed thereto.

We purpose to make manifest the truth of the proposition, that the great hope of the gospel relates to the second (personal) coming of the Lord Jesus; that that event is the central object upon which enlightened anticipation lays hold as the climax of desire, the crisis of reward; and that, therefore, this truth is one of the main influences by which the heart is purified, and the believer himself prepared and made "meet for the Master's use."

By the second coming of the Lord Jesus, is meant the event obviously signified by the language, namely, the return from heaven to earth of our Saviour, who is now at the right hand of God. It will be admitted that Christ was really on the earth during his sojourn among men, some nineteen hundred years ago, and that he ascended *bodily* to heaven after the resurrection. The proposition, then, is that at a certain time, he will descend just as really as he ascended, and appear in person on the earth, as the same Lord Jesus who sojourned in Judea among the Jews and Romans.

THE "ONE HOPE."

First, let us realise that the apostles declare there is only "one hope," as there is only "one faith and one baptism." This is the teaching of Paul, in Ephesians 4 : 4-5 : "There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in ONE HOPE of your calling." That this "one hope" is an essential constituent of the gospel, is evident from Paul's words to the Colossians, chap. 1 : 5, where, speaking of "the hope which was laid up for them in heaven" (Christ being there), he says, "*Whereof ye heard before in THE WORD OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.*" He even says, "We are saved *by hope*" (Rom. 8 : 24), and solemnly assures the Hebrews that their salvation was contingent upon their adherence to that hope. His words are, "Whose house are we, *if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of THE HOPE firm unto the end*" (Heb. 3 : 6). His language to the Colossians is equally striking on this point :—

"He will present you holy and unblameable and unreprou-
able in his sight; *IF ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled,
and be not moved away from the HOPE OF THE GOSPEL.*" (Col. 1 :
22-23).

These testimonies ought to impress us with a sense of the gravity of the question about to be considered. It is no light thing to be doctrinally mistaken as to that for which we should hope. What a misfortune to spend our spiritual energies in looking for that which God has never promised! Such a mistake implies ignorance of the real "hope of the Gospel"; and this "ignorance," Paul says, "alienates from the life of God" (Eph. 4 : 18). What

God has never promised, no one will ever receive ; for how should the idle longings of man divert the purpose of the Almighty ? especially when the gratifying of those longings will involve the failure of the promises really given. "According to your faith be it unto you." This is a divine principle (Matt. 9 : 29). If a man squander his faith upon that which has no foundation in truth, he sows to the wind. The faith which builds its house upon the foundation-rock of the assured promises of God, will alone withstand the storm that will sweep away "the refuge of lies."

THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST.

Before presenting testimony concerning the coming of the Lord, it will be of advantage to touch on the personal ministry of Christ when on earth, in the land of Judea, which he travelled constantly for three years, doing wonderful works in attestation of his divine mission. He proclaimed the things of the kingdom of God, and asserted his Messiahship in connection therewith. This proclamation had the effect of drawing around him many disciples, and of causing them to look upon him as the anointed king of Israel in a literal sense, and destined to effect "the redemption of Israel" from the Romans and all other nations, and to establish the kingdom of God in triumph over all the earth. This view of Christ, created in the minds of his disciples by his own teachings, is condemned by thousands of well-meaning but mistaken people. Most uncalled for is the condemnation, and quite scriptural (with slight modification) is the view condemned.

LOOKING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The teaching of Christ on the subject had a further effect upon the minds of the disciples. It created in them an expectation that they themselves should *share the kingly honours of Christ at the time when his kingly mission should be manifested*. This is also universally admitted although condemnation is freely administered. The disciples are reprobated as "carnally minded," for having looked for what is generally disparaged as "a temporal kingdom."

Now, we shall find that there is much injustice in this imputation against the taste and judgment of the disciples. There was, no doubt, a good deal of unhallowed ambition among them, which their divine master repeatedly strove to repress ; but this ambition did not show itself in inventing a false doctrine, or carnally perverting a true one. It rather manifested itself in the form of impropriety of spirit, *in relation to that which was true*. It gave them mistaken ideas of the object of the kingdom of God, and the principles on which admittance to it was to be granted ; but it did not cause them to misapprehend the nature of that kingdom. There is a distinction here that is very important ; the over-

looking of which leads to lamentable conclusions. Their hope of inheriting the kingdom of God in substantial manner, like their estimate of Christ's kingship, was founded both on prophetic testimony, and the express teaching of our Lord himself. In the prophets they had observed such testimony as the following:—

"The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Dan. 7 : 18).

"The time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (verse 22).

"And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom UNDER THE WHOLE HEAVEN shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High" (verse 27).

"Let the saints be joyful in glory, let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written; THIS HONOUR HAVE ALL HIS SAINTS" (Psalm 149 : 5-9).

"Instead of thy fathers (referring to Christ), shall be thy children (namely, the saints, his people), whom thou mayest make PRINCES in all the earth" (Psalm 45 : 16).

"Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and PRINCES shall rule in judgment" (Isaiah 32 : 1).

"I will gather the remnant of my flock (of Israel) out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase; and I will set up SHEPHERDS over them, which shall feed them, etc." (Jer. 23 : 3-4).

"And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (Obadiah, verse 21).

CHRIST'S OWN PROMISES.

And they had noted the teaching of our Lord himself to the same effect in the following recorded sayings: "Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily, I say unto you, *he shall make him ruler over all his goods*" (Matt. 24 : 46-47). "And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, *I will make thee ruler over many things*" (Matt 25 : 20-21). "And he said unto him (that had gained the ten pounds), Well done, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, *have thou authority over ten cities*" (Luke 19 : 17). Again, Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the Jews, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, *and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*" (Matt. 21 : 43).

At the time Jesus used these words, the chief priests and rulers were in possession of the kingdom of Israel, which having been originally established by God, was called the kingdom of God. Now the generality of people can understand the meaning of this predicted taking of the kingdom from them. They know as a matter of history that the Jewish polity was abolished, and that in fulfilment of Christ's prediction, its rulers were deposed from their seats of authority, and in fact, "miserably destroyed" in the awful judgments that overtook the city of Jerusalem. But when directed to the second part of the statement, they stumble. "*It shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" Most people understand the taking, but what about the giving? *The thing taken is the thing given*: thus the kingdom of Israel, which was taken from the chief priests and Pharisees, shall be given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This is self-evident. The only question requiring settlement is, Who are the fruit-producing nation? And this is easily answered. Jesus said to his disciples, "Fear not, little flock: *for it is your Father's good pleasure to give YOU the kingdom*" (Luke 12:32). He further said, in answer to Peter's question, "Lord, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"

"I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, *when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, YE ALSO SHALL SIT UPON TWELVE THRONES, JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL*" (Matt. 19:27-28).

Again, when the disciples were assembled at the last supper, he said unto them—

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And *I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, AND SIT ON THRONES, JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL*" (Luke 22:28-30).

Here is a complete identification of "the nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." That nation consists of the disciples of our Saviour, who is himself at their head as "THE HEIR." They are styled by Peter (1 Epist. 2:9) "a chosen generation; a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD; a holy nation; a peculiar people;" agreeing with the testimony that they will yet inherit the kingdom of God which was taken from the Pharisees, and which, though now in ruins, is to be restored gloriously.

THE DISCIPLES NOT MISTAKEN.

If the disciples were so egregiously mistaken as they are supposed to be, in their idea of Christ's kingdom, and the position which they should hold in it, it is remarkable that we never read of any correction by Christ of that mistake. There were three

occasions which would have elicited such correction had it been required.

THE FIRST was when "the mother of Zebedee's children came with her two sons—James and John, saying, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left, *in thy kingdom*" (Matt. 20 : 20-21). Now, according to the popular view, this was the time to condemn the earthliness and carnal misdirected ambition supposed to be indicated in the request ; and doubtless the Saviour, who was never slow to correct the misconceptions of his disciples, nor even to rebuke with severity, would have done so if the request had really been of the nature to call for it ; but how different from anything of this kind is his answer. Not a word of censure nor implied rebuke ! Rather a direct confirmation of the idea embodied in the fond mother's petition. "Ye know not what ye ask," says he . . . "To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, BUT IT SHALL BE GIVEN to them for whom it is *prepared of my Father.*" So that instead of pronouncing her request inadmissible, he actually declares that the position requested *will be given* to those for whom it is prepared (verses 22-23).

THE SECOND OCCASION occurred after the resurrection. Jesus joined two of his disciples as they walked to the village of Emmaus (Luke 24 : 13), but held their eyes that they should not know him ; and they conversed with him on the subject of his own death. In the course of conversation, one of them, giving expression to the view shared by the disciples generally, said : "*we trusted that it had been he WHICH SHOULD HAVE REDEEMED ISRAEL*" (verse 21). Here again was the time to explain their misconception, had it been such ; but here again there is an entire absence of any remark of that nature. He uttered a rebuke, but it did not refer to what they did believe, but to what they did *not* believe. "O fools," exclaimed he, "and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory" (verses 25-26). He reproached them for disbelieving in his sufferings, and not for believing in his kingly glory.

THE THIRD TIME was immediately before the ascension. It is stated in Acts 1 : 6, that when Jesus and his disciples were come together, the disciples asked him, saying, "Lord, wilt thou at this time *restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" They had had their eyes opened to the fact and necessity of his sufferings ; but seeing that these were now accomplished, and that he had been gloriously resurrected from the dead, they evidently thought that the time had at last arrived when their cherished hope of national restoration under the Messiah should be realised ; and so they asked him if he would *at that time* bring their desires to pass.

Now it is a notable circumstance, that this question was put after Christ had spoken to the disciples of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God *during forty days*" (verse 3). This fact suggests the supposition that the question was based on the teaching they received during that time. At any rate, how was the question received? With discouragement and rebuke? Nay: but, as in the previous case, with confirmatory answer: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put in his own power" (verse 7). This was equivalent to affirming that "times and seasons" had been provided for the event contemplated in their question—that is, that the event, "the restoring again of the Kingdom of Israel," would really come to pass in process of time, but that it was not proper for them to know when. How inappropriate would such an answer have been, had their supposition of the fact of such restoration been mistaken.

But the fact is, there was no question of the event itself. Jesus had been enlightening them during forty days, in reference to it. Their enquiry related purely to the time of the event, and his answer was confined to that same thing. "They thought that the kingdom of God *should immediately appear*" (Luke 19:11). This was the peculiar error of early times. They did not err in believing that God would establish His Kingdom on earth, and that Christ should visibly manifest himself as the "king over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9): for these things had been abundantly testified in the prophets and proclaimed by Jesus himself. Their mistake lay in supposing that they would be accomplished in their own day.

MODERN MISTAKES.

The moderns have gone to the other extreme. *They do not look for the kingdom of God at all.* They magnify the sacrificial into unscriptural proportions, and omit the kingly altogether. They exclude the kingdom of God, knowing nothing of it, and believe in nothing concerning it, while the death of Christ overshadows and ensanguines every doctrine in their religious system. The disciples only saw the *king* in Christ, and expected his manifestation in their own times; the moderns only see the *sacrifice* and consider his mission accomplished in the saving of supposed immortal souls at death.

AFTER CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

The mistake of the disciples was corrected in due time. The occurrence of Christ's crucifixion and subsequent resurrection and ascension, supplied the lack in their knowledge, enabling them to see that the promised glories of the future age were

not attainable by mortal man without a sacrificial intervention—a tasting of death for every man, by which “many sons might be brought to glory.” But this addition to their knowledge did not divert their attention from these glories. Far otherwise; the death of Christ, apart from its prospective relationship, had no attractiveness; its interest and importance arose out of its connection with the glorious result it achieved. So that instead of shutting out the kingdom from their mind, it only intensified their appreciation, by showing them its value in the greatness of the sacrifice necessary to secure it. It gave eagerness to their ardour, leading them intensely to desire the consummation of “the glory to be revealed.” They therefore said, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” They evidently had no idea of Christ leaving them again. They had forgotten the many parables in which he had taught them his approaching departure into “a far country from which he should afterwards return, to take account of his servants” (Luke 19: 12; Matt. 25: 14). Only one feeling was uppermost in their minds—a desire that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

ANGELIC PROMISE OF CHRIST’S RETURN.

When, therefore, “he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight,” “they looked steadfastly toward heaven,” evidently struck with wonderment at the unexpected and inexplicable occurrence. Christ taken away from them again! They were unable to understand the new disappointment. Their hopes had been raised to the highest by a companionship of forty days, and the grief which had overwhelmed them during their master’s three days in the tomb, had been effaced by a sweet communion on “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;” and now again their Lord and Master, their best friend, their hope and salvation, he on whom their whole affection and their most yearning desire were concentrated, had left them. What were they to do? They were again cast upon the world; again thrown into perplexity. But this time relief was at hand:—

“Two men stood by them in white apparel, and said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? THIS SAME JESUS WHICH IS TAKEN UP FROM YOU INTO HEAVEN, SHALL SO COME IN LIKE MANNER AS YE HAVE SEEN HIM GO INTO HEAVEN” (Acts 1: 10-11).

The disciples were comforted in their perplexity by being assured that *Jesus would come again*; this was the balm administered to their troubled spirits; this, the hope by which they reconciled themselves to the absence of their Lord and Master. From that day forward, it became *the central doctrine* around which

all their teaching revolved, the constantly prominent and essentially distinguishing feature of the glad tidings they proclaimed.

CHRIST'S OWN TEACHING.

Jesus himself had repeatedly taught them the doctrine of his return, even previous to his crucifixion. The parable of the nobleman (Luke 19:11-12), was intended for this very purpose, for it is said that he used it "*because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*" Its teaching is very manifest:—

"A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, AND TO RETURN. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. . . . And it came to pass that WHEN HE WAS RETURNED, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to be called unto him."

By this the disciples were informed that Jesus should be taken up to heaven to do a work of preparation, and be invested with power, and should afterwards return to the earth, and THEN judge his servants; awarding to them the rulership of ten cities, or shameful rejection, according to their deserts (see rest of the parable). It was an amplification of his other statement: "*Thou shalt be recompensed AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST*"—a resurrection which does not take place until "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout" (1 Thess. 4:16). The parable of the ten virgins is to the same purport. The absent bridegroom is put for the ascended Christ, and the waiting virgins for those who "look for his appearing." Besides other parables to the same effect, Jesus had plainly said, "*The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them* (the disciples)" (Matt. 9:15); and had assured them without a figure: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF" (John 14:3).

But they were not able to understand the simple lesson, for the reason that *Christ was with them and they never expected him to leave them.* They could not see what his "return" could mean, when they knew nothing of a going away; but when the days came that the bridegroom was taken from them, "then remembered they his words." The announcement of the angels would revive the many lessons which Jesus himself had taught them of his purposed departure and his intended return to establish the kingdom; and thenceforward did the second coming of the Lord become their cherished hope—the *great event to which they looked for salvation.* It was the thing they preached and wrote about, the thing they hoped and prayed for, the top-stone of the faith which they preached.

Of course, it did not, and could not, exclude, but rather, involved and necessitated the doctrine of Christ's sacrifice for sin, and the necessity for contrition and personal regeneration ; for the second coming of the Lord was only good news to those who loved him, and who were prepared to meet him, and were fitted to be with him. Yet it was the great doctrine to which the others were subordinated.

APOSTOLIC TEACHING.

We find Peter teaching it in one of his first addresses after the ascension of Christ :—

“ And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive, UNTIL the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began ” (Acts 3 : 20-21).

And the same apostle, in writing to the elders among “ the strangers scattered abroad,” repeated the doctrine in the following connection :—

“ The elders who are among you, I exhort, whom am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ ; and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God . . . AND WHEN THE CHIEF SHEPHERD SHALL APPEAR, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away ” (1 Peter 5 : 1, 2-4).

Thus, for the immediate disciples of our Lord, it is proved beyond all question, that his second coming was their great hope—in fact, their *only* hope, for what other hope could they have ? They loved their master dearly, and knew that his return to them would be their own deliverance from the imperfections of a sinful body, and the afflictions of wicked men, and not only so, but the establishment on earth of “ glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will among men.” To what event, then, could they look with *Christian* hope other than to the coming of *Christ* ?

To what other event could they look with any hope at all ? No event in their lifetime had promise for them ; and what was there in death except a lightning-like bridge to the resurrection ? For them it had none of the fascination with which modern preaching has invested it. They did not recognise in “ sudden death,” “ sudden glory.” Death to them, instead of being the “ portal of bliss,” was “ the gate of corruption.” It was the bondage of that hereditary mortality from which Christ had come to deliver them—the bereaving grave-sleep in which they should rest till the return of their master to wake them to an incorruptible resurrection, when they should say, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? ”

No ; their hope was not death, but the return of the Lord, to which all their personal hopes and fears, and all their expectations

concerning the fulfilment of God's promises, inevitably directed them. Now, as it was with the apostles, so did it become with those who were afterwards converted to the Christian faith. The gospel preached, conveyed the same hopes which filled the bosoms of the preachers. Having proffered immortality for its basis, Christ's sacrifice as the means presented for faith, and the promised kingdom as "the inheritance" in which immortality would be enjoyed, it naturally led their minds to the coming of Christ as the great realising event; for all the promises contained in it go forward to "the revelation of Jesus Christ" as the time of fulfilment. Did Paul desire to attain to the resurrection from among the dead? (Phil. 3:11). He expected to be included among "those that are Christ's AT HIS COMING" (1 Cor. 15:23). Did he look forward to "a crown of righteousness" to be received from "the Lord the righteous judge?" (2 Tim. 4:8). He did not expect its bestowment till "HIS APPEARING and his kingdom" (verse 1), referred to as "that day," in verse 8.

THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL.

Now, were not these the hopes communicated in the Gospel to all who embraced it? Resurrection to eternal life, and inheritance in the kingdom of God, is the salvation offered to every son of Adam without distinction of age or station. If a man receive that promised salvation in the sense of believing it, he "rests in hope." Of what? Of its fulfilment. He may labour in the work of self-preparation with great devotedness—working out his own salvation with fear and trembling; he may follow righteousness with ardour, nursing moral life with enthusiasm; he may busy himself in every benevolent work, and take delight in pressing the Gospel upon the attention of his fellow-men; not only may do, but *must* do, if he would be an accepted servant when his Lord comes to take account of his stewardship; but what is the inmost feeling of his nature, if he be a true man? Hope—nay, constant longing desire—for the salvation he preaches to others. That is, tired of his own imperfections and faults as a perishable human being, he yearns for the immortality promised, and grieved with prevailing perversion and injustice, as politically and socially exemplified around him, he longs to be a witness of and partaker in, the perfection of the kingdom of God.

Now as these "things hoped for" cannot be attained till the coming of the Lord to bring them to pass, is it not plain that that coming will be the uppermost anticipation in his mind? It matters not that it is unlikely to occur in his lifetime; because, whether he live or die, it will be the time of his deliverance, and equally important as a matter of prospective contemplation a thousand years before the event, as to a Christian alive at Christ's coming.

It is only the popular dogma of immortal-soulism, as involving the belief in a conscious death-state in which spiritual destinies are sealed, that deranges the harmony of New Testament teaching on this point. If Christians at their death are really transported to heaven, to enjoy reward in the presence of the Saviour, the doctrine of his return to the earth cannot have any practical interest for them, because their salvation is altogether independent of it. They *die*, and are **SAVED**, according to the common teaching ; they go to heaven and see Christ ; therefore, their attention is naturally concentrated on death, as the great revealing event, and diverted from the coming of Christ, which they come to look upon as a sort of profitless and even questionable doctrine. In fact, the great majority of religious people go the length of rejecting it altogether, as a carnal conceit, and interpret all references to it in the New Testament as meaning the occurrence of death.

What a mighty perversion ! What fatal unbelief ! Yet the natural fruit of the corrupt tree on which it grows. If popular belief as to the death-state be correct, then the other is the logical result, and " orthodox " people who go to that extreme, are only consistent. But take away the doctrine of the immortality of the soul—the root of all evil in a theological sense—and harmony is restored. We see the righteous dead asleep in corruption, and perceive the necessity of the Redeemer's advent to wake them to incorruptibility and life and the essential importance of that event as the object of hope during their lifetime.

IN ALL THE EPISTLES.

We were endeavouring to show that the second coming of Christ was the hope of Christians converted by the preaching of the apostles. We now follow up the arguments advanced by quoting a number of passages from the epistles addressed to them in which the doctrine is set forth with a plainness which must carry conviction :—

" For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world, *looking for that blessed hope and THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF THE GREAT GOD AND SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST* " (Titus 2 : 11-12).

" For our conversation is in heaven *from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body " (Phil. 3 : 20-21).

" Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; *and unto them that look for him SHALL HE APPEAR THE SECOND TIME*, without sin unto salvation " (Heb. 9 : 28).

" *When Christ, who is our life, SHALL APPEAR*, then shall ye also appear with him in glory " (Col. 3 : 4).

"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" (1 John 3 : 2).

"Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son FROM HEAVEN, whom he raised from the dead" (1 Thess. 1 : 9-10).

"Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST" (1 Cor. 1 : 7).

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord . . . stablish your hearts, for THE COMING OF THE LORD draweth nigh" (James 5 : 7-8).

"That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, AT THE APPEARING OF JESUS CHRIST. . . . Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST" (1 Peter 1 : 7-13).

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thess. 3 : 5).

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men; even as we do toward you; 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" (1 Thess. 3 : 12-13).

"Keep this commandment without spot unrebukeable, until THE APPEARING of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6 : 14).

"And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2 : 28).

"It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thess. 1 : 6-7).

"The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at HIS APPEARING and his kingdom. . . . Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me AT THAT DAY; and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his APPEARING" (2 Tim. 4 : 1-8).

It is superfluous to comment upon these eloquent testimonies. They leave no room for argument. They show that the hope of the early Christians was different from that of modern professors; that it laid hold of the coming of the Lord. Jesus himself had exhorted them to be watchful: "*Behold I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth*" (Rev. 16 : 15). He had also said:—

"Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. . . . Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21 : 34-36).

Now, in the professing Christian world we see none of this anxiety about the second coming of Christ. There is general indifference to it. One is reminded of the statement in the parable,

“ While the bridegroom tarried, *they all slumbered and slept.*” Very few care about the approach of the bridegroom ; very few believe in it. When spoken to about it, their language is practically that of the scoffers of whom Peter wrote, “ Where is the promise of his coming ? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” The day comes when this apathy shall be rudely dispelled. “ As a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth,” said Jesus (Luke 21 : 35).

How is it that men are so blinded to the most obvious doctrine of the New Testament ? Because, under the guidance of a false theory, they look upon death as the eternal settlement of every man for weal and woe, whereas death settles nothing. It consigns us to darkness and silence, to await the coming of Christ. That is the great settling time “ when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ ” (Rom. 2 : 16). Blessed are all they who are prepared for its arrival. Happy are they who “ look for his appearing ” thrice happy they who “ love it ; ” for it is only to such that he is to “ appear the second time unto salvation.”

ADDENDA.

WHAT CHRIST IS COMING FOR.

It is of little advantage to know that Christ is coming again unless we know the purpose for which he comes. The common idea is that he is coming to burn up the earth, to hold a universal assize of the human race, to consign the unworthy to everlasting woe, and to take his accepted people away to the distant heaven of heavens. That this is a totally unscriptural and therefore erroneous idea, will be manifest from the following facts :—

1.—*The judgment that Christ will hold at his coming is limited to those who become responsible by enlightenment (a restricted class).*

PROOF : “ This is the condemnation that light is come ” (John 3 : 19).

“ The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you ” (John 12 : 48). “ If ye were blind ye should have no sin ” (John 9 : 41). “ Sin is not imputed when there is no law ” (Rom. 5 : 13). “ We (that is, Paul and the class he was writing to) must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ ” (2 Cor. 5 : 10). “ And it came to pass when he was returned, he commanded those servants to be called unto him to whom he had given the money ” (parable illustrative of Christ’s coming—see Luke 19 : 11-25).

These Scriptural limitations exclude the idea of a universal assize, and involve the conclusion which is plainly affirmed in other parts of Scripture, that the benighted, besides being without hope, are without responsibility, and pass away in death without the prospect of resurrection. “ They shall never see light ” (Psa. 49 : 19). “ They shall not rise ” (Isa. 26 : 14). See also Prov. 21 : 16 ; Jer. 51 : 57 ; Eph. 4 : 17, 18.

2.—*The earth belongs, by the Father's promise, to Christ and to Abraham, whose seed he is.*

PROOF: "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made . . . to thy seed which is Christ" (Gal. 3 : 16). "The promise to Abraham that he should be THE HEIR OF THE WORLD" (Rom. 4 : 13). "Thou art my son . . . I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa. 2 : 7, 8). "The kingdoms of this world are become (at the finishing of God's purpose) the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. 11 : 15).

If the earth is the inheritance of Christ and Abraham (whose inheritance is to be everlasting), the earth will not be burnt up when Christ comes, nor at any other time, but will last for ever, as declared (see Jer. 31 : 36 ; Psa. 104 : 5 ; Ecc. 1 : 4 ; Psa. 125 : 1 ; 78 : 69).

3.—*The earth is the promised inheritance of the righteous.*

PROOF: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5 : 5). "Those that wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth . . . the inheritance shall be for ever" (Psa. 37 : 9, 18). "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth" (Prov. 11 : 31).

If the earth is to be the everlasting inheritance of the righteous, what room is there for the popular notion that it is to be destroyed?

4.—*When Christ comes, he sets up a kingdom on earth to which there will be no end, although a change takes place in its constitution at the end of the first thousand years, consequent on the abolition of sin and death.*

PROOF: "His appearing and His KINGDOM" (2 Tim 4 : 1). "The God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never perish" (Dan. 2 : 44). "In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9 : 11). "The Kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (Micah 4 : 8). "On the throne of David and his kingdom, to order it and establish it" (Isa. 9 : 7). "Of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1 : 33). "Reign a thousand years" (Rev. 20 : 4, 6). "Then cometh the end . . . the Son shall himself be subject" (1 Cor. 15 : 24-28).

If Christ at his coming is to establish a kingdom on earth which will never come to an end, there will manifestly never be an end to the earth. The possibility of such a thing is excluded by the fact that the Divine purpose is to fill the earth with his glory (see Num. 14 : 21 ; Isa. 11 : 9 ; Hab. 2 : 14), and at the last to banish every curse, and death itself (Rev. 21 : 4 ; 22 : 3).
