

Pre-Millennial Doctrine or Waiting for the Son?

Revelation 1: 5-7.

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In a day like the present, when knowledge on every question is so widely diffused, it is most needful to press upon the conscience of the Christian reader the vast distinction between merely holding the *doctrine* of the Lord's second coming and actually waiting for His appearing (1 Thess. 1: 10). Many, alas! hold and, it may be, eloquently preach, the doctrine of a second advent who really do not know *the Person* whose advent they profess to believe and preach. This evil must be faithfully pointed out and dealt with. The present is an age of knowledge — of religious knowledge; but oh! knowledge is not life, knowledge is not power — knowledge will not deliver from sin or Satan, from the world, from death, from hell. Knowledge, I mean, short of the knowledge of God in Christ. One may know a great deal of Scripture, a great deal of prophecy, a great deal of doctrine, and, all the while, be dead in trespasses and sins.

There is, however, one kind of knowledge which necessarily involves eternal life, and that is the knowledge of God, as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. "This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17: 3). Now, it is impossible to be living in the daily and hourly expectation of "the coming of the Son of Man," if the Son of Man be not experimentally known. I may take up the prophetic record, and by mere study, and the exercise of my intellectual faculties, discover the doctrine of the Lord's second coming, and yet be totally ignorant of Christ, and living a life of entire alienation of heart from Him.

How often has this been the case! How many have astonished us with their vast fund of prophetic knowledge — a fund acquired, it may be, by years of laborious research, and yet, in the end, proved themselves to have been displaying unhallowed light — light not acquired by prayerful waiting upon God! Surely the thought of this should deeply affect our hearts and solemnise our minds and lead us to inquire whether or not *we* know the blessed Person who, again and again, announces Himself as about to "come quickly"; else, if we know Him not, we may find ourselves of the number of those addressed by the prophet in the following startling words: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light? even very dark and no brightness in it?" (Amos 5: 18-20)

Matthew 2 furnishes us with a very striking illustration of the difference between mere prophetic knowledge of Christ—between the exercise of the intellect on the letter of Scripture, and the drawings of the Father to the Person of Christ. The wise men, manifestly led by the finger of God, were in true and earnest search of Christ, and they found Him. As to scriptural knowledge, they could not, for a moment have competed with the chief priests and scribes; yet what did the scriptural knowledge of the latter do for them? Why, it rendered them efficient instruments for Herod, who called them together for the purpose of making use of their Biblical knowledge in his deadly opposition to God's Anointed. They were able to give him chapter and verse, as we say. But, while they were assisting Herod by their knowledge, the wise men were, by the drawings of the Father, making their way to Jesus. Blessed contrast! How much happier to be a worshipper at the feet of Jesus, though with slender knowledge, than to be a learned scribe, and a heart cold, dead, and distant from that blessed One! How much better to have the heart full of lively affection for Christ than to have the intellect stored with the most

accurate knowledge of the letter of Scripture!

What is the melancholy characteristic of the present time? A wide diffusion of scriptural knowledge with little love for Christ, and little devotedness to His work; abundant readiness to quote Scripture, like the scribes and chief priests, but little purpose of heart, like the wise men, to open the treasures and present to Christ the willing offerings of a heart filled by the sense of what He is. What we want is personal devotedness, and not the mere empty display of knowledge. It is not that we would undervalue scriptural knowledge; God forbid, if that knowledge be found in connection with genuine discipleship. But if it be not, I ask, of what value is it? None whatever. The most extensive range of knowledge, if Christ be not its centre, will avail just nothing; yea, it will, in all probability, render us more efficient instruments in Satan's hand for the furthering of his purposes of hostility to Christ. An ignorant man can do but little mischief; but a learned man, without Christ, can do a great deal.

The verses which stand at the head of this paper present to us the divine basis on which to found all scriptural knowledge, more especially prophetic knowledge. Before any one can utter his hearty amen to the announcement, "Behold He cometh with clouds," he must, without any question, be able to join in the blessed burst of praise, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." The believer knows the One who is coming, because He has loved him, and washed him from his sins. The believer expects the everlasting Lover of his soul. The meek and lowly One who served, suffered, and was emptied down here, will speedily come in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory, and *all* who know Him will welcome Him with glad hosannahs — they will be able to say, "This is the Lord, *we have waited for Him*, we will rejoice and be glad in His salvation." But, alas! there are, it is to be feared, very many who hold and argue about the Lord's coming who are not waiting for Him at all, who are living for themselves in the world, and "mind earthly things." How terrible to be found talking about the Lord's coming, and yet, when He does come, *to be left behind!* Oh! think of this; and if you are really conscious that you know not the Lord, then let me entreat of you to behold Him shedding His precious blood to wash you from your sins, and learn to confide in Him, to lean upon Him, to rejoice in Him and *in Him alone*.

But if you can look up to Heaven, and say, "Thank God, I do know Him, and I am waiting for Him," then let me remind you of what the Apostle John says, as to the practical result of this blessed hope. "Every man that hath this hope *in him*, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Yes, this must ever be the result of waiting for the Son from Heaven; but not at all so of the mere prophetic doctrine. Many of the most impure, profane and ungodly characters, that have made their appearance in the world, have held, in theory, the second advent of Christ; but they were not *waiting for the Son*, and therefore they did not, and could not purify themselves. It is impossible that any one can be waiting for Christ's appearing, and not make efforts after increased holiness, separation, and devotedness of heart: "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that watcheth." Those who know the Lord Jesus Christ, and love His appearing, will daily seek to shake off everything contrary to their Master's mind; they will seek to become more and more conformed to Him in all things. Men may hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and yet grasp the world and the things thereof with great eagerness; but the true hearted servant will ever keep his eye steadily fixed on his Master's return, remembering His blessed words, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 3).

What a day will that be when the Saviour appears!

How welcome to those who have shared in His present rejection.

A crown incorruptible then will be theirs —

A rich compensation for suffering and loss.