

CHANGED IN A MOMENT AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM

A Dialogue on the
LORD'S COMING

By **H. T.**

LOIZEAUX BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
19 WEST 21st STREET - - - NEW YORK

FIFTEEN CENTS

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A Dialogue

WELL, William, said a Christian father to his son, who had come to see him one Sunday evening, I hear you have been attending those lectures on the Lord's coming.

Yes, father. I have ; and I only wish you had been with me, for what I have learned by so doing has made it appear as though I had been asleep almost all my days, so different does every thing look in the light of the Lord's coming. You seem different ; I myself seem different ; the world seems different, and all I see bears another aspect altogether in the light of that glorious day. I have been a Christian now these ten years, and I have heard you say that you have known the Lord nearly forty years, but I never heard you speak of these things ; neither have I ever heard any one else speak of them till very lately, and it makes me feel quite sad to think that I should have been converted all this time without knowing that that glorious One is coming to take us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also, and not only to be with Himself, but to be like Him forever. (Johnxiv. 3 ; Phil. iii. 20, 21 ; 1Johniii. 2.)

Oh, William, I hope the Lord is coming every day, and every hour in the day, to comfort or convert some poor soul. I am sure I feel Him coming, and comforting me continually ; and I know He comforts us when we are assembled together in His name ; and I hear every now and then of some poor sinner being converted : what is that but the Lord's coming ? This is the way I have always looked at it, and I am sure it has given much joy and comfort to my soul so to do.

In this sense, father, the Lord Jesus is with us

always, according to His promise.—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [or age].” But His being with us down here, in our sorrows and trials, is a very different thing from our being with Him up there in His glory, with these vile bodies changed, and made like unto His glorious body, sitting with Him on His throne, being His bride, His companion, sharing in every thing which He has. Oh, my heart bounds with joy at the glorious prospect, knowing that it is all sure and certain *through His death*. Three times in the last chapter of the book of Revelation the Lord Jesus tells us that *He is coming quickly*. Oh, father, the Lord Jesus is coming quickly—surely He is coming. (Rev. iii. 11; John xiv. 3.)

But, William, do we not go to be with the Lord when we die? Did He not say to the believing thief on the cross, “This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise”? And St. Paul says, “Absent from the body, and present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. v. 8.)

Yes, dear father, but do you not see that it is “*absent from the body*”? and this is a very different thing from *the body* being *glorified*, and with the Lord. When we die, our souls go to be with Christ, most assuredly, and this is most happy, but our bodies go into the grave. The souls of Paul and of Peter, and of thousands of God’s saints, are up there with Christ, enjoying the Lord’s presence, but are still in an unclothed state, and therefore not glorified, but in a waiting position, until that happy moment comes when their bodies will be raised again, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Therefore death is never spoken of in the Word of God as *the hope* of the believer, but always *the Lord’s coming*. (Phil. iii. 20, 21; Titus ii. 13.)

Yes, William, I know the Scriptures speak of the Lord Jesus coming with ten thousands of His saints, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;

and then we shall really know whether we are His or not.

But, further, this is not the time of which I am speaking. Before the Lord comes *with* His saints, He will first come *for* them; because we must be with Him up there before we can come forth with Him down here, and the distinction between these two events is marked very plainly in Scripture: for when He comes *with* His saints, every eye shall see Him (Rev. i. 7.); but when He comes *for* His saints, it is not at all likely that any one but His saints will see Him; for as the apostle John says, "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2.) So that it seems very plain that every one who sees Him then will know this transforming power. And then again, when He comes *with* His saints, He will come to this earth, His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives (Zech. xiv. 4.); but when He comes *for* His saints, He will only come into the clouds, and not to the earth, and His saints (the dead raised, and the living changed) will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and go back with Him into heaven at once (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.); and there every one will be put into his proper place (Matt. xx. 23; 2 Cor. v. 10.), and the marriage of the Lamb will take place, and after that, we all shall come forth with Him in glory to the earth. (Rev. xix. 7-14.) And, dear father, as regards our knowing, when that day of judgment comes, whether we belong to Christ or not, Scripture never speaks in this way; but it always tells us, in the most positive and plainest language possible, that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are really His now, down here, as much as they will be by and by when they are with Him up there; not yet glorified, of course, but really His, altogether His, and His alone, bought with His own blood. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Know ye not that your body is

the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Then again, in the epistle to the Colossians, "*Hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Therefore, you see, father, it is not a thing which remains to be done, but it is done already. And what God does, He does like Himself, and worthy of Himself. He allows nothing to be added to it, nor any thing to be taken from it, so that we may have perfect liberty to serve Him in this world, with with the full consciousness that we are His—together His. (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Col. i. 13; Eph. i. 5-11.)

Why, William, you quite surprise me; for I always thought our minister preached us very beautiful sermons; and I have been hearing him now these twenty years and more; but he never talks to us in that way. He is continually telling us to hold on, labor hard, and pray without ceasing, and then we may expect to get the blessing at last, or perhaps we may be sure of it, if we do not give way.

Yes, father, I know the way you have been preached to, and the way I have been preached to also; but since I heard these lectures, I have been reading the Word of God for myself, and have read it as the Word of God, and believed what it says. This is what Mr. — so pressed upon us, telling us to bring our Bibles with us when we came to hear him speak, and not to depend upon what he said, but upon what God said; and thankful indeed I am that I ever did so, for I have now a joy unspeakable and full of glory, which before I knew nothing of. Not that I was not a child of God before, for I can now see that I really was, because I truly believed in Christ, and was able, through mercy, to say, "Abba, Father." But I had been listening to

what man says, instead of reading the Word of God for myself, to see what He said; and the result was, that I went on holding down my head, not knowing whether I should be safe at last or not; and I am sure I did not honor God by so doing, for the true way to honor Him is to believe what He says and do what He tells us to do. And if He tells us that by believing in His Son we are His, and His forever, and that He loves us as He loves Christ, it is for us to bow our heads and say, Amen; and thank and praise Him for it; not to doubt whether He is as good as His word or not, and thereby virtually make Him a liar. Oh, I do wish Christians would hearken to what God says, and not to what man says! (1 Thess. ii. 13; John v. 24; 1 John v. 9-12.)

William, how long is it since you heard those lectures, and took to reading your Bible so much?

Not quite fifteen months, father, yet; but I seem to have learned more in that short time than I had done in the whole ten years before. I am sure there is no teaching like being taught of God Himself. (John vi. 45; 1 John ii. 27.)

But did this new view you have got of the Lord's coming do all this for you, William?

Not entirely, father, but it sent me to the Word of God, and then, in looking into that for the Lord's coming, I saw other things also. And not only so, but Mr. — showed us from the Scriptures that the Holy Ghost is down here, not only to gather out of the world a bride for Christ, but that He has taken up His abode in each believer, and is now instructing them, taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us, and showing us things to come; and so is leading the Church along through the world up to the glory, always delighting to point believers to that happy day when they will see Him who died for them. I am sure I have found it to be so with me, and I can only wonder that I could have kept so long in such darkness and ignorance

as I was, but I now see the blinding effect of traditional teaching, and the power and claim which early education has upon us; but I am happy in knowing that it is, in some little measure, losing its hold upon me now, and I do hope the Lord will still lead me on, for I am sure that He alone is able to do so. (1 Pet. i. 5.)

Do tell me, William, how it is this knowledge of the Lord's coming has such an effect upon the Christian, for I cannot understand it, although I can see the effect it has had upon you; and there certainly seems something very beautiful in it.

It works in this way, father: Suppose I retire to bed to-night with the thought that perhaps Christ may come before the morning, and I rise in the morning thinking He may be here before night, you can understand the effect it will have upon my thoughts, my will, my ways, my desires. I shall be very careful to do every thing I can that is pleasing to Him, and to avoid every thing which is contrary to Him; and, as Peter exhorts those to whom he wrote, I shall be diligent "to be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (Many things which Christians look at as blameless and harmless now, and call by pretty names, look very dark in the light of that coming glory.) This is the way the Lord's coming is always presented in Scripture; *not as a doctrine telling of something coming merely, but as a blessed hope*, which acts as a stay to the soul, and meets us in every corner of our lives, stirring us up to active service for Him. (1 Cor. xv. 58.) It is also a balm for every wound, an antidote for every sorrow; and I am sure there is not a sorrow that can enter the mind, nor a pang can rend the heart, but this blessed hope is a solace for it all, as well as a remedy against worldliness.

Now, if we look at a few passages of Scripture where this glorious event is spoken of, I think we shall very plainly see that it is always spoken of in

such a way as to meet those to whom it is proposed in the very circumstances of sorrow or trial in which they were then found. In the fourteenth chapter of the gospel by John, we see the disciples were in sorrow because the Lord Jesus was going to leave them; for up to that time, they had not been aware that He was going to do so. They had been looking at Him as the King of Israel, about to take the throne of His father David (Luke xix. 37, 38; Acts i. 6.), instead of looking at Him as a suffering Saviour, going to be crucified; therefore they were very sad, and the Lord said to them, "Let not your heart be troubled In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And 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." Now, what could have met them in their circumstances of sorrow and separation like this precious promise? How it must have dried up their tears, and bid their sorrows cease, thus to know that though He whom they so loved was going away, yet He was coming back again to receive them to Himself, that they might be with Him to enjoy His company forever! And what is so comforting to the children of God now, who are feeling their loneliness in this world, and mourning the absence of that glorious One, as to be able, by faith, to look up and see the Lord Jesus gone to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, and to know that very soon He will fulfill His parting promise, and they shall be with Him, basking in the sunshine of His presence throughout an unchanging eternity? Thus you see, father, how the hope of the Lord's coming lifts the soul above this present scene through which we are passing.

Ah, William, I am afraid there are but few of God's people who are feeling themselves lonely and sorrowful in the world because the Lord Jesus is

absent; we seem to be making ourselves comfortable and at home in it, and the sorrows we mostly have are the result of our not being able to do so; but surely it ought not to be so, for it was a path of loneliness and sorrow indeed to Him when He was down here, and we ought not to desire it should be otherwise to us, nor to be seeking a path of roses where He had a path of thorns and br'ers.

This is too true, I know, father, with the greatest part of God's people upon the earth, but still it is pleasing to know that there is one here and another there who in secret are sighing and crying because of these things, and w^h are longing to see and be with that blessed One who has died for them: not to get away from the trials and sorrows of the world merely, but because of their desire of being with Christ; the language of their hearts is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee;" and their inward breathings are continually, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" and I am sure it is such desires which truly please and honor God.

Now, if we look again at the Lord Jesus after His resurrection, when He finally left His disciples, to take His seat at His Father's right hand, He having been seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, He led them out as far as to Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them; and it came to pass that while He blessed them, He was taken from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also 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." Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. Thus we see them going quietly back, holding themselves

in a waiting position, ready to do any little service which God might call upon and enable them to do in the meantime, while He was away. And very soon we see them brought into such a position of power and service, and active testimony for Christ, through the Holy Ghost, as the world never saw before, nor since; and I am sure there is nothing which gives such power for calm yet true and acceptable service to God as this blessed hope filling our hearts and regulating all the movements of our lives; because, if we are continually expecting to see and be with that glorious One, we shall be seeking very carefully to know His mind and will in all things; and knowing it, we shall do it. This is a very different thing from that bustling religious zeal which is abroad in the world.

Do you think, William, that the apostles were really looking for the Lord Jesus to return in their day?

Yes, father, undoubtedly they were; for we find them telling the Jews that though they had crucified Him, yet if they repented, God would send Him back again; and the burden of their preaching was, "through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts iii. 20; iv. 2.); not *of* the dead, but *from* the dead, or, from among the dead, as it was with the Lord Jesus Himself. He rose out from among the dead. So will it be with all who are united to Him; they will rise to meet the Lord in the air when He comes, leaving the unbelievers, or wicked dead, still in their graves. (1 Cor. xv. 22; Rev. xx. 5.) Then again, the apostle Peter found it needful to exhort the Christians to whom he wrote, not to think the Lord was slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, because He had not come according to their preaching; but he assured them the reason of His delay was salvation, God not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. So you see, father, the reason

why Christ has delayed His coming these eighteen hundred years is, that you and I, and many other poor sinners like ourselves, might be brought into this blessed position, and form a part of that glorious company. (2 Pet. iii. 9.)

Why, then, William, you make out that there will be two resurrections. I never heard any thing like this before. Surely this cannot be the case.

Yes, father, it is; for nothing is more plainly declared in Scripture than that there will be a resurrection both of *the just* and of *the unjust*; two distinct things at two distinct times, and a long time separate from each other; a thousand years, at least, is to elapse between the two, as we see in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. And the Lord Jesus, when He was upon earth, told the Jews, when they made a feast, not to call their rich friends, but their poor neighbors, because their poor neighbors could not ask them again, and so make a recompense, but they should be recompensed at the resurrection of *the just*; so that the Jews had a certain knowledge of two resurrections, as we see also from Hebrews xi. 35; Luke xiv. 14; Acts xxiv. 15.

Well, William, if this be the case, what a state the Church of God has been in the greatest part of its time!

What a state indeed, father! but I am so glad that the Lord Jesus has, in His grace, opened the eyes of many of God's people now, just as He is about to return; for you remember, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, in the parable of the virgins, that *they all slumbered* and slept, and at midnight the cry went forth, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet Him;" and the slumbering virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps, and the bridegroom immediately came. So now I find the cry has gone forth far and wide of late, and God's people are awaking, and trimming their lamps, and are standing waiting for Him, as the Lord Jesus

said, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men who wait for their lord." This is a happy position; and I am sure it is the one we should occupy—expecting our Lord.

But who do you think the foolish virgins are, William?

Oh, this is a very solemn question indeed, father, because, you see, they had only lamps; they had no oil in their vessels with their lamps; or, in other words, they had not the Spirit of God dwelling in them; they did not love Christ, though they professed His name, and were associated with His people; therefore they could not be admitted to that happy scene where nothing but love reigns. They would not be happy and at home amid the joys of the Father's house were it possible for them to be admitted. The unrenewed soul would, like Adam in the garden, seek to hide itself from the presence of the Lord, even were it in the glories of heaven.

Oh, William, this almost makes me tremble.

I am not surprised, father. The light of truth is very searching, and if there is any dark corner in us, it is sure to reveal it—and to expel it too, thank God, if our eye is single.

The next passage we will look at is the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. There we see the Lord's coming spoken of as taking place very suddenly—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the shortest space of time which can be expressed; and this is quite in keeping with their condition, for, as a church, they were in a very careless and loose state, reigning as kings, while Christ was absent, and His apostles in sorrow, and were allowing things among them which were not so much as named among the Gentiles. What was, therefore, so calculated to arouse them, and bring them to a sense of their condition, as the sudden appearance of their Lord? I can almost fancy I see them, when it was thus

pressed home upon them by the apostle, all in confusion, as it were ; pushing this thing this way, and that thing that way, to get things a little straight, as soon as possible, lest the Lord Jesus should come before they were able to do so ; like a servant, hearing his master's feet at the door, while things inside were all in disorder. This is what the true knowledge of the Lord's coming always does ; it throws a light upon present things, giving us to see them as they really are, so that we are able to discern between the evil and the good, the precious and the vile, and to see that which is of God and that which is not of Him. I am sure this is how it has been with me ; for how many things have I been glad to push aside, and cast away altogether, since my eyes have been opened to it, in which before I saw but little or no harm.

This quite accounts for the difference I have seen in you of late, William ; for many things with which you were formerly so pleased, now seem to have lost their charm for you, and many other things which before you did very wearisomely, now seem your delight.

It is so, father, and I am so glad it is made manifest in my conduct ; for words, however prettily spoken, do not speak so loudly as actions.

But do you not think, William, that those early Christians must have felt very much disappointed when they knew themselves to be dying, and the Lord had not come ?

Oh, no, father ; I have no doubt whatever but that most of them drew their last breath looking for His coming ; and there they are now up there with Christ, still waiting for that same happy day ; and when it does come, they will then have the fruit of their having waited for Him down here. They had a certain fruit of their doing so while upon earth, in its having filled their hearts with joy and gladness, and kept their souls above present things, and their

affections true to the Lord. Thereby they escaped many corruptions and entanglements, which otherwise they might have been led into (2 Pet. i. 4.); and beside this, there will be its fruit also in resurrection glory, for when the apostle Paul came to the end of his earthly course, and sought to stir up and encourage his son Timothy to a life of faithfulness to God, he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; 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 that *love His appearing*." Now, there are several crowns spoken of in Scripture to be given as rewards for faithfulness to the Lord in this world. Peter speaks of a crown of glory which fadeth not away, held out to those who properly feed and take care of Christ's sheep during His absence; and in the book of the Revelation, there is a crown of life promised to those who are faithful unto death; and in the first epistle to the Corinthians, an incorruptible crown to those who run well; and here, in Timothy, a crown of righteousness to those who love His appearing, or who have fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith; because it is impossible for us to love Christ's appearing without doing so in our measure. We may have a very correct knowledge of it in our minds, and be able to speak pretty well of it with our lips, but if we *love it*, we shall act consistently with it. Therefore, to say we love Christ's appearing, and yet go hand in hand with the world, or to seek to please ourselves in it, is a contradiction; because the two things cannot exist together, any more than can light and darkness.

Oh, I see this very plainly, William,—the one must expel the other; for we cannot be glad to see any one, even if we love them ever so much, if we know they will find us doing things that they do not like.

Yes, father, I am sure it is so; and I think it is so beautiful to see the apostle Paul, when in the full flow of service to the Lord, saying he did not count his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God; and then, when he had come to the end of his course, he could look back and see that he had done it; he had not loitered in the way, nor been pleasing himself on the road, but had done that which the Lord Jesus had given him to do; therefore he was not ashamed, but could hold up his head with joy, knowing that the crown was waiting for him. And I am sure it is the privilege of each of us, in our measure, to do the same things. How many there are of God's dear children who find their dying pillow planted with thorns, instead of roses, because they have not been careful to do so, but have allowed present things to occupy their attention, instead of service to the Lord! (1 Tim. 9-12.)

Oh, yes, I see it now, William; and this puts faithfulness to Christ in this world in its proper place; not making our salvation depend upon it, but it is the fruit of salvation; we being already saved, through His death, it is for us to seek to please Him who has saved us.

Yes, father, it is so. Were it otherwise, our salvation would depend upon our own doings, and not upon what Christ has done. Christ has saved us, and then given each of us a path to walk in, a service to do; and by doing it, we get present blessing to our souls, and shall have His acknowledgment and approbation of it by and by, when we see Him in the glory. (Matt. xxv. 21.)

Again, if we turn to the epistle to the Philippians, the latter end of the third chapter, we shall there see they had some among them who did not like the cross, but, on the other hand, made a god of their belly, and gloried in their shame, and were minding

earthly things. Now, this is just the opposite to our true position ; for we are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, but our conversation, or citizenship, is in heaven ; and instead of feasting these poor bodies down here, it is for us to be looking for the Lord Jesus to come from heaven, to change them, and make them like unto His glorious body. But instead of this, there were some, even in the apostle's day, who began to say in their heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming." They did not say it with their lips, perhaps, but in their heart ; and their conduct answered thereto.

But oh, what a sure remedy is this glorious hope for every carnal appetite ! and if it is not abiding in our souls, something else is sure to take its place ; inward corruptions will arise, and lead us into paths which are not good. Knowing this, the apostle might well say, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed-for, my joy and crown, so stand fast *in the Lord*, my dearly beloved ;" for, so sure as we are not standing fast in the Lord, with that glory vividly before our souls, so surely will the world gain upon us, in one way or other ; we shall begin to pamper our appetites, or take pleasure in something that is going on in the world, or among ourselves ; but the sure way to keep every thing in its proper place down here is to be occupied with that glorious One up there. It is not to be done by effort, nor by carefulness, but by being occupied with Christ ; communion with Him being the moving spring, every thing will work properly ; there will be a time and place for every thing, and every thing will be in its place : we shall then be content that the world should have its own, and that we should have the cross, knowing that very soon those who now have the cross will then have the crown. Oh, father, what a contrast ! a few moments the cross ; the crown eternally !

What a contrast indeed, William ! how little it

makes every thing down here look, except it be faithfulness to God and His saints.

Yes, father; little indeed the things of earth are in the light of that coming glory; because present things are fast passing away, and therefore ought not to cause one anxious thought; because nothing will avail us in that day but what has been done in and to the Lord. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." All else, then, will be vain. We shall then see that all flesh is indeed grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass; in the morning it groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withered; but a cup of cold water given *for Christ* will not be forgotten by Him in that day, nor lose its reward in the glory; a kind look, a kind word, or a smile to one who belongs to Christ in this cold world, will then shine more brightly than all the diadems of earth, or all the gold of the Indies. (1 Pet. i. 24; Ps. xc. 6; Mark ix. 41.)

Again, if we turn to the first epistle to the Thessalonians, we shall find them in a very different condition to any of the other churches; hence, the Lord's coming is also spoken of in a very different way to them: but in such a way as to dry up every tear they had, and dispel every sorrow. When the apostle went first to Thessalonica to preach Christ's gospel, he found them worshiping idols, bowing down to blocks of wood and stone; but those who believed soon cast their idols away to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for His Son from heaven*. But the apostle was not allowed to stay among them more than three weeks, being driven away by persecution. (Acts xvii. 2-10.) He therefore had not time to fully establish them in the doctrine of the Lord's coming, but he had taught them *to wait for the Son of God from heaven*; and so earnestly were

they doing so, that they never expected any among them would die; but death did come in, and took some from their midst, and it put them all into consternation, for they seemed to have thought that those who had died would not partake of the glory; therefore the apostle wrote to comfort them in their sorrows, and to set them right wherein they had made a mistake; and this he did by referring to those brethren who had been taken from them by death as being asleep, exhorting them not to sorrow as those who had no hope, because "they who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" when that day of glory comes. He also told them that we who are alive shall not be in the glory before them, for "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the 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. Wherefore," said he, "comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. i. 5, 9, 10; iv. 13-18.)

Well, William, I never saw the death of God's people in such a beautiful light before. This must have been a comfort indeed to those poor sorrowing Thessalonians. How very differently they must have looked at those brethren who had been removed by death! and how very different must have been their feeling as to those who died afterward!

Yes, father, it takes the gloom away from the cold, icy grave, thus to regard those who depart in the Lord, as being asleep in Jesus, like a babe asleep in its mother's arms, watched over and cared for with the tenderest love, knowing that very soon the same gracious, loving One who has put them to sleep will come and wake them up again in His own likeness, to enjoy His company forever in unfading glory, where sorrow and death can never reach them any more, and separation will be unknown. But of

course to the natural eye it is death, with all its terrors; but to faith it is sleep—sleep in Jesus. Oh, how sweet these words are to my soul, because they rob death of its sting, and chase away all its gloom! (1 Cor. xv. 51–55; Is. xxv. 8.) This passage also makes that portion in the eleventh chapter of the gospel by John so very simple and plain, which at one time was quite a mystery to me. The Lord Jesus says to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whoso *liveth* and *believeth* in Me *shall never die*; believest thou this?” So that you see, father, those believers who are alive when Christ comes will never die at all, because the living will be changed, and, like Enoch and Elijah, will be taken up to heaven without tasting the pains of death in any way whatever. I do not suppose Martha understood this at the time, but no doubt she did so fully afterward, when the Holy Ghost was given. Then, again, in this fourth chapter of the Thessalonians there seems something so very beautiful in the word “shout;” people shout in victory; and well may the Lord Jesus do so when He comes to call His sleeping ones out of their graves, and His living ones out of the reach of Satan, to be with Himself forever.

Ah, William, this is the crowning point of all, to be with the Lord Jesus forever. The thought of heaven is very pleasant, the Father’s house very beautiful, the glory very desirable; but what is it all when compared with being with Christ?

Ah, what indeed, father! It would be all a dreary blank if He were not there; but the thought is so cheering that we are to be *with* the Lord Jesus, and like Him, without the possibility of any change or separation whatever. Could there be for a moment the fear of such a thing happening, the glory would instantly grow dim in our eyes, and it would quench every spark of joy we have; for what makes all so

exceedingly precious is, that it is He Himself who has done and secured it all.

Now, if we pass on to the epistle to the Hebrews, the latter part of the tenth chapter, there we shall see the state of suffering and sorrow these poor Hebrew Christians were in. I feel more for them than I do for any of the other churches, because, when they first believed, their joy was very great, and, like their forefathers on the banks of the Red Sea, they sang triumphantly; but they found the wilderness very rough and trying to their feet, for through their having believed in Christ, and receiving His apostles, they became subject to a long and bitter persecution, and all their earthly goods were taken from them, and they themselves “made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst they became companions of them that were so used.” But they took it all joyfully, knowing in themselves they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. But they found the continuance of these things very painful, and hard to endure; for week after week and year after year passed away, and the Lord did not come, nor their circumstances alter, and they felt themselves very much discouraged and cast down, and almost ready to turn back, and give up their confidence in Christ, and the apostle had to exhort them not to do so, but to go on patiently; for after we have done the will of God, we shall receive the promise; “for yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” What a balm must these three little words, “*a little while*,” have been to their drooping spirits! How it must have cheered them, and enabled them to go on their way with a light but steady step, to be thus assured they should soon see their Lord and Master, and be with Him forever, and that then they should bid farewell to the wilderness and all its circumstances,—the journey would be over and past, suffering and sorrow forever gone,

all tears wiped away from their eyes, and they with Him who had died for them !

This was a word of comfort for them indeed, William.

Yes, father, this is the way our gracious God always does ; when we are pressed to our utmost strength, then He never fails to come in with His abounding consolations, making up in Himself whatever we may be lacking of present things through faithfulness to Him ; and when our souls are enjoying His company, a very little of the things of earth goes a great way ; the cravings of nature are kept down in His presence : and though He may allow the privation and sorrow still to go on, yet, on the other hand, He never fails to administer that joy and strength by which we are able to bear it. (1 Cor. x. 13.)

Yes, William, I know it to be so. All His ways, from first to last, show Him to be a God of love ; and I was thinking, if the apostle could say “ a little while ” eighteen hundred years ago, how must it be now ? It must be very near indeed.

Yes, father, that and many other passages show very plainly that *the Lord is at hand*—as it were, just at the door ; and I am so glad it is so, for I long to see Him, and, as Job says, that my eyes may behold Him for myself, and not another. But I know that His time is the best, and my desire is, that my heart may be directed more and more into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ, and at all times, and in all circumstances, to say, “ Not my will, but Thine be done : ” for by so doing, we truly glorify God. True service to Him is doing or suffering that which He has given us to do or suffer ; not making to ourselves paths of our own, nor walking by the light of sparks of our own kindling, but seeking simply to know His will, and then cheerfully doing it.

The next passage we will turn to is in the epistle

of James, the last chapter. The believers there addressed seem to have been mostly agricultural laborers, and their rich neighbors seem to have employed them to reap down their fields and did not pay them for it. Of course these poor Christians must have suffered very much in thus being deprived of their wages. Only look at them in their lonely cottages, with their empty cupboards, and their fireless hearths, through their cruel oppressors. But the apostle exhorts them to take it patiently, for *the Lord is coming*; and he bids them behold the husbandman, who never looks for fruit in the winter; he is then plowing the ground, casting in the seed, and waits patiently till harvest-time for fruit; therefore, says he, let it be the same with you. "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*." Therefore, never mind enduring hardness now, you will have plenty of fruit by and by in resurrection glory. The apostle Peter also, writing to the strangers scattered throughout different countries in his day, reminds them of "the inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you; who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time;" and he speaks of their being in heaviness through manifold temptations, and tells them it is "that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i.) Therefore you see, father, that these very trials and sorrows which we are now passing through, if endured properly, will enhance our glory when we see the Lord.

Well, William, the farther you go on the more surprised I am that my eyes should have been closed so many years to these beautiful scriptures.

Beautiful indeed they are, father, and I am so glad

you see their loveliness, for they give a real dignity and calmness to the soul, pointing us on to the Lord's coming, when every thing will be put straight with God's people, and every loss fully made up, and more than made up, a thousandfold. Thus the apostle, in writing to the Philippians, says, "Let your moderation [or yieldingness] be known unto all men. *The Lord is at hand.*" As if he had said, If men seek to deprive you of your rights, do not stand up and contend with them, but quietly yield, for the Lord is coming; He is just at hand, and you will not then be sorry for any thing you may have been deprived of for His sake down here. (Phil. iv. 5.)

Ah, William, though this is very beautiful and very happy, no doubt, yet on the other hand it is very trying to flesh and blood to allow ourselves to be trampled upon and say nothing.

Yes, father, I know it is, but it is not for us to consult flesh and blood at all, seeing we have died and risen with Christ, and are united with Him in heavenly glory. We are not of this poor world, even as Christ is not of the world; but we are only passing through it to our heavenly home. And did not the Lord Jesus allow Himself to be trampled upon indeed for us, when He laid aside the glory which He had with His Father before this world was, and became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich? (Is. liii. 7.) He was reviled, but reviled not again, and when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously, and, at last, gave Himself a ransom for us; surely, then, we ought to count it happy if we are allowed, in any little measure, to make Him the smallest return in any way. We want to know more of our true character as strangers here; it would remove many difficulties out of our path, and make many things pleasant which now are really very trying. People think but little of many inconveniencies and hardships they have to endure

while on a journey, away from home, which, if at home, would not be so easy to put up with. We shall have plenty of rest and ease when at home, in the Father's house. Besides, if we are looking onward with delight and joy to something which is coming, we do not feel the pressure of present things half so much as those who are not doing so; therefore we do well at all times to keep that bright day of glory before our souls, knowing that it will soon burst upon our view in all its eternal realities; and in the light of that glory, present things look so little,—oh, so little! but on the other hand, everything connected with Christ and His Church, so weighty,—oh, so weighty!

I wish these things had more power over us all, William, for I see very plainly that much of the weakness and failure among God's people is because these things are so little before our minds.

This is the case, father. We get looking at the things which are seen, instead of the things which are unseen, and our souls get dragged down by them. It would not be so were we more occupied with Christ up there and His glory down here; ever ready to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

May the Lord keep us from looking for ease or satisfaction in this world, for if we do, we shall be sadly disappointed, because it is not to be found in it. It is a plant that will not grow upon earth; earth is too ungenial a soil for it; but it grows freely in heaven, and we get, as it were, a small bud now and then from the tree; but we no sooner have it than it withers in our hand, the atmosphere of earth is so bleak and chilly; but we shall be able to enjoy it fully when we are with the Lord. It is in Him alone that joy is to be found; and we ought to be drawing from Him now, moment by moment: but we are so prone continually to look for it in something down here. This is a great mistake, and we

reap sorrow instead of joy by so doing. (Phil. iv. 4.)

Now, if we turn to the first epistle of John, the third chapter, we shall find these words: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; 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. And every man that hath *this hope* in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Here, the Lord's coming is spoken of as a means by which we are kept from the evils by which we are surrounded; and surely it is so, for there is no possibility of giving way to any evil thing when that blessed hope is filling our hearts, and throwing its rays upon our path. And not only so, but if we are delighting ourselves in the thought that we shall very soon see Christ, and be like Him forever, we shall delight ourselves also in seeking to be as much as possible like Him now—meek, lowly, loving, mild; because, when it says that when we see Him we shall be like Him, it does not mean that our bodies are to be changed merely, but something much deeper than this; it means that we shall be altogether like Him, both outwardly and inwardly; thoughts, desires, feelings, ways,—yea, in every thing like Him, so that there will not be one discordant note throughout eternity, but we shall be entirely meet for His presence, with capacities to enjoy His company in every thing.

Then, again, in the book of the Revelation, the first chapter, I think we have a very sweet reference to this same happy time. There, John sees the Lord Jesus in glory, and falls at His feet as dead; and He lays His right hand upon him, and says unto him, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [or the grave] and of death." Thus reminding John of that time of suffering and sorrow when he saw Him bow His head on the cross, and followed

Him to the sepulchre; but that He was now alive again for evermore, and had, as it were, brought away the keys of death and the grave with Him; and that in His own proper time He would show it forth by unlocking the grave of all His saints, and bidding death be gone.

Then, I suppose. William, the Lord Jesus was here reminding John of the happy day when He would fulfill His promise as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of the gospel by John?

Yes, father, there is no doubt of it. And what could have inspired John with such happy confidence in the Lord's presence as this?

Ah, what indeed, William! for since we have been looking into it this evening, I am sure I have had such a happy longing after the Lord Jesus as I have not had for many a long day before; the world has indeed been under my feet.

This is the way the Lord's coming always acts, father, when the heart is true; and the great reason why the children of God are so mixed up with the world is that they have lost sight of that happy day.

Yes, William, I believe it is so—that I do.

Then again, in the second and third chapters of this book we see the same glorious time continually referred to by the Lord Jesus, and used by Him as a means to stir up the churches to faithfulness and watchfulness. Then, in the fourth and fifth chapters we see the Church in glory, casting their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power." And again, "They sung a new song, saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and *we shall reign on the earth.*'" And the Church is ever after seen in heaven, that favored company having been com-

pleted, and taken to be with the Lord. Then in the sixth chapter, we see the judgments begin to be poured out upon the earth, previous to the Lord's coming in glory with all His saints, and taking to Himself His great power and reigning. (Rev. xi. 15-17.) Then, "the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ"—that joyful time for which creation groans and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Then this bondage of corruption, which all creation is now laboring under, will be removed; and the lion and the lamb will dwell together, and the sucking child will play upon the hole of the asp, and put his hand on the cockatrice's den; "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." And not only will the poor brute creation be at peace with each other, but men also will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. ii. 4: xi. 5-9; lxxv. 25.)

But, William, I have always heard that this blessed time is to be brought about by the preaching of the gospel!

Yes, father, I know this is what man has been saying, but God says just the reverse. He says that during this dispensation "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13.), and that this glorious time is only to be brought about *by the appearing of the Son of God*, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is meant, William, by the manifestation of the sons of God?

It is that which takes place at this same happy time, father; for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then shall we also appear with Him in glory.*" (Col. iii. 4.) *Then, we shall be manifested*

as the *sons of God* in glory with Christ. *We are* the sons of God *now*, but the "world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not;" then, it will. The Lord Jesus will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. (2 Thess. i. 10.) He will then set up His kingdom upon earth and reign in righteousness.

And do you really think, William, that the Lord Jesus will yet reign as King over this earth?

I do, father. Scripture tells us over and over again that it will be so. You remember, at His first coming He was born King of the Jews; but He came in circumstances of humiliation and need, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and Israel hid as it were their faces from Him; He was despised, and they esteemed Him not. He was to them as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, and they saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him (Isa. liii.); and when He presented Himself to them as their King sitting on an ass's colt (John xii. 15.), they took Him and put Him to death; they even sent a message after Him, saying, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." But though they did this, the kingdom was not done away with, only put off for a time, in which God is bringing about His eternal purpose respecting the Church; and when the Lord Jesus shall come again in glory, Israel will gladly receive Him, both as their Saviour and their King; they will then look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn; He will come out of Zion as their Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. xi. 26.), and bring them into everlasting blessing. They will not then be a proverb and a by-word among the nations as they now are, but they will be gathered into their own land, and men will call them the holy of the Lord; honorable; for they will be the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them; the Lord will be

their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning will be ended. (Isa. lx. 20.) But this cannot be till the Church is gathered in and taken to be with the Lord; also the Old-Testament saints will be raised at the same time, and will be with Christ in glory. This is the happy time for which all creation is groaning and waiting with earnest expectation. (Rom. viii. 19-22.)

Then I suppose, William, we must be carefully looking out for those signs which are spoken of in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and other places?

Oh, no, father; they are for the faithful among the Jews when the Lord Jesus is about to come in blessing to them; and *they* will have them in abundance; but *for us* there are neither signs nor seasons, nor times nor dates; but the Lord has left us this promise, "*Surely I come quickly.*" And it is for us to be waiting for Him with our loins girded, and our lights burning, and not to put our hands to a single thing if we cannot leave it half finished and go to meet Him with a smile.

Then we have not been looking at the Lord Jesus coming to the earth in glory at all, William?

No, father; perhaps we may do so at some future time, if the Lord tarry; but we have been looking at *our being gathered unto Him, the Lord Jesus having come into the clouds, to call us up to meet Him in the air*; because, as I have already said, we must be *with Him up there* before we can *come forth with Him down here*. For this we are to be looking and waiting continually, as it may take place any moment. I must now go, as I have stayed very much longer than I had intended.

Well, William, I am sure it has not been in vain; and I do hope I shall prayerfully look into the Word of God for myself, and pray that this evening's interview may result in an abiding blessing to each of our souls.

HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS
OR
EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM
A DIALOGUE

SEQUEL TO "CHANGED IN A MOMENT"

SO you have been able to get here, William, this evening. I am very glad to see you, I have so many questions to ask.

Well, father, I was determined not to be hindered by trifles, and have therefore come as I gave you to expect. How have you got on? Have you been looking into those passages of Scripture we referred to when I was last with you?

I have, William, and the result is that quite a new world is opened up to my view, I can now fully enter into what you told me, that when you first saw the doctrine of the Lord's coming, everything appeared to you in altogether a different light from what it did before. Just so is it with me now; for, the forty years of my christian life seem almost like a dream.

That is the appearance they may have, father, but they are not a dream, they are an eternal reality. All our movements since we believed, have their special relation to that coming glory. Rev. ii. 23. We might all this time have been laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come instead of allowing ourselves to be taken up with the many trifles with which we have been occupied; thus much precious time has been lost which might have been turned to very great profit, both to our own souls, and to the souls of others. But I do hope the Lord Jesus will keep our eyes steadily gazing upon Himself the few remaining days we have to stay upon earth, so shall we reflect Him to those around us as we pass along; and thus be a real help to each other, and thereby please Him who has died for us; because we truly serve one another just in proportion as we reflect that glorious One, and thereby help each other to appreciate and enjoy Him personally. As the apostle John says, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John. i. 3. But the last time I was with you we were talking about the Lord Jesus coming into the air and calling His church up to meet Him there, and we proposed that when we met again we should look a little into the word of God to see what it tells us about *His coming to the earth in glory* with all His saints. Zec. xiv. 5.

We did, William, but before you go on I should very much like to ask you about the judgment seat of Christ. When will it be set?

It will be set, father, *after we are caught up* to be with the Lord, and *before we come forth* with Him to the earth in glory. The Lord Jesus will put things straight with His church up there, before He comes forth with us to the earth; and this He will

do by having us all before His judgment seat, "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Rom. xiv. 10—12; 2 Cor. v. 10.

Oh! William, I did not think it would be thus. I thought you said that judgment was passed and gone for ever with the believer, because Christ had died.

So it is, father, as to all that affects our eternal life: for the Lord Jesus Himself said, when He was down here, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall *not* come into condemnation; but *is passed* from death unto life." John. v. 24. And not only so, but by believing in Christ we become united to Him by a bond which nothing can sever, so that we become a part and parcel of Himself, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Eph. v. 30—32. Our sins are for ever washed away by His precious blood, but this does not hinder the Lord Jesus from holding us responsible for our behaviour since He brought us into this glorious position, but quite the contrary; therefore He will look over our walk and see how we have conducted ourselves in the several positions in which He has placed us, then He will give to every one of us according to our works. This will take place when we have done with this present scene, and are up there *with Himself in glory*. This the Church at Corinth failed to remember, therefore they began to judge one another, and the apostle tells them "to judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." 1 Cor. iv 5. Therefore, you see, father, that not only will our actions be brought to light, but the counsels we, each of us, now take with our own hearts will all come out in that day of glory. How very careful,

therefore, we ought to be in all our movements, for God does not see as man sees. But we must ever keep in mind that it is not *our persons* which will be judged, but *our conduct*; for, *we shall be in our glorified bodies* when the judgment will take place: there will, therefore, be nothing to fear, because none will be cast out, but each believer will form a distinct part of the bride of Christ; and, as we have already seen, all who compose that happy company have "*eternal life*, and they shall *never* perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand." Nevertheless, the apostle's prayer ever was that we may be found unblameable and unreprouvable in that day. Phil. i. 10; 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13; v. 23; 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Pet. iii. 14. At this time also it is that the rewards will be given to each one, according to their faithfulness to Christ while upon earth; and "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." 2 Cor. ix. 6; Phil. iv. 17; Rev. **xxii.** 12.

Oh! William, it quite makes me tremble to think that all my movements in this world will be made manifest in that day of glory. This does throw a dark and gloomy shade over that bright and beautiful picture of being in Christ, and with Him, and like Him for ever.

I can quite understand, father, the first sight of it making you thus shrink back alarmed, but you will not do so when you have fairly looked into it. I remember it had the same effect upon myself when it was first presented to me. I felt, in a little measure, like the prophet Habakkuk, I trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, and rottenness seemed to enter my bones; for I trembled in myself to think that I should have to stand before that holy, glorious Lord Jesus, and that all the movements of my life would be made bare in His presence. But now I can see that it is quite right and proper it should be so, and it often

gives me the greatest calmness, when others are thinking and speaking improperly of me, to know that there is such a day coming, when everything will be made clear and plain. I find it also a daily, and hourly check upon my conduct, for if I catch myself going to do or say anything that has any relation to others, behind their back, which I would not do, or say before their face, I instantly check myself by saying Ah! I may be able to do this, or say that, and they, perhaps, may not know it now, but they will know it well enough by and bye (Luke xii. 2, 3); and I am very glad afterward that such a check has been upon me, both for my present peace and comfort, as well as with respect to that glorious day. Therefore, I can truly say that there are but few things which I am more thankful for than the knowledge of the judgment-seat of Christ, when everything will be made manifest; because it acts as a check against the workings of nature in a way which, perhaps, nothing else would: and if we are doing all we now do, in the Lord's presence and in the light of that coming glory there will be nothing to dismay us in the prospect of that time of manifestation. Dear father, if you have anything covered up from the Lord, or from your brethren, or from any one else, *go and uncover it at once; make full confession, and restoration if possible*, and it will be done away with for ever, and so will not have to be uncovered before the Lord in that day; and you will have the present joy and blessedness of so doing. But so surely as you leave it unconfessed now, so surely will it have to be put straight then, be it little or much. How very much better, then, to uncover it now, and have it done away with, than to leave it to be manifested in the light of that day of glory. 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 12; Jas. v. 16; 1 John i. 9.

This, William, certainly puts things in a very different light to that in which they first appeared. But, I must

confess, that the first view of it ~~was~~ very gloomy; for after the soul has been so happily reposing in the love of Christ, and nestling itself in His bosom, to be told that all our movements down here are thus to be laid bare in that day is not very pleasing.

No, father, it is not, at the first sight; especially to those who know their own imperfections, and how sin is mixed up with everything they do; but when properly looked into, there is nothing to intimidate the upright soul, but, on the contrary, it imparts a calmness and dignity to know that there is such a day coming, when everything will be put straight, and be seen in its true light and character, and also to know that our little desires toward God, and our little services toward each other will all be faithfully remembered, and acknowledged by Him in that glorious day.

But this seems a very poor motive, indeed, William, to serve God with the thought of getting rewarded for what we are doing.

Yes, father, there could not be a lower motive possible, than to labour, in such a case, for what we can get; love to Christ is the moving-spring of all true service; but on the other hand, if the Lord Jesus sees us desiring to tread in His steps, and to do His will in this world, where everything is so against us, and where, at times, we can scarcely keep our heads above water because of the corruptions within and without, and because of our own weakness and the weakness of God's people with whom we are associated—if, I say, in these circumstances, Christ is pleased to hold out many precious promises of rewards to encourage us to watchfulness, and faithfulness, it is not for us to despise them, but, on the contrary, to honour Him by valuing them. Hebrews xi. 26. Moreover, I think it is so pleasing to know that the question is not *what we do*, but that we do *that which He has given us to do*, whatever it may be, *with the one object of pleasing Him*. This being the case, the most menial

thing will be done with the same delight as the man exalted, and will meet with the same acceptance and approval by Him in that day; because the Lord Jesus will measure everything we now do, by the position in which He has placed us, and according to the strength and measure of grace which He has given to each of us; "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required." Rom. xii 3; Ephes. iv. 7; vi. 7, 8; Col. iii. 23, 24.

Its gloominess, William, does certainly quite pass away as you carefully look into it; and I do hope that I shall find the subject to be as useful to me as it has been to you.

I should also like to know your thoughts about the marriage supper of the Lamb, because it seems to me that it will take place up there, previous to the Lord Jesus coming forth with us to the earth.

I think it is very plainly shown to be so, father, and that it will take place after the decisions of the judgment seat; because, when everything is put straight with the church, and each one is in his own proper place, then Christ will formally present us to Himself as His bride, the purchase of His own blood; and this will be done with the greatest demonstrations of joy, and gladness, as is shown forth by the figure of a marriage. The false bride or harlot, will meet her doom about the same time, and her smoke will rise up for ever and ever. The heavenly hosts will rejoice at the downfall of the one, and at the exaltation of the other. Eph. v. 27; Rev. xix. 1—7. You see, father, the scene will be then altogether changed with them both. When the harlot was here upon earth, she glorified herself, and lived deliciously, decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls; living in every luxury the world could produce. The merchants of the earth were made rich through the abundance of her delicacies, while the true bride of Christ passed through the world, in some measure as

her Lord, solitary and despised. But oh! how much better to be treading in the steps of that glorious One now, during this little while, though in poverty and sorrow, rather than to be going hand in hand with the false bride of Satan's producing, whose end will be destruction.

This, I think, I fully enter into, William. Then, there are those who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb; I should like to know your thoughts about them before you go on. Rev. xix. 9.

They seem, father, very plainly shewn to be the old testament saints, that is, all who died in faith previous to the Lord's crucifixion: they are the friends of the bridegroom as John the baptist calls himself, (John iii. 29) because the old testament saints will not form a part of *the heavenly bride*, yet they will be in the nearest position possible to Christ: for who is nearer to you than your friend who is as your own soul; but your wife is a part of yourself. Eph. v. 31, 32.

I think I see this very plainly, William.

I am so glad you do, father. We will then go on to look a little into what the Scripture tells us about *the Lord Jesus coming to this earth in glory*; and I think we shall find this quite as interesting, and that it concerns us quite as much as *His coming into the air and gathering us up to meet Him*, though of course the latter must take place first, and is therefore that for which *we* are to be more immediately looking. But I do not know anything more needful for us to keep before our minds, than that the Lord Jesus is coming to put things straight *down here*, in this world, where everything is now in such confusion and disorder, and to bring in everlasting righteousness and peace where sin and iniquity now dwell. This, Christ will surely do; for as we have seen, He will first put things straight with His bride the church; then with Israel, His people; and

After that also with the poor world. How very desirable this is, seeing that all creation is now groaning under the power and rule of the wicked one, and we all are feeling most keenly what the malignant reign of that cruel usurper, Satan, is, who is now the prince and god of this world. Very much around us is shewing forth most plainly the influence and working of that evil spirit, in all his malice and cruelty; wars and bloodshed on every hand, and what, perhaps, is still worse, the envy, and hatred, and malice, which are disseminated in every circle of life upon earth, so that it is quite a rare thing to find even a household dwelling together in unity and love, such influence has that wicked one over the hearts and minds of all mankind. But his reign is of limited duration, and already there are many indications that it is drawing very near to its close. How happy for the poor world that it is so! And how happy for us also, who believe in Christ, to know that our stay upon earth is very short; for, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, but we are the espoused consort of earth's rightful, but, at present, rejected King, who has all power given unto Him both in heaven and in earth; and though men are now despising Him, and many of His professed friends are putting Him to shame in the midst of His enemies, yet very shortly will He be manifested as the King of glory, and every knee shall bow to Him, "of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." *Then* will have come the time of the church's *manifestation with Christ*; for we shall reign with Him over the earth in unclouded glory, and thus will the Lord Jesus be honoured, and glorified, where He has been so despised, and put to shame. With this blessed hope before our souls we can well afford to be, for a short time, as He was down here, in weakness, and sorrow, and

rejection, until that happy moment comes; knowing that "if we suffer [with Him], we shall also reign with Him:" and "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Psalm xxiv. 10; Rom. viii. 17—19; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; 1 Peter iv. 13.

Did you say, William, that Satan is the prince and god of this world? Surely this must be a mistake.

No, father, it is not; for the scriptures speak of him as such continually. The Lord Jesus Himself, in the fourteenth chapter of the gospel by John, calls him the prince of this world. And in the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, Satan "shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, all this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be Thine." Luke iv. 5—7. Also in the fourth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians the apostle calls him the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not. Of course, he is not the God of the earth: "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" and He is overruling everything in His providential government, "making even the wrath of man to praise Him," as well as "giving us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness," notwithstanding the wickedness which is going on in the world. But everything which men, as men, are delighting themselves in, is of Satan, and has been so, more or less, ever since Adam yielded himself to him in the garden of Eden. From that time, men have, more or less, been pursuing a course contrary to God. As it is written, "that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." All God's joy and delight is in Christ; therefore, whatever is going on down here that does not spring from love to Him, how

ever seemingly plausible and praiseworthy it may be. God has no delight in it; and what we see men, for the most part, doing at this present time is seeking to make the world beautiful and happy, while Satan is its prince, and Christ, its rightful King, is rejected: and we can expect nothing but this from the men of the world, but it is very sad, indeed, when any of God's people are found joining hands with them in it. Luke xvi. 15; xix. 14.

Oh! William, this does put this age of progress, of which men are so making their boast, in a light I never had any idea of before. It seems that the very same spirit is now actuating men which actuated those who built the tower of Babel in days of old; their end being to get themselves a name.

It is exactly so, father, and when the Lord Jesus comes, He will destroy everything in which men are priding themselves: as it is written, "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." And we read of its being "upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures," and upon everything which causes men to hold up their heads, and exalt themselves; "and the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day . . . and the idols He shall utterly abolish." And He "will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace unto the heathen; and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river, to the ends of the earth." Isaiah ii. 11—18; Zechariah ix. 9, 10.

How long a time do you think will elapse, William, between the taking up of the church and the appearing of the Lord Jesus to bring this about?

I do not know, father, but it will not be very long; for while the Lord Jesus is putting things straight with His saints up there, previous to His coming, it will be a time of very great trouble and sorrow down here. The Lord Jesus, when on earth, alluding to this interval, said, "except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved; but, for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." It will be the time of Satan's greatest power, and he will be full of wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. Iniquity will then be at its height, because the church, which is now the salt of the earth, will then have been removed to be with the Lord. As soon as it is gone, the earth will become corrupt. It is bad enough now, but then it will be ten times worse, and God will pour out the vials of His wrath upon the earth, because of the wickedness which will then be going on. In those days men will gnaw their tongues for pain, and will blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and their scres, and yet will not repent of their deeds. Matthew xxiv. 22; Rev. xii. 12; xvi. 10, 11.

You said, William, that it was for the *elect's* sake that those days would not be allowed to continue very long, does not this seem to indicate that the church will still be upon the earth at this time?

At first sight it may do so, father; but by carefully looking into the Scriptures we see very plainly that this will not be the case: yet, as God has never left Himself without a witness in the world, even in the very worst of times, neither will He do so then; for, after the church is taken away, God will raise up an elect company who will be His faithful witnesses upon the earth in this exceedingly trying time. For it will be then that the Antichrist will make his appearance, and present himself to the Jews as their long-expected Messiah; and they will receive him as such, as the Lord Jesus told them when He said, "I am come in

my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." John v. 43. They rejected the true Christ, and now they will be allowed to receive, with open arms, this false one. Part of the Jews will be in their own land again at this time and will have got their temple built, and their worship going on, as far as they can, as in former days; and this wicked one will come in a very flattering way (Daniel xi. 32), and will be endued by Satan "with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 9, 10), so that he will cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men, and deceive them that dwell on the earth (Rev. xiii. 13, 14), and will gain such power and ascendancy over the Jews in a very short time, that he will exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, will sit in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God. 2 Thess. ii. 3—5. This is "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet as standing in the holy place," whom the Jews, as a people, will worship; but a few of them chosen of God, will not do so (Matt. xxiv. 15), but will utterly reject him, and will therefore pass through those sufferings spoken of in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew and elsewhere. The Lord Jesus, speaking to this faithful few, tells them that as soon as they see this wicked one in the temple as the object of worship, the only way for them to escape the sword will be to flee to the mountains and secrete themselves there: Mark xiii. 14—16, for he will seek to destroy all who will not bow down and worship him, and many will he cause to be put to death, therefore, the only way for them to save their lives will be by flight; and those of them who are on the house-top must not stay to take anything out of their houses, neither will it do for him that is in the field to turn back to take up his clothes, so suddenly and fiercely will this persecution come upon them. Th-

Lord also exhorts them "to pray that their flight may not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day;" for, if in the winter, they will suffer in the mountains from the inclemency of the weather and for want of food: and if on the Sabbath-day, they, being Jews, could only go a Sabbath-day's journey on that day, and could, therefore, soon be overtaken by their enemies and destroyed. This wicked one is called in the book of the Revelation a beast, and he "will cause all to receive a mark in their foreheads or in their hands," so that they may be known as his worshippers: and no one will be allowed to buy or sell, unless he has those marks. Therefore, this little faithful band, who will not bow down to him, will be in the greatest straits possible, even on the very eve of perishing; for it seems that their adversaries will pursue them with the greatest hatred to where they have fled for safety, and will compass them in on every side, and be just about to pounce upon them and make them their prey, when, in their great extremity, the Lord will appear and fulfil His promise, that "those who endure to the end shall be saved," or delivered. And as soon as they shall see Him "*coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory,*" they will cry out and say, "Lo, this is OUR GOD; we have waited FOR HIM, and He will save us: this is THE LORD: we have waited for HIM, we will be glad and rejoice in HIS SALVATION." Isaiah xxv. 9. That which will be salvation to this faithful few will be destruction to their enemies. The man of sin himself will "the Lord consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." It is not only the Jews, however, who will receive this wicked one, but all christendom also—those who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. "God will send them strong delusion that they shall believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteous-

ness." Therefore it is that the gospel of God's grace is either "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death;" so that it will be much better in that day for those in heathen lands who have never heard the gospel, than for those in such places as England where it has been so fully proclaimed; because, those, who *having heard of*, will not receive Christ, now, in this time of God's longsuffering love, will then receive His enemy, and will have their part with him in everlasting destruction. Matt. xxiv. 13—22; 2 Thess. ii. 8—13; Rev. xiii. 16, 17; xiv. 9—12.

This is a very sad and sorrowful picture indeed, William. But do you not think there will be *any* from among the Gentiles who will pass through this time of trouble and be spared to remain upon the earth?

Oh! yes, father, most surely there will: for we read that during the reign of Christ, which will immediately follow that time of trouble, the *Gentiles* shall come to thy (Jerusalem's) light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising. Isaiah lx. 3. And, again, "The *Gentiles* shall see thy (Jerusalem's) righteousness, and all Kings thy glory." Isaiah lxii. 2. At this time it is that the Lord Jesus will be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel. Luke ii. 32. And we find that there will be those who will be received or rejected according as they have been kind or unkind to Christ's brethren during their time of suffering and sorrow. Matt. xxv. 34—46.

God's ancient people Israel will be brought from every corner of the earth where they are now buried among the nations (Eze. xxxvi. 24; xxxvii. 11—14; Isa. xi. 11, 12), and God will purge those who are rebellious out from among them, "and they shall not enter into the land of Israel" (Eze. xx. 38), "but the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." "Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in

Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." Isa. xxiv. 23. The glory of Christ, at this time, will, as it were, put into the shade our natural sun and moon, which give us light by day and night. Isa. lx. 19—21. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of *all the nations*, which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." And those who will not come up, "upon them shall be no rain." Zec. xiv. 16, 17. At this time will be fulfilled the long-looked-for accomplishment of that promise—"the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah xi. 9), which so many of God's people have been expecting to be brought about by the preaching of the gospel. "All (Israel) shall then know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." "The desert also shall blossom as the rose," and all creation will be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Rom. viii. 19—22. There will be no longer the hostility and unkindness existing between the poor brute creation which now prevails, but they will dwell happily together as in the days of man's innocence; (Isa. xi. 6—9), because, "the bondage of corruption," which was brought in by sin, will be removed, and the spider will no longer devour the fly, nor the wolf the lamb; "and the child will play upon the hole of the asp," free from danger, for the curse, to a great extent, will be rolled back, like a mighty wave, from off the earth. "In that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one;" and that cruel usurper, Satan, that great enemy of God and man, will then be bound in chains, and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Rev. xx. 1—3), and all his emissaries with him. Men will then delight in just the opposite of that which they are now pursuing, because love and joy and harmony will reign where now jealousies and

envyings and bickerings dwell; sword and spear will be no longer needed, for people will "dwell in peace and safety, and none shall make them afraid." "Many people shall say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isa. ii. 3. The earth also will bring forth its fruits in abundance, for "there shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon;" "and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him who is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you. Isaiah xxxv. 1; Zech. viii. 23.

What a contrast this will be, William, to what exists now! For what on earth is more despised than the poor Jew.

What a contrast! indeed, father. Yet, at times, when I see some of them going along the streets despised and suspected, I find my heart rising up to God, and saying, O! Lord do remember Thy ancient people Israel, and speedily fulfil Thy promise to them, that they may be no longer "a proverb and a byword among the nations." And sure I am that those words, which that wicked man, Balaam, was forced to utter concerning them are true even to day—"Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Num. xxiv. 9.

Then you really think, William, that the Jews will be restored to their own land again, and brought into blessing?

Yes, father, I do. There is nothing more certain; for Scripture is full of it, from one end to the other: and it speaks of their being not only brought into blessing themselves but of their being made channels

of blessing to the whole earth. It tells us that "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit," (Isaiah xxvii. 6), and will continue so to do as long as the sun and moon endureth. Jer. xxxi. 35, 36; Isaiah lx. 15. For the shame which they are now passing through, they shall "have double;" everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness; sorrow and sighing shall flee away; "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing." Isaiah xxxv. 1, 2. Scripture is full of such promises as these to the, now, poor despised, but then blessed and honoured, house of Israel; and they will all be fulfilled to the very letter, when Christ comes to take "the throne of His father David, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Luke i. 32, 33. In the book of the Revelation we see the twenty-four elders, who represent the risen saints, sitting on their seats before God; and when they see this happy time brought about, they fall on their faces, and worship God: for they well know what it is to have been down in this world, under very different circumstances to the reign of that glorious One. They will, therefore, so fully enter into the joy and blessedness of that happy change, though they themselves will be so far above it all, that they will say, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned." Rev. xi. 15—17.

This is that long-looked-for time of blessing, when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Rev. xi. 15. The saints of the most High shall possess this kingdom (Dan. vii. 18), and every

thing will be gathered out of it that offends and them that do iniquity. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. xiii. 41—43); and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. Isaiah xxv. 8.

Then will be fulfilled that sure promise to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Gen. xxii. 18.

I suppose sin will be quite banished from the earth at that happy time, William?

No, father, not entirely, though it will be a reign of righteousness: not as it is now, the weak going to the wall, but "the Lord with righteousness will judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." Isaiah xi. 4. As soon as sin shall make its appearance, it will be instantly dealt with. Psalm. ci. 7, 8. *Now* it is not so: and "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Eccle. viii. 11. God is *now* keeping silence for a time, and allowing men, and Satan, to have their own way; *then* it will not be so, "the Lord will come, and will not keep silence." Psalm l. 3, 21. This explains in a little measure, that mystery which has perplexed the minds of so many of God's people in all ages, how that the "wicked man prospereth and bringeth his wicked devices to pass," while the righteous is often trodden under foot. Jer. xii. 1, 2; Hab. i. 13. Not that the wicked man's actions will be passed over and forgotten for ever, far from it; for there is an hour coming when for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. xii. 36. But God is *now* sitting on "*a throne of grace*." Heb. iv. 16. In the kingdom, Christ will sit on *a throne of judgment*. Psalm ix. 7—12: therefore, sin will then be dealt with immediately. The hearts of many will still be unchanged then,

as now, but sin and iniquity will be kept down ; Satan and his agents will be gone, and not allowed to deceive men as they are now doing, and righteousness and peace will flourish. Psalm lxxii. 4—7. At the end of the thousand years of blessing, however, things will, notwithstanding, present a very sad picture, thus shewing that the unrenewed heart of man is the same under all circumstances: for, whether he be in innocence, as Adam in the garden ; or under law, as Israel with God's visible presence among them ; or under grace, as the Gentiles at this present time ; or in the enjoyment of the righteous reign of Christ, with the absence of Satan from the scene, as those during the millenium will be, man's weakness and unprofitableness is seen: for when "Satan is loosed out of his prison," and goes "forth to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," he gets a vast number "as the sand of the sea" instantly to enrol themselves under his banner, and to "go up and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city," to fight against Him who has been their Lord and King, and who has done such great things for them. Then the wickedness of men and Satan will be endured no longer, but "fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them." Rev. xx. 7—10. At this time will come to pass that which the apostle Peter speaks of, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works therein, shall be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter iii. 10—13. Thus will close the scene of this present world altogether.

You were speaking of signs to the Jews, William, when you were here before. What will be the earliest for them, do you think?

I do not know of any sign for them, father, until

they get back again into their own land, and have got Jerusalem into their possession. Perhaps the fact that they are desiring and taking steps to get there, is the first sign to them, for we read, "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come; for Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." Psalm cii. 13, 14. This we see they are beginning to do already. Not that any sign will be apprehended by the nation at large, nor yet by the whole of those who are in the land of Israel, for they will have received the false Christ as their Messiah, and therefore will not be looking out for the Christ of God; but the signs will especially be to the faithful of those days, who will be in very great tribulation, and persecution, and will indicate to them that *the Lord is coming*, and that therefore "their redemption draweth nigh." Luke xxi. 28. When those who have persecuted them are destroyed, and they themselves brought into blessing, the change will be so great that it will seem to them like a dream: then "their mouth will be filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing." They also who are "among the heathen," the ten tribes, will hear of it, and will say, "The Lord hath done great things for them," and will instantly discover that *they themselves* are included in the blessing, and will say, "The Lord hath done great things *for us*, whereof we are glad." They will then desire to return to their own land immediately, and will say, "Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as streams in the south." But it will not be as it was when they came up out of the land of Egypt, "a mixed multitude" allowed to go with them into Canaan, but the Lord will meet them on their way, and will purge the rebels out from among them, and none will be allowed to enter into the land of Israel, but those whose hearts are upright toward God. Psalm cxxvi; Isaiah xxxv. 10; Ezra. xx. 34—38.

This will be a happy time, William, for this poor world, and for the poor brute creation also, thus to be brought so near to their original position—that in which they were created—and from which they fell through the sin of man.

It will indeed, father, be a happy time, both for man and beast. Groans and sighs will mostly cease, and joy and delight be in their stead. This is the happy time concerning which the mother of Zebedee's children requested of the Lord Jesus that her "two sons might sit the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom" (Matt. xx. 20, 21), and which "the disciples thought would immediately appear" when the Lord Jesus was down here, in the house of Zacchæus; concerning which also they contended, while eating the passover, as to which of them should be accounted the greatest in it. (Luke xxii. 24—30. But the Lord told them that this was the way the Gentiles were acting. They were seeking for places of distinction over each other; and those who got authority, and used it, were called benefactors: but it was not to be so among them, but just the contrary, those who would be chief must take the servant's place, for those "who humble themselves shall be exalted," "but those who exalt themselves shall be abased." Therefore, those who wish to have the highest place in the kingdom must take the lowest place now. And this remains quite as true of us, in these days, as of the apostles. The Lord Jesus took the lowest place, when He was down here; "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

This is the time, I suppose, William, which the Lord Jesus referred to when speaking of Himself as a man going into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return, and he left his house and servants, and gave every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch; and said, "Watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Mark xiii. 35—37.

It is, father. I have long looked at this beautiful Scripture, and have thought it showed forth, in a very special way, the present position of the church of God upon earth: because we know the Lord Jesus will come for us before He will come to take the kingdom and reign. And He compared things down here, during His absence, to a night; and, according to the custom of the Jews, divided it into its different watches. The first watch, or even, is from six o'clock till nine; the second watch, or midnight, from nine till twelve; the cock-crowing from twelve till three; and the morning from three till six. Then the day commences. Now if we compare this with the time that the Lord Jesus has been away, I think we shall very plainly see that the course of things down here, both as regards the church and the world, has been shown forth very forcibly by these different watches. The time of the apostles and the first four or five centuries may be very properly looked at as the first watch or even, because when the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead and taken His seat at His Father's right hand, He then sent down the Holy Ghost to set up a light for God upon earth, and it shone very brightly for a time, but it gradually became dim, getting lower and lower, until a time of the greatest ignorance and superstition set in: so that from the fifth till the fifteenth century

things were so, that men themselves now speak of it as a time of midnight darkness, and call it the dark ages. Scripture always speaks of this present time, this interval between the Lord's crucifixion and His coming again in glory, as being night. Not but that there has been, every now and then, a bright star to be seen glimmering through the gloom, even in the very thickest of the night, but they have been very few, and those few scarcely seen because of its denseness. But in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries God brought to light the glorious truth of justification by faith which had been hid so long, and thereby dispersed a great deal of the thickest of the darkness; from that time till the present God has been gradually sending forth His light and His truth abroad in the earth; till, now, where are we? Not that the wickedness of the world has been checked by the light, quite the contrary, though in some cases it may have changed its gross aspect and put on a little better appearance but sin has gone on increasing as the word of God tells us it would, so that it was never greater than it is to day. But, oh! father, is not the night indeed far spent, and the day near at hand? Is not that bright and glorious morning-star just about to burst upon our view? Because Christ will come for His church in the morning, before the day breaks. Had we been living in the first watch—the time of the apostles—we might have said, There is midnight and the cock-crowing to come yet; the Lord may stay till either of these watches, before He comes: or, He may stay even till the morning. But now, if, according to the figure, we see that all these watches are passed and we are a long way advanced into the morning, we are, as it were, pushed up into a corner, as Christ, according to His own word, must come in the morning. And, though to us there are neither signs nor seasons, yet we are not justified in being ignorant of the day.

In which we live. But to many of us may be repeated what the Lord Jesus said to the Jews, because they did not comprehend the time of His coming in humiliation and sorrow. He said, "You can discern the face of the skies, and of the earth, but how is it that you do not discern this time?"

Oh! William, how glad I am that God has, by His Spirit, opened my eyes to see these glorious truths, though it be now in the time of my old age: and I pray God that that happy moment may not find me in any way slumbering or sleeping, but that I may be watchful and sober. And I think the order of these events is also shown forth very plainly, by the Lord Jesus being spoken of continually as the Morning-star in connexion with His church. But to the faithful among the Jews, and those who fear His name in that day, He is spoken of as "the Sun of righteousness, arising with healing in His wings."

Yes, father, it is thus shown forth very plainly indeed: because the morning-star appears while it is yet night, and those only see it who are up and awake; but when the sun rises, every one sees it, because it brings in the day. So will it be with the Lord Jesus *when He comes for His church*, He will come as the Morning-star, and those only will see Him whose eyes are open to do so; but, when He comes to the Jews, *He will come to the earth in glory* as the Sun of righteousness, and bring in the day, that happy day, of joy and blessing to this poor world. But, on the other hand, He will consign to an unchanging night of unspeakable sorrow and anguish, all who have rejected Him. Luke xix 27.

This time of the kingdom, William, brings to my mind that favourite passage in the 8th of Proverbs, where the Lord Jesus presents Himself in the character of wisdom, and speaks of His delight being "with the sons of men" before ever the world was, when as yet

He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the fountains abounding with water. He then saw man in the distance, and found His delight, and interest in him. But sin came in, and made a barrier between God and man; and thereby, for the time, seemed to frustrate, and set aside, the purposes of that glorious One. But it did not touch His love, nor hinder His feelings toward us, and here in this time of blessedness and joy, Christ seems to get that on which His heart was set from all eternity.

The Lord Jesus will find a certain measure of satisfaction at this time, father; but things upon earth will not even then be such as He can be *well pleased* with (this will only be in the time of the new heavens and the new earth), for, as we have seen, sin will still be in the world, and though men will bow to Him because of His power, and glory, yet we read of many "yielding *feigned* obedience to Him." Psalm xviii. 44; lxi. 3. (see margin.) It will not be a submission in heart, on the part of many, and, therefore, will not be that which the Lord can take unmingled pleasure in. This world, which "was created by Him and for Him," will have the traces of sin still left upon it at this time as we have seen, but the weakness and failure of man, from the beginning, however, will serve as a means by which the Father, through that glorious One, will bring about a purpose, which He had purposed in Himself before this world was (2 Tim. i. 9), namely, of bringing the church into likeness to, and union with His beloved Son; and of forming a bond between believers and the Lord Jesus, such as, probably, never could have existed, had man remained in innocence in the garden of Eden, and had sin never come into the world. For, not only has the Lord Jesus done that, by which He will have a *people in the new earth* to delight in; but He will have a *company up there, with Himself, in His own glory*, and that accomplished

in such a way, that we shall be able to lose sight of ourselves altogether, and find our whole joy, and delight in Him. And He will have His perfect joy, and delight in us also, without the possibility of any interruption, throughout an unchanging eternity. Man may fall in Eden; angels may not keep their first estate, but leave their own habitation; but we, whom Christ has bought with His own precious blood, He has made as secure as He Himself is secure; for He has said, "because I live, ye shall live also." But the accomplishment of this involved a great deal, for we had become sinners; and "the wages of sin is death." This debt we had incurred, and it must be paid. Therefore, if that Holy Lord Jesus would have us up there with Himself in His glory, He must first come down here, and put Himself in our place, and die in our stead. And this He has done. He was crucified "between two thieves," upon mount Calvary, and at the close said, "It is finished: and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost." Eph. i. 4—11. Thus our salvation was accomplished, and everything settled and done; and He is now set down at His Father's right hand. For by (this) one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Heb. x. 14. So that our hearts are now at leisure from ourselves, and we have nothing to do upon earth but seek His glory.

It is this, William, which bows my soul in worship and adoration before Him; for though I delight in the glory, and can look forward with joy to that happy time of which we have been speaking: it is when I contemplate that Holy, glorious, *Son of God*, as spit upon, and nailed to the cross for me, that my heart is laid low at His feet, and I have nothing to say before Him, but Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord Jesus!

Yes, father, it is the dying love of Christ which melts the heart of all God's people, and produces true worship and adoration before Him. We see that

which constitutes the greatest theme of praise in heaven is, "*the Lamb that was slain.*" And we can quite understand, that when this pure and spotless One first made His appearance in this world of sin and death, with what joy the heavenly hosts appeared to the shepherds, "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men;" because they saw Him by whom they were created, and by whose power they were upheld, thus become a babe, wrapped in swaddling bands, and lying in a manger, an inhabitant of this world of sorrow. Isa. ix. 6; Heb. i. 3. Also, when He was nailed to the cross, we can understand the sun withdrawing its light, and refusing to see its Maker thus hanging on a tree, and the earth quaking, and the rocks rending, when the Lord of glory bowed His head in death: but man, poor man, for whom He died, could become the willing perpetrator of that dreadful deed, and behold it unmoved. Col. i. 14—20; 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Oh! William, what debtors to mercy we are; for we have the same evil nature as those who did it: and had we been there would, most likely, have been foremost in it all.

But we have not yet referred to the Lord Jesus coming in flaming fire. How do you regard that?

You remember, father, that when we were looking at the Lord Jesus coming to receive His *church*, we saw His coming presented, in different Scriptures, in various aspects, according to the circumstances of each assembly, under whose notice it was brought; so also is His coming in glory presented in one aspect to the Jew, and in another aspect to the world. In the first chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians, where the Lord Jesus is spoken of as coming in flaming fire, we find that *the world* is persecuting God's people: He is therefore, presented as coming in this way—*taking vengeance*. Again, in the book of the Revelation, we

see Him coming forth as King of kings, and Lord of lords; with His eyes as a flame of fire, clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, because He is coming to meet *His enemies in battle as a man of war*. But when He is spoken of as coming to His faithful and suffering witnesses in that day, whether Jew or Gentile, it is as their *Deliverer*, and *Saviour*: and, to those who fear His name, as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings. When about to put things straight in this world, He is spoken of as "coming with clouds; and every eye shall see Him: and they also which pierced Him." So also are we who believe in Him presented in different aspects: for sometimes we are spoken of as the saints of God, coming with Christ to the mount of Olives; then again as the manifested sons of God, and all creation brought into blessing at our manifestation; and in the book of the Revelation as the armies of heaven, coming forth with the Lord Jesus, "on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean;" then, after that, as "the bride, the Lamb's wife:" each case, in accordance with the circumstances in which we are presented, but all beautiful and glorious, according to Him who has done, and ordered it all.

Who do you think, William, they are, who are spoken of in the first part of the twentieth chapter of the book of the Revelation; who live and reign with Christ a thousand years, after Satan is bound, and whose resurrection is called the first resurrection?

They, father, are evidently those who had been put to death, because they would not worship the beast, and his image, and whose souls we see under the altar, in the sixth chapter, crying for vengeance. With their resurrection closes the resurrection to life, the church and the old testament saints having been raised before, the whole of which is there spoken of as the first resurrection in contrast to the second.

which is the resurrection to condemnation, and which will not take place till after the thousand years of blessing are over: the Lord Jesus referred to both these events, in the fifth chapter of the gospel by John, the one He called the resurrection to life, and the other, the resurrection to damnation, or condemnation. The souls under the altar crying for vengeance, are told to rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled; and in the end of the nineteenth chapter, we see the little season is past, and then they get the vengeance for which they cried executed: and here in the commencement of the twentieth chapter, they get that also for which they did not cry, that is the quickening of their mortal bodies, and they live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Their blood had been spilt by the sword of the Antichrist, because they would not bow down and worship him. And here they have the reward of their faithfulness; their bodies are raised to share the glory with Christ. At one time their cry, when under the altar, pained me very much, their impatience for vengeance gave my spirit quite a chill, when I read of it, because it was so unlike the Lord Jesus, who, when they were nailing Him to the cross, said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Stephen also, as they were stoning him to death, with his last breath said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." But these cry with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" But when I saw there were different companies of saved saints in heaven, and that they, whose souls John saw under the altar, did not belong to the church—the bride, the Lamb's wife—but are a company of another dispensation, the mystery in my mind was solved immediately and I could hear their cry without a pang even as I

could look at King David, the man after God's own heart, on his death-bed giving charge to his son Solomon, concerning Shimei and others, who, on referring to their past conduct, could say, "His hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." What should we think of such a death-bed in these days? The child of God would shrink back from it with horror. The same may be said of many expressions in the Psalms. But it was quite consistent with godliness, in the days of David, and throughout the Jewish dispensation, so also will it be in days yet to come, when the church has been taken from the earth.

Then, William, the fact of their living again being called the first resurrection, does not argue that the old testament saints, and the church, have not been raised before this time?

Certainly not, father; but as we have already said, it is the finishing up of the resurrection to life.

But, William, is not this to assert, that there will be several resurrections to life?

No, father; though those who are saved will not all rise at one time, as we have seen, yet properly speaking, it is only one resurrection: because those different companies will all rise to life everlasting, and reign together with Christ in glory: whereas, they who will be left in their graves, when Christ shall appear, will be left to the second resurrection which is the resurrection to condemnation.

We having been taught from our childhood that there will be only one resurrection—that the wicked and the righteous will all rise together, and stand before their judge, as criminals at the bar—it becomes very difficult for us to get rid of the old thought, and to allow our minds to be turned into another channel, however correct and true it may be.

It is so, William; but it becomes very simple, when thus explained. Thou in the latter end of the chapter

there is the "great white throne, and Him who sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them: and I (John) saw *the dead*, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened."

Yes, father, this is the sad and sorrowful picture of the second resurrection, or the resurrection of the wicked dead, those who have died without Christ in all ages. Their bodies have been in their graves, or in the sea, or elsewhere, up to this time, when this world's history *in connexion with sin*, will close altogether. *Then* they will be raised, small and great, to stand before God, to receive every one according to their works.

You said it is the scene of the judgment of the wicked dead, William; but I see there is the book of life spoken of as being open.

There is, father, but we do not find one mentioned as having his name in it. You see, they are called *the dead*, though they *stand* before God. It is also said, "*the dead* were judged out of those things which were written in the books."

But what about the righteous, who die during the thousand years of blessing, William?

It does not appear, father, that the righteous will die at all during that happy time; nor that death will then come upon any one, but as the result of sin. This being the case, there will be none of God's people in their graves at that time, because all the righteous will have been raised before the commencement of this time of blessing, and will have been with Christ in glory; and as to the righteous who will be alive upon the earth, it does not appear that they will die at all, but their bodies will be changed, as with us at the beginning: for we know that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. xv. 50.

Then, William, there are the new heaven, and the

new earth, spoken of in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. I suppose this is that happy period when everything connected with this present scene of sin and death will have passed away for ever.

Yes, father, the Lord Jesus will have reigned till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Iniquity will have been put down, and the wicked will have been sent to their own place, which is the lake of fire; and the Lord Jesus Himself tells us that their worm shall never die, and the fire will never be quenched. (Mark ix. 43-48.) And as the apostle Paul tells us, the heavens will pass away with a great noise—the elements shall melt with fervent heat—the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and here the apostle John tells us that he saw the new heavens and the new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. This will be a perfect state, which will not be the case in the millennium. Hence the new Jerusalem will come down to the earth, and the tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. This will not be the case during the thousand years, blessed as it will be: for sin and death will still be there, though not to the extent it is now. But in the eternal state they will both be gone for ever, and everything connected with them. The Lord Jesus will have subdued all things unto Himself. (Phil. iii. 21.) Then will He deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. xv 28-28.)

This is a glorious prospect, William, for the whole redeemed family of God from Abel downwards. But have we any scripture which will give any idea of the position of the bride in the eternal state?

There is not much said about her, father: but she is represented by the new Jerusalem, which at this time is still seen as a bride adorned for her husband, having all the freshness, in love and joy, of the marriage day. And we know that this our relationship with Christ will never cease; but as His bride we shall be with Him, enjoying His company. He will be our delight as our Saviour and Redeemer. The One to whom we owe our all. And we shall be His delight as the especial gift of the Father, and the purchase of His own blood; sharing in all His glory as the glorified Son of Man. And with Him beholding the glory which He had with His Father before this world was. (John xvii. 22-24.) It appears also that the bride, or the new Jerusalem will be the especial dwelling-place of God and the Lamb. (Rev. xxi. 3, 22, 23.)

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