

The Hope of the Church; with concluding practical observations.

Rev. 22: 6-21.

Lecture 8 of 'Eight Lectures on Prophecy' from shorthand notes.

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In drawing to a close, as we have to do this evening, the inquiry into Scripture, which on these successive occasions we have been pursuing, there is one subject that I am anxious to lay before you as fully as time will allow. It is a subject closely connected with that which has been announced as the theme of our meditations this evening: indeed, it forms a part of it. The resurrection of the saints at the coming of the Lord, as distinct from the resurrection of the wicked, is the subject to which I refer; and the coming of the Lord is itself "the hope of the Church."

The idea that Christians generally have is that of an indiscriminate resurrection; the righteous and wicked, as it is supposed, being raised at the same moment, and that moment absolutely at the end of time, after the millennium, at the close of the entire course of God's dealings with this earth on which we dwell. This was the idea which Martha, the sister of Lazarus, had. Desolate and sorrowful through the loss of her brother, our Lord, to comfort her heart, said to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." What was her reply? "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Martha's faith as to the resurrection was exactly that of the bulk of professing Christians now; true, doubtless, as far as it goes, but stopping far short of the precious fulness of truth revealed in the Word of God respecting it. There is, indeed, to be a resurrection, and that resurrection is to be at the last day. But, as we were showing you from Scripture two or three weeks ago, "the day of judgment," "the day of the Lord," and, I would now add, "the last day," each expresses not a literal, actual day of twenty-four hours, but a lengthened period. The "last day" begins before the "day of judgment," — "the day of the Lord," but it seems to us to embrace the whole period from the coming of Christ to receive his saints, to the time "when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." The resurrection at the last day embraces thus the resurrection both of the righteous and the wicked; but this does not in any wise prove that they are both at the same moment, and we shall see just now, from the plain testimony of Scripture, that they are not only distinguished from each other, but separated by an interval of a thousand years.

The first passage to which I would refer you is Luke 14: 14, which simply distinguishes these two resurrections as to their character. Our Lord, having exhorted those with whom he was sitting at table, when they made a feast, to call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,

proceeds to enforce the exhortation thus: — "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Would any one, not previously possessed with the prevailing notion, gather the impression from this passage that the resurrection of the just and that of the wicked form one indiscriminate event? Would not the natural impression of the passage on any unprejudiced mind be, that the resurrection of the just is an event perfectly distinct? "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

In Phil. 3: 10, 11, the apostle represents it as his great endeavour — his arduous, his continual endeavour, to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, "if by any means," says he, "I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." But if the only resurrection be an indiscriminate resurrection both of righteous and wicked, — a simple act of God's power, apart from all questions of spiritual condition and character, how could it be Paul's solicitude "*by any means to attain to the resurrection of the dead*"?

In the fifth of John we have another important passage in which our blessed Lord distinguishes between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."* (John 5: 28, 29.) Here our Lord speaks of two resurrections, distinguishing them by the sources from which they respectively flow, and by which they are respectively thus characterized: life in the one case — judgment in the other. "The resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of judgment." "Yes," you may perhaps be saying, "but both are in one hour." I anticipated this objection, when I referred to the passage; and it is as much to meet this objection that I ask your attention to the passage, as to show you the positive proof it contains of the doctrine we are considering. "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." People infer from this that all rise together. And this would be a just inference, if the word "hour" meant a literal period of sixty minutes. But if you look back to verse 25 of this very chapter, you will see that the word is used in quite another sense. He has been speaking of the quickening of dead souls — how he that hears and believes has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment or condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. He then says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." *The hour is coming, and now is.* It had commenced when our Lord spake. There is an "hour" in which the Son of God is quickening dead souls — the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. How long has this "hour" lasted? It had begun when Jesus spake thus; it has not terminated yet! Already do we know this "hour" of quickening dead souls to be of more than eighteen hundred years' continuance. For anything, therefore, that the word "hour" proves to the contrary, the "hour" in which Christ will quicken *dead bodies* might last as long as this present "hour" in which he is quickening *dead souls*. The passage before us does not determine how long the period is. It teaches plainly that there is a "resurrection of life," and a "resurrection of judgment." There is an "hour" coming *in the which* both these will be accomplished; we read, in the immediate context of this passage, of another "hour" which has unquestionably lasted for nearly two thousand years. What the period actually is that intervenes between these two resurrections, we have to learn elsewhere in Scripture; and in another passage we are plainly told that it is one thousand years.

*Or "of judgment," for that is what it really is. There is but one and the same word in the original for "judgment" in ver. 22 — "condemnation" in ver. 24 — "judgment" in ver. 27 — and "damnation" in ver. 29, of this chapter. It is simply "judgment" in each case.

It is in Revelation 20 that we learn this. We find there, that the duration of the "hour" in the which these two resurrections take place is one thousand years. The resurrection of life is at the commencement, the resurrection of judgment is at the close. I have scarcely referred to this passage in any of the previous lectures; I have dwelt chiefly on the proofs furnished elsewhere. It is often and confidently alleged, that the doctrines we have been placing before you are mainly, if not entirely, based on some peculiar exposition of Rev. 20. I have purposely, on account of this, deferred any notice of it. (save a mere passing glance, see the chapter: *The Millennial reign of Christ*) till this last evening, that you may see, my brethren, that the truths we have been considering do not rest exclusively, *or even mainly*, on the evidence of this chapter. It is indeed an important part of God's Word; and God forbid that we should slight it, or any part of Scripture. But if this chapter had not been in the Bible — if it had pleased God not to have communicated to us the instruction contained in it — there is still, as we have seen, abundant proof throughout God's Word of the great doctrines to which our attention has been directed. But I do now turn to this passage. You shall have still other passages to demonstrate that the resurrection of the saints is distinct from that of the wicked: but it is here we are told what length of time elapses between the two.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." People say that this is figurative language; and it is at once granted that it is so. No doubt the key of the bottomless pit, and the great chain in the angel's hand, and the binding of Satan, and the setting a seal upon him, are all figures. But what are they figures of? Are they expressions without meaning, because they are figurative? Or is the meaning necessarily uncertain and indefinite? What do they all teach us, but that Satan will be forcibly restrained, and that in his own abyss, for a thousand years. *So restrained* that he shall deceive the nations no more, till a thousand years are fulfilled. What difficulty is there in understanding the force and meaning of figures like these?

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." Observe these last words, my brethren: "*This is the first resurrection.*" There may have been figures employed in the passage: no one questions it. But when the Holy Ghost is pleased to *interpret* the figurative language he has employed — *when he is pleased to tell us what it means* — are we to evade the force of all he says, by making his interpretation figurative also? "this is the first resurrection," is the Holy Ghost's explanation of the figures or symbols by which it had been set forth. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a

thousand years." Nothing can be more evident, than what the simple definite impression of this language will be, on any mind not prepossessed with thoughts of another character. The way in which it is commonly sought to evade its plain obvious meaning is by explaining it thus: that the resurrection of the martyrs, which John beheld, denotes a revival of the principles for which they suffered. That having suffered death for Christian principles, the revival and universal spread and ascendancy of these principles is set forth by the symbol of those who had been beheaded, living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. Such is the popular interpretation of this passage. But it breaks down at every point. They who have been beheaded are they who reign. Are they *principles* or *persons* that have been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God? Then again, supposing that the reign of principles might be set forth by the resurrection and reign of those who had been martyrs for them, how are we to account for their priesthood? "They shall be priests of God and of Christ." As one has said in substance somewhere, "You may speak of the *reign* of principles; but can you make principles into *priests* as well?" Then again, "On such the second death hath no power." What is the second death? It is explained in verse 14 to be "the lake of fire." And could there be any question of the second death, the lake of fire, having power over Christian principles? The lake of fire is for the punishment of evil persons; and it is one element in the blessedness of those who have part in the first resurrection, that "on such the second death hath no power." Then further, the first resurrection is so linked in this chapter with what all admit to be a literal resurrection of dead bodies at the end of the thousand years, that you cannot explain away the one without explaining away the other. When John has witnessed the vision in verse 4, which is explained to him in verse 5 to be "the first resurrection," we are told of certain who have no part in it; "but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." In the verses which ensue, we have a rapid glance at the events which occur when the thousand years are expired — Satan is loosed — the nations again deceived — fire comes down from God out of heaven and destroys them — the devil who had deceived them is cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet are (having been cast there alive a thousand years before, see Rev. 19: 20); and then what follows? "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Is this figurative too, my brethren? If so, where is there Scripture authority for the doctrine of the resurrection at all? And if this be not figurative, why should the account of "the first resurrection" at the beginning of the chapter be set aside as figurative? If it be allowed, which it must be, that the resurrection of the wicked dead at the close of the chapter is a literal actual resurrection of dead bodies, on what principle can it be maintained, that the first resurrection at the beginning of the chapter is figurative, and denotes the revival of dead or dying principles? What says the Holy Spirit? "This is the first resurrection." "But the rest of the dead lived not again," etc. The rest of the dead *what?* — *principles?* - or *persons?* Surely "the rest" must bear some relation to those from whom they are distinguished. If you get so many yards of a web of cloth, and another person gets "the rest," you would be amazed to hear any one contend that what you had received was *linen*, and what the other had received was *woollen!* No; if it be a revival of principles which constitutes the first resurrection, "the rest of the dead, who live not again till the thousand years are finished," must be principles also. And if it shocks you to trifle thus with God's holy Word, — if it be certain that the dead who are raised and judged before the great white throne are dead persons, not principles; then is it equally certain that the first resurrection is a resurrection of persons too.

If the first resurrection be one of principles, then must the second also. If the second, that before the great white throne, be a resurrection of persons, the first must be a resurrection of persons likewise. Nothing can be more evident and simple than this.

This chapter, then, demonstrates that there is an interval of at least a thousand years between "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of judgment." "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." That "hour" lasts a thousand years, and the "little season" which succeeds. The "hour" in which Christ quickens dead souls has already lasted more than eighteen hundred years. The "hour" in which he shall raise dead bodies commences with his coming to change his living, and raise his sleeping saints. It closes with the resurrection of the wicked dead and their judgment before the great white throne — "the resurrection of judgment." I commend the whole chapter (Rev. 20) to your patient, attentive, and prayerful perusal in your closets before God.

Let us now turn to 1 Cor. 15. The resurrection is the subject here. We have statements which show its deep and fundamental importance. "Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." How solemnly important, then, this truth of the resurrection. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." Have the first-fruits, then, been gathered into the garner? And shall not the plenteous, teeming harvest follow? Assuredly it shall; "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; afterward" — who? "they that are Christ's at his coming." Not a word here of any who are not Christ's. Their resurrection, that of the wicked, I mean, is on another principle, and at another time; not at his coming, but, as we have seen, a thousand years afterwards. They are not raised as the harvest of which his resurrection was the first-fruits. No, they are raised by an act of his almighty power, to be the monuments throughout eternity of the righteous exercise of that power, in casting them into the lake of fire, which is the second death. The two events are as distinct in character and principle as they are in date. And the statement here is most precise. It is a statement of the order in which the resurrection takes place. Every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Not a word of those who are not.

Turn now, my brethren, to 1 Thessalonians 4. The apostle is giving express instructions to those who had been bereft of Christian friends by the hand of death. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as other which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord" — such is the authority by which he writes; no expression of opinion, of spiritual judgment, on the part of the apostle, weighty as that might have been: but express revelation, *the word of the Lord* — "that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." The Thessalonian believers had the hope of the Lord's return very fully and distinctly before them. They had been "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Some of their brethren, however, had fallen asleep —

had departed; and the survivors seem to have been filled with sorrow on their account, lest they, the departed ones, should by reason of their departure, be hindered from sharing the joy of the living saints at the coming of the Lord. The apostle assures them that "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent" — that is, shall not anticipate, or go before — "them which are asleep." The living saints shall not enter into their full joy at the Lord's coming a moment sooner than those who have departed in the faith. "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." So far from the full joy of the departed being postponed — so far from our entrance into our full blessedness and glory being before theirs; "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." Their resurrection precedes our ascent with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." These are the words, my brethren, supplied by the pen of inspiration, wherewith to comfort one another when we stand around the graves of our departed friends who have been put to sleep by Jesus; for so the words literally mean. But what is the comfort usually administered on these occasions? With all kindness of spirit, it may be, and every desire to bind up the broken heart, Christians generally on these occasions say just the reverse of what we are exhorted here to address to one another. They say of the departed, "Ah, they will not return to you, but you shall certainly go to them." My brethren, the Word of God here before us declares, they shall return! God's Word no where affirms that you shall go to them. You may do so: for we may, any of us, fall asleep, as those who have gone before us have done already. To be "absent from the body," is to be "present with the Lord;" and the apostle speaks of "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." We may pass into this disembodied state, and be in paradise with the Lord. *It may be so*; but it is not certain, as to any of us, that it will. "We who are alive and remain," was the language held by the apostle in his day; and shall we, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, presume to say with certainty that we shall not be alive and remain? God forbid! The Saviour had said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself," leaving the moment of his return in entire uncertainty. The apostle, taking up that word in faith, reckons himself among those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord. If it was the joy of his heart thus to reckon, where are our hearts, my brethren, if we feel it a relief to think (as alas! so many of us think) rather of remaining here till death, than of being among those who are alive and remain till our Lord return?

I have dwelt the longer on this passage, because it is so deeply interesting and important: it occupies so central a place with regard to the subject, not only of the resurrection, but of the hope of the church. What is the church's hope? It is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to raise his sleeping and to change his living saints: it is the hope of being thus all caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so of being ever with the Lord. I say, to *change his living saints* as well as to raise those who are asleep; and for further instruction as to this, let us turn again to 1 Cor. 15: "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (ver. 51, 52.) Men take upon themselves to say that we shall all sleep. How often do we hear Christians say, "We must all pay the debt of nature." "There are many things uncertain," you will hear it said, "but one thing *is* certain; we *must* all die." There is nothing more common than to hear such affirmations as these. In support

of them Scripture itself is misquoted. "It is appointed unto men once to die," says the Apostle, in Heb. 9: 27. But how many improve on this, and quote the passage as though it had been written, "It is appointed unto all men once to die." Not only is this an addition to the text, but a contradiction of the context. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." So far from its being appointed unto *all* men to die, the passage speaks of a class of persons who will not die. To them that look for him, Christ will appear. And they will not die. "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The Apostle styles himself and others, "stewards of the mysteries of God," and says, "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Alas! what an account have some of us to give of our stewardship in this respect! What unfaithful stewards have we been! Even in respect to this mystery here unfolded — "Behold, I show you a mystery" — how small a place has it had in our esteem and in our ministrations! Every word used by the Holy Spirit in revealing it is precious. There is a sweetness, for instance, in this word, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," which cannot be adequately expressed. Were it possible for any interval to elapse between the coming of Christ and the change which we are to undergo; were we in unchanged bodies left for ever so short an interval in the presence of the glory in which Christ will appear; who is there amongst us that would not, like John, fall at his feet as dead! But there is no such interval. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Nothing so rapid as the twinkling of an eye, and it is thus we shall be changed at the coming of the Lord. One moment here in our bodies of flesh and blood, in these tabernacles of clay — one moment here, I say — the next moment in glory. As we are told again in Philippians 3: 20, 21, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Would that the prospect of this change might be ever before our eyes.

There is one most interesting connection of the passage we have been considering in 1 Cor. 15 with one in the Old Testament. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15: 53, 54.) Where is this saying written? In one place only in Scripture besides. In Isa. 25: 8 you will find the passage that the apostle quotes: "He will swallow up death in victory." But then the connection in which these words stand in Isa. 25 links the subject we are considering with those which have been previously considered; and it shows, moreover most distinctly, that the resurrection of the saints is at the commencement, not at the close, of the millennium. At the close of Isa. 24, after predicting the dreadful judgments which shall befall this guilty world, the prophet says, "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." What is this but the millennial reign of Christ; the earthly centre of which we saw the other evening to be Zion and Jerusalem? Well, in verse 6 of the next chapter we read, "And in this mountain" — Mount Zion, for there has been no other mountain referred to between — "shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, 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." It is here, my brethren, in the midst of this magnificent prediction of the introduction of earth's full blessing under the reign of Christ — Israel restored — the nations happy — the covering destroyed — the veil removed — tears wiped from all faces — the rebuke of Israel taken away from off all the earth — in the midst of this prediction, I say, we have the words quoted by the apostle. About what time is it that this prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled? Hear what the apostle says, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's AT HIS COMING For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So WHEN this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, THEN shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." A comparison of these passages affords the most complete demonstration that the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the saints, the deliverance of Israel, and the introduction of millennial blessing, all occur about the same time. These two passages group together all these glorious events at the commencement of the reign of Christ. It is not that they all occur at the same *moment*, I need hardly say. But it is quite clear that they all take place *about the close of the present and the commencement of the next dispensation*.

I would notice here, however, a difficulty which may occur to some. It may be enquired, "If death be swallowed up in victory at the commencement of the millennium, how is it that in this chapter we are told that 'the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death'? and how is it that we find in Rev. 20: 14, that at the close of the millennium, and not before, 'death and hades are cast into the lake of fire'?" My brethren, the swallowing up death in victory is not necessarily the destruction of death. A foe long triumphant may have laid his rueful grasp on the rightful subjects of some mighty prince; he may by that prince's conquering hosts be swallowed up in victory, and all his captives set at liberty; every subject of the prince that has been in bondage to him may be released; and yet the life of the tyrant may be spared — yea, he may be spared to act the part of jailer to the prince's enemies. It is exactly so in the case before us. Death has had under his grasp the bodies of God's beloved people. At the coming of the Lord, the Prince of life, he will be compelled to relinquish every captive; not one of all the bodies of God's people shall be left in the grasp of the fell destroyer. He must disgorge his prey; he must give up all. Already has he been compelled to give up that wondrous blessed One himself, who once entered, voluntarily entered, his dark domains. The Lord Jesus Christ was once for a little while an inmate of the tomb. It was then that he really conquered death. "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death" (see Heb. 2: 14) was the object for which he had taken part of flesh and blood; and his resurrection proved that death's power was vanquished, — death's title set aside! A mightier than he who had the power of death had voluntarily subjected himself to death in atonement; and having in his death put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, he came forth, bursting every barrier, and leading captivity captive. Not only was it impossible that he himself should be holden of death, his death in atonement set aside death's title over the saints. He "abolished death;" and having "spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (or in himself). Faith knows this now, and rejoices in this perfect victory of Christ over death. True, that for wise and gracious purposes death is still

permitted to retain in his grasp the bodies of those who have been put to sleep by Jesus; but it is only during the absence of Jesus that death has this permitted power. And such is the effect of Christ's victory over death, that even now, while believers do die, death is gain to the believer. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." But when Jesus comes, the bodies of all his saints shall be delivered from every trace of the power of death. Death shall indeed be swallowed up in victory then. When all the risen and glorified saints shall unite to sing, what faith has sung by anticipation even here, "O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" surely death is swallowed up in victory then! Still it is not destroyed. It is, so to speak, for a thousand years longer the jailer of those unhappy ones who have lived and died in sin. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." While those who are pronounced blessed and holy, as having part in the first resurrection, live and reign with Christ for a thousand years over a renewed and happy world, the generations of the wicked dead shall, so to speak, remain under the custody of death until the end of that blessed period. Then shall they too be raised in the resurrection of judgment, and death itself shall be destroyed. But you see, my brethren, how distinct this is from death being swallowed up in victory. The one is at the commencement of the millennial reign of Christ; the other is at its close, when he shall "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15: 24-26.)

Turn now to Rom. 8: 16-25, a passage which, in its connections with several in the Old Testament, as well as in itself, sheds much light on the subject we are considering. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This is the present joy of believers; we are the children of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Observe, my brethren, it is a glory to be *revealed* — a glory to be revealed, too, *in us*. It is a glory, moreover, which we share with Christ — *glorified together*. Glory is, in the thoughts of most Christians, connected with the separate state, the state of disembodied spirits. They speak, in consequence, of saints going direct to glory when they die. One can find no fault with this, if it be simply expressive of the immediate happiness of the saints with Christ on their departure from the body. But it is not strictly correct and scriptural thus to speak of glory. Glory is a manifested thing. The glory here spoken of is a glory to be *revealed*, and revealed *in us*. When will this be? Not until this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal have put on immortality. As to those who have fallen asleep, it is said of their bodies, "Sown in weakness, raised in power: sown in dishonour, raised in glory." Yes, it is when these bodies of humiliation, changed or raised by our Lord Jesus Christ, "are fashioned like unto his glorious body," that we shall be "glorified together" with him. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." We are the sons of God now, and faith knows this, and rejoices in it. But where is the manifestation of it? I speak not now of its manifestation morally, by the difference in spirit and character between the children of God and the men of the world. Feeble and imperfect as this is, there still is some difference discernible, as to character and conduct, between Christians and the world. But as to our condition outwardly, — are we not subject to every infirmity of body, and to the ills of life, in like manner as our fellow-creatures around us? Yea, and have we not besides a life of sorrow peculiar to ourselves — sorrow coming upon us in consequence of being sons of God — sorrow to which we were

strangers before we became the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus? And is it thus that the sons of God are manifested? No; the "manifestation of the sons of God" has not yet taken place. When will the period for it arrive? Turn to 1 John 3: 1, 2: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." So far are the sons of God from being manifested now. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear (i.e., it is not yet manifested) 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." *When he shall appear we shall be like him.* The manifestation of the sons of God will be at the appearing of Christ. As we read in Col. 3: 4, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." It is for this the earnest expectation of the creature (or creation) waits. "For the creature (or creation) was made subject to vanity not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature (or creation) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Here we find that sin — the fall — has affected not us only, but the whole creation, of which man, in innocence, was made lord. The creation was made subject to vanity. The whole of it groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. How true! What a world of sorrow, and disappointment, and wretchedness this is! It has its bright appearances, indeed; but they are treacherous and delusive. Saunter forth on the evening of a summer's day; ascend some eminence, and view the landscape spread out in stillness and beauty beneath: and how easy to forget, amid the serenity of such a scene, that it is a world of sin, and death, and darkness you are beholding. If at such a time one could but realize what angry passions, what aching hearts, what broken spirits, are concealed from view within those cottages which seem the very abodes of contentment and peace; yea, if we could but call to mind, as to the brute creation itself, sportive beneath and around us, the misery which sin, our sin, has inflicted on its various tribes, we should learn that, with all the loveliness that still attaches to the ruins of God's creation, it is nevertheless ruined. The power of the usurper extends over it, and, as represented in this passage, it groans and travails in pain. Where is the tribe — where the climate — where the scene on the whole face of the earth, that contributes not to this universal groan? This once happy and beautiful, but now marred and ruined, creation groans and travails together in pain until now. Is it always to be so? Are the sighs never to be hushed — the groans never to cease? O yes! the creation waits — not intelligently, of course, but by a hold and beautiful figure of speech, it is represented here as waiting for the era which shall bring its deliverance. And what is that era? The manifestation of the sons of God. Christ is the heir of all things. It was *by* him, and *for* him, that all things were made: but as to this earth, Satan has usurped his place. Through man's folly and sin in being deceived by Satan, it has come to pass; and in the inscrutable wisdom of God's counsels, it has been permitted to be so. Satan has usurped the place of the rightful heir; and Satan is a murderer, and his reign is marked from beginning to end by devastation, and misery, and death. The god, the prince of this world, is a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, What could we expect from his reign, but one universal groan? And so it is. But he is to be dethroned. His title, which he only held through man's sin, by the just judgment of God, has already been set aside by the atoning sacrifice of God's only begotten Son. He who, by right of creation and by the counsels of God, is the heir of all things, went down into death. That he might take the inheritance and fill it with

blessing to the creature, and praise and worship to the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth — that he might do this, not only compatibly with the divine glory, but to its fullest possible display, where Satan and sin had achieved their deadliest triumphs, he went down into the dust of death. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (Col. 1: 19, 20) Where is he now? At the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour. By and by he will return, and, crowned with his many crowns, as Son of David, Son of Abraham, Head of the heathen, Son of Man, Son of God, will reign over the whole creation which sin has marred — which Satan has defaced. Then will creation be delivered. But why has he not come yet? The reason is, there are those who are co-heirs with him, who are to reign with him when he comes, and this is the period during which they are being gathered. By the Gospel of the grace of God, and by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, those are being gathered who are to form the body, the bride of Christ; the "many sons" whom he is "bringing to glory." When this work is completed he will come. The very first thing when he comes is, as we have seen, to raise his sleeping and change his living saints; to gather thus around him in glory his co-heirs — those who are to share his glory through eternal ages. This will be the manifestation of the sons of God; and then shall creation be delivered: then shall the wailing, the groaning, cease. Creation's groan will have become deepest towards the close. The last sounding of that groan will be the heaviest of all; but it will be hushed, and die away in silence, not again to be broken thus, till at the end of the thousand years, the fell usurper being again released to do his work of mischief, he will succeed to some extent, and for a little while. But it will be a little while indeed. Judgment, final and universal, will at once ensue. All evil will find its eternal dwelling-place in the lake of fire, which is the second death: and in the new heaven and new earth, which God will then create, the tabernacle of God shall be with men; and he will be all in all.

Nothing can be plainer, my brethren, to return to Romans 8, than that the manifestation of the sons of God is what ushers in the deliverance of creation. When the moment for this arrives, it is not only that Israel shall be restored, the Gentiles made happy, and all mankind be blessed under the reign of Christ and his saints in glory — creation itself shall be delivered. I know no better clue to the meaning of this expression in the eighth of Romans, than what we find again and again in the Old Testament; as for instance in Isa. 11: 6-9: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' 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." Will not creation be delivered then, when even the tribes of savage beasts shall have ceased to devour each other; and when the most savage and venomous shall be the harmless playmates of the little child? "A little child shall lead them!" There will be one exception, and only one, to the deliverance of creation. In Isa. 65: 25, after a magnificent description of millennial blessing, and of the longevity of the inhabitants of the millennial earth, we find that while all creation besides is delivered and made happy, the curse remains on that tribe from which Satan selected one to be his instrument in deceiving the mother of our race. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like

the bullock: *and dust shall be the serpent's meat*. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

"The glorious liberty of the children of God!" People talk of glorious liberty now. And it is indeed wondrous, blessed liberty, into which we are now introduced by grace. But the passage before us is literally, "The liberty of the glory of the children of God." It is the liberty of grace in which we believers stand at present. We shall be manifested as the sons of God by the glory which shall be revealed in us when Christ shall appear, and we shall appear with him in glory. It is into the liberty of this glory, the liberty which this glory of Christ and his saints will impart to the world over which we shall reign — the liberty of the glory of the children of God, that the creation itself shall be delivered. How blessed, not only to be saved ourselves, but to be made the channel and instrument of refreshing and deliverance to this now groaning, troubled creation.

"For we are saved by hope;" or "*in hope*" as it would be more exactly rendered. The meaning is, we have not yet entered into the enjoyment of all that is implied in being "saved." We have the salvation of our souls now; we receive it by faith. We have the forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the first-fruits of the Spirit. We are *now* the children of God; but we are saved *in hope*, as well as in present possession. We have not all the salvation now. Our bodies are still mortal; we are still amid a world where the curse remains, where the usurper rules, and where one universal groan resounds. But *in hope* we are saved from all this. *In hope* we have the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body, our manifestation as the sons of God, and the deliverance of all creation into the liberty of the glory which shall then be revealed in us. "But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Well may we pray with the apostle, "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

Yes, it is Christ — Christ himself, who is our hope. So 1 Tim. 1: 1 reads, if you omit the words in italics, which the translators have supplied. Indeed, they alter not the meaning of the passage, though they diminish its force. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, OUR HOPE." He is our hope. It is his coming that is presented as such throughout the New Testament. As individual believers our hope is not death, or the state of happiness which succeeds it, real and blessed as this is; but the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to swallow up death in victory, and clothe us upon with our house which is from heaven, that mortality may be swallowed up of life. As associated with each other and with our Head, members of Christ, and members one of another, our hope is not the restoration of the church below to purity, and union, and power, and the conversion of the world by means of its labours, but the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. No limit can be put, indeed, to what our gracious God would do in restoring grace to a remnant that really, humbly, and earnestly sought him; but the hope of the church ought never to have been anything but the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and such would surely be the hope of any such remnant, whose hearts God might stir up to inquire for the old paths, and to walk therein. As to the world, which has departed from its allegiance to God, and consummated its iniquity by the crucifixion of its rightful Lord, judgment hangs over it, and must be executed. But surely it is a part of the blessed prospect our God has placed before us, that when the earth has been purged by judgments, we shall share the peaceful glories of our Head and Bridegroom, when he has become the centre of blessing to a renewed and delivered creation: all things, both in heaven and in earth, gathered together in one,

even in him. We shall live and reign with him. And often am I reminded of the saying of one who now sleeps in Jesus, and who was very slow to receive the truths on which we have been meditating for these evenings past, but who did receive them in the end, not as the word of man, but, as they are in truth, the Word of God. — "I used to look forward," he said, "to death, and to happiness with the Lord after death. But it never gave full relief to my heart. Burdened and oppressed with the condition of the church, and the sorrows of a poor, sinful, dying world, I knew that I should escape it all myself at death; but that did not relieve me fully, for it left the confusion, and sin, and sorrow untouched, though it gave me the hope of personal escape. But now," he said, "that I can look forward to the coming of Jesus, it is not only that I shall escape from this scene of darkness, but the scene itself shall be changed. The whole church in glory with Jesus, Israel restored, the nations happy, creation delivered, all in heaven and in earth exhibiting and proclaiming the glory of him whose blood shall be the acknowledged title, and known security, of the universal happiness his reign diffuses — oh, this is a prospect that the heart can dwell upon with ever fresh and deepening delight." So indeed it is. But while the heart, thus expanding with the prospect, reaches beyond the thoughts of self, and exults to anticipate a glorified church, a happy world, and a restored creation, what is it that is the very kernel of the church's joy in hope, in looking for the moment when Christ's coming shall bring all this? It is himself: his coming; the music of his voice, the beauty of his countenance, the joy of being for ever with the Lord; it is this that is the essence of our hope. O that we were awake to realize this! What is it he has himself said at the close of the whole volume of inspiration? When that volume has told its wondrous tale from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation — its tale of man's deep apostacy in every position in which God has placed him in responsibility to himself — and its tale of God's rich and exhaustless grace, and of the counsels of that grace yet to be accomplished in Christ; when the whole volume has told its rich, its varied, its wondrous tale, who is it speaks one word of deepest joy and consolation to the church? It is Jesus. And what are the words which he leaves to have their deep, abiding, ineffaceable impression on our hearts? Hear them! "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." These are his last words; and while they die away upon the ear, the Spirit in the church takes them up, and responds, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." O that this were but the language of our hearts! If it were so, how loosely should we sit to this world! How calm under its afflictions! How superior to its charms! How should we look down upon all its gilded pageant scenes, yearning indeed in sorrow over the giddy multitudes beguiled by them on the way to death; but our hearts filled with the remembrance of those sweet words which Jesus has left as his closing testimony, to abide in all its assurance and power upon our spirits. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly." Does he not let out all his heart in this utterance, beloved? "Surely," he says, "Surely, I come quickly." In the joy of his anticipation of then receiving his bride he says, "Surely, I come quickly." O that there were but some response, some suitable response on our part, to the affections of our heavenly Lord and bridegroom! May the Spirit in us and in all saints respond, and that in the fulness of divine life and affection, — "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." W. T.