

The Second Coming of Christ Pre-Millennial.

John 14: 1-3.

Lecture 2 of 'Eight Lectures on Prophecy' from shorthand notes.

W. Trotter and T.S. (Smith?)

(New Edition, Broom & Rouse, 1890.)

The subject of this evening's address, as already announced, is "The second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ proved to be pre-millennial."

Before I proceed to lay before you the Scriptural proofs of this position — proofs which we shall find to be almost without end — I feel anxious to express one thought, which presses heavily upon me, in connection with the solemn and happy theme which is to form the subject of our meditation. How strange, and sad, and sorrowful it is, that the "blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," should be regarded in our day as a matter not very interesting, not very important, not very "practical," not of any present and pressing moment; as a matter, on the whole, "better let alone;" an event which it will be time enough to look for a thousand years hence! Oh, my friends, where are our hearts' affections? Where is our love for Christ? If there be no longing desire to meet him "in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore;" what, alas! must be the condition of our souls!

But you will say, "Yes, but we meet him *when we die*." True, we do meet him when we die; but that is not the hope which is set before us in the New Testament. We shall see this night, that throughout the New Testament the hearts of the apostles and disciples were taught to long, and look, and hope — not for death, but for the glorious personal return of the Lord Jesus himself. This was the expectation of the saints in the earliest days of the Church. The clouds and darkness of modern perversion had not settled down upon the question then. The disciples did not hold that the Lord's return was necessarily distant; nor had the notion entered into the minds of Christians of these earliest days, that the death of all believers was a certain thing. No; it was understood that the time of the Lord's return was uncertain, that for aught they knew, he might return even during the "first watch" of the night, and that whoever should be then living — living "in the Lord" should never die, but should be "changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Death, indeed, *might* come. No one could say that it would not. No one could say that *he should not die*. but neither could any one say positively that he should die. No one in that day said, as people now say, "There is only one thing certain: we all must die." This rashness of assertion was reserved for later ages. Paul had said expressly, "*We shall not all sleep*." (1 Cor. 15: 51.) And although elsewhere the same apostle had also said, "It is appointed unto men once to die," (Heb. 9: 27.) it was not then the custom to set one passage in direct opposition to another, from

the very same apostolic pen. The latter passage could not really be intended to have a meaning put upon it, which should directly contradict the revelation made as to a solemn and blessed "mystery," in the other. No; nor did the latter passage even say, "It is appointed unto *all men* once to die;" but simply, "*unto men* once to die;" that is, to *men generally*, to *all except* those spoken of in the next verse, who shall be found alive, and looking for him, when Christ descends.

But let us proceed to the question before us. Will the personal return of the Lord Jesus be pre-millennial? Will that event take place *before*, or not until *after* the millennium?

1. The passage which we have read introduces our subject in a way most tender and profitable. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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 the Lord does not say here, "If I go and prepare a place for you, *I will send for you*;" though in the course of the few fleeting years of their earthly pilgrimage, in case the Lord's return should be a little while delayed, that would indeed be true. For even to this day, the Lord has been calling first one, and then another, and yet another still, of his people home to glory. But that was not the way in which it pleased our loving Lord to address his disciples. His comforting assurance was, "*I will come again, and receive you to myself*, that where I am, there ye may be also." Such then is the blessed prospect that is set before us. Our Lord and Master, our heavenly bridegroom, has gone to prepare a place for us. The Father's house — made ready purposely for her reception — shall receive the Church. This is our hope. Where he is, there shall we be also.

2. How seasonable then, and cheering were the words uttered by the angels, immediately after the departure of our blessed Lord. The narrative in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is as follows: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven 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." Whither is the blessed Saviour gone? Into heaven. What does he there? He is gone, as he had said, to prepare a place for his people, in his Father's house. What shall next ensue? He "*shall so come in like manner* as he was seen to go into heaven." This is the event next presented to our view. The happy mansion of our future rest and glory shall be prepared by his hand of love; and he will return, in like manner as they had seen him go away. It will be a personal return. It was in person that he was seen to go away. It was himself, in his own true and proper glorified humanity, that then departed; and in his own personal, and proper, yet glorified humanity, will he return. Indeed all Christians, on the authority of God's Word, must admit this. The question then is, *when* — at what period in the history of our world — will this personal return take place? Will it be *pre-millennial* or *post-millennial*? Will it be *before* the thousand years of blessedness or *after* them? To this enquiry 'the two scriptures we have just glanced at have introduced us; and that, I do hope, in such a way as to interest both our minds and our affections.

To this inquiry, I am compelled by the testimony of Scripture to reply, that the second personal advent of our Lord and Saviour *will be pre-millennial*: that is, it will take place *before* the millennium. I may add here (if perchance there be some present who may not know it) that *pre* means *before*; and that *millennial* is derived from the two Latin words, *mille*, a thousand, and *annus*, a year. Hence *millennium* means a period of a thousand years' duration; and *millennial* means relating to that period. *Pre-millennial*, then, simply means, *before the millennial period*. The second advent of our blessed Lord will, assuredly, be pre-millennial. This, I maintain, is one of the clearest and most unquestionable of truths revealed to us in the Word of God. We have passages proving it, as we have previously said, almost without end. We cannot crowd the whole argument into one address; but we shall endeavour to present the Scripture testimony, as far as time admits, as simply and as concisely as possible. And may we be favoured with a docile spirit of faith, and with happy liberty of heart, whilst it passes under our review.

3. Let us first refer to a short statement in the Acts. It seems to follow, very naturally, those at which we have looked. "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3: 20, 21.) I ask your serious attention to this passage; I pray that it may rest upon many minds tonight. These words were spoken in one of the first addresses of Peter after Pentecost. Peter had heard his beloved Lord and Master speak of his departure to the Father's house, and of his future return; and his mind was filled with the cheering truth. So it was with the rest of the apostles. They went throughout the world, publishing not only "the sufferings of Christ," but also "the glories (See Greek.) which should follow" — the "glory which should be revealed" at his return from heaven. In almost every address this was the prominent theme. In the occasion before us it was so. "Repent and be converted," said Peter to the multitude he then addressed; "and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive, until "until when? "*until the times of restitution of all things*." What times are those? "The times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Mark well this declaration. It is an exceedingly important one. The heaven must receive the Lord Jesus "until" those times. It is not said that the heaven shall receive, or retain, the Lord during those times, or *until the end* of them; but, definitely and distinctly, "*until the times*," that is, *until those times arrive*. When those times come, then the Lord shall be sent; when they arrive, he will return.

I do not pretend, dear friends, to indicate either the day, the hour, or the year, of the Lord's return — I deprecate such presumption. No man knoweth either the day or the hour in which the Son of Man will come. What we learn here is this — that there is a certain period — a period of "which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began;" and that the return of the Lord Jesus with power and great glory will be, not at the end of that period, as in modern days has been most erroneously imagined, but at the commencement. This Peter clearly asserts. What period is it that is here designated "the times of restitution of all things," and as to which it is said, "God hath spoken of them by the mouth of all his holy prophets?" Has God spoken of the final judgment at the end of the world by the mouth of all his holy prophets? No. It may be questioned whether he has spoken of that event anywhere *in the Old Testament*. Certainly *all* the holy prophets of the old dispensation have not spoken of it. What *times*, then, have they all spoken of? Plainly of the millennial times — of the times when all the nations of the earth shall be brought under the Messiah's sway. These, then, are "the times of restitution," at

the commencement of which the Lord Jesus will return. The word which is rendered "restitution," means restoration from a state of disorder, brokenness, and confusion. Suppose the building in which we are met were thrown down, and the materials scattered, and that it were subsequently reconstructed, its restoration or reconstitution would be expressed by the Greek word here rendered "restitution." It refers to the times at the commencement of which all things shall be re-ordered, restored, and set to rights — the millennial times. When these times come, as we have previously said, then will be the time of the Lord's return.

It is true that "better times are coming." The general anticipation of a period of universal blessedness is not a fable. The whole Bible is one vast proof that there shall be such a day of peace, and rest, and glory. But before that day arrives, a dark and awful page in the world's history will be unfolded. This the world *does not* know: *this* the world *does not* believe. Still it is true. The revelation of the Lord from heaven, in flaming fire, at a time of trouble such as never has been, no, nor ever shall be, will introduce the "better times." A "great and terrible day" is at hand; — terrible, I do not mean to the saints, but to the wicked who obey not the gospel. (2 Thess. 1: 8.) There is no ground for fear on the part of those who trust in Jesus — who know Jesus — whose feet are fixed upon the sure foundation. No; though the earth should melt, and the mountains be removed into the depths of the sea, they may look up with unwavering confidence, as heirs of "a kingdom that cannot be moved." All will certainly be well with them.

4. But we must hasten on. We will now turn to the parables that we find recorded in the thirteenth of Matthew. They present us with prophetic views or phases of that which professes to be the kingdom of heaven upon earth. We have much there bearing on the point before us. First, we have the parable of the sower. Read it at your leisure. What was the result of the sowing? Was it that the seed sown ultimately produced a universal crop? Did the sowing go on till all the earth was one vast field of wheat? Does the parable hint at, or even allow of, any such interpretation? No. Some of the seed fell by the way side, and the fowls picked it up. Some upon a rock, and the sun burnt it up. And some among thorns, and by them it was choked. Only some of it fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit unto perfection. And that fruit — that wheat when ripe — as we learn from the parable which immediately follows, was gathered out from among the tares into the garner.

5. But the next parable — that of the wheat and the tares — explicitly teaches that there will be no millennium before the harvest. The explanation of it is as follows: — "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." How clear and decisive is all this. The world is to be a *mixed field* — a field of wheat and tares — until the harvest. Never, previously to the harvest, is it to be purely a wheat-field. Where then is there a millennium to be found before that harvest? There is evidently no place for such a period before the harvest. This parable certainly and absolutely excludes it. To tell us that the harvest is said to be "the end of the world" will not affect our

position. Were it so — were the harvest properly and truly the end of the world — still the truth must be allowed, that according to this parable, the world will be a mixed field of "wheat *and tares*" until then. There can be no millennium, therefore, before that solemn event.

But let me say to my unlettered hearers, that the parable does not teach that the harvest is the end of *the world*; that is, of the earth. Christ does not say, "The field is the world, and the harvest is the end of that same world." What he says is, "the field is the *kosmos*, and the harvest is the end of the *aion*. Two very different words, you see, are used in the original Greek. The latter one, *aion*, means *age*, or *dispensation*. The former means properly the *world* or *earth*. Both of these words occur in Heb. 9: 26. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world (*kosmos* — *earth*, properly and literally); but now once in the end of the world (*aion*, *age* or *dispensation*,) hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Here the word *aion* cannot mean the material world. Since the blessed Saviour died, more than eighteen hundred years have passed, and the end of the world has not come yet; nor will it come till the conclusion of a still future millennium. The apostle's meaning, therefore, cannot be that Jesus died in the end of the world; but simply, in the end of the Mosaic *age*, or dispensation. So in the case before us: the field is indeed *the world*; but the harvest is at the end of *the age*; that is, of the period, or dispensation, during which the Lord Jesus remains absent, at the right hand of God. This interpretation is confirmed by two other Scriptures, to which I beg to refer you, viz., Joel 3: 13 to 17, and Rev. 14: 14 to 20, where the *harvest is* clearly placed at the commencement of the reign of the Messiah. Thus a correct understanding of the Greek word *aion* reconciles all these passages.

This parable then of the wheat and tares affords us satisfactory proof that the millennium will not take place before the harvest; that the harvest is the end of the age; and that at the end of the age the Lord will appear in glory. All which will be further proved as we proceed.

6. The third parable in this chapter — that of the grain of mustard seed — points the same way. The seed that was sown was the least of all seeds (Mark 4: 31), but when it had grown, it became a great tree in the earth, and the fowls of the air came and lodged beneath its branches. The vulture, the cormorant, the night owl, and the bat have made their nest there. Unclean birds have taken possession of it. Am I, my dear friends, misinterpreting the parable? Let me tell you that I rest not this interpretation upon my opinion or upon *any man's* opinion, but upon divine authority. For the Lord himself tells us, in the previous parable, who are the "fowls," or "birds of the air;" for it is the same word that is used in both places. As the sower sowed the seed, the birds came and devoured it. This is explained by the Lord. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh *the wicked one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." The Lord thus tells us that by the birds of the air that devour the seed, Satan and his angels are meant: and thus it is that the kingdom of heaven, as it purports to be, or nominal, national Christianity, becomes a vast and monstrous worldly system, as is said in the 18th of Revelation, "the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Such then, and not the world's conversion, is, according to this parable, to be the result during the present dispensation.

7. The fourth parable in this same chapter is that of the leaven and the meal. Read verse 33: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of

meal, until the whole was leavened." We all know how this parable is generally explained. But, dear friends, I cannot allow that interpretation of it to be correct. The leaven does not mean the *Gospel*. *Leaven* everywhere in the language of the Spirit of God, which is always beautifully consistent with itself, means something evil. We read of the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy;" of the "leaven of malice and wickedness;" of the "old leaven," which must be "purged out;" and of the leaven of legality, which in Galatians 5 the Apostle Paul declares "leaveneth the whole lump." In twenty places we have mention of leaven, and it always denotes evil. In the sacrifices of old, it was typical of evil. Therefore the *paschal bread* — type of Christ, the holy bread of God — might not be leavened; whilst "a sacrifice of thanksgiving" from imperfect worshippers must have leaven in it. "Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving *with leaven*." (See Areas 4: 5.) Further the Church should be "a new, *unleavened* lump." (See 1 Cor. 5: 7.) It was not said, "Put into it *new leaven*," but "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are *unleavened*." Twice does Paul declare of evil, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (1 Cor. 5: 6; Gal. 5: 9.) Even in his day the leaven had been introduced. "The mystery of iniquity (said he to the Thessalonians,) *doth already work*." What was it that was *working* even then? Was it not the *leaven*? Both at Corinth and throughout Galatia, he expressly mentions the *leaven* as being at work. Into the "three measures of meal" not into *the world*, not into *society at large* — no, but into the new, *unleavened lump* — *into the Church* — a leaven-like mystery of iniquity had been already introduced. The "woman," the seducer, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, as I receive it, had done this. The very *hiding* of it looks suspicious. Could this *hiding* mean the public, free, and open preaching of the Gospel?

The whole lump — sad announcement! — was to be leavened. Has not that announcement been fulfilled? Look at that which bears the name of the "kingdom of heaven;" look at Christendom. What do we see? three measures of unleavened meal — a new unleavened lump? No; we can discern scarcely anything on the broad surface of its vast extent, but *leaven*. The "kingdom of heaven" itself, so called, for such at first it was, has become "like unto leaven." Its whole appearance and character is changed. "Mystery, Babylon," is its chief, grand feature. And let me ask, Has not every one of us more or less *admitted the leaven*? Is there one single Christian here whose garments are not soiled — in whose heart "*leaven*" in one form or another is not working? The Lord grant that we may rightly interpret this parable, and profit by meditation on it.

8. The working of this "mystery of iniquity" will be brought to a close only by the personal return in judgment of the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven. If this be so, there cannot be a millennium of universal righteousness before the Lord's return. The proof of this position drawn from 2 Thess. 1 and 2 is exceedingly clear and convincing. Let us turn to it. Do let us carefully mark this passage. In the first chapter, the Thessalonian saints are instructed as to the revelation from heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ, in flaming fire with all his holy angels. Read from the sixth to the tenth verses. Assuredly, dear friends, it is the *personal return* of the Lord Jesus that is here spoken of. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." Such is the description of the second personal advent of the

Lord Jesus. Then the apostle goes on to tell us, that the "mystery of iniquity," then already begun, would end only in the revelation of a certain wicked one, the "man of sin;" and that this man of sin would be destroyed by that very personal presence of the Lord, which he had just described in the terms that we have quoted. Now I beg you to observe the connection of the whole passage from 2 Thess. 1: 7, to 2 Thess. 2: 8; for properly it is one undivided paragraph. The mystery of iniquity was working already; that is, even in the apostle's day. The result of it was to be the revelation of the man of sin. The second personal advent will find that "man of sin," that "wicked one," in the plenitude of his power, and will prove his destruction. Can there, then, be a millennium of universal blessing, and of the subjugation of the world to Christ, whilst *antichrist* is undestroyed? Can the true sovereign reign, while the usurper of his rights holds his unrighteous sway? Impossible! The millennial reign of Christ, therefore, cannot be previous to his second advent, for until then will he "gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity." The second advent, then, according to this Scripture, must be pre-millennial.

9. Let us now return to Matthew's Gospel. In the twenty-third chapter, we have a record of the conclusion of the *public* ministry of our blessed Lord. "Woe, woe, woe!" were the solemn words that chiefly characterized that last discourse. His own people had refused to receive him as the promised Messiah, and he finishes the dread series of judicial denunciations, with the following words (ver. 38, 39), "Your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The concluding clause of the verse, namely, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," that is, of Jehovah, is the well-known prophetic, national welcome, which will be given to Messiah by repentant Israel in the latter day. (See Ps. 118: 26.) On a previous occasion a great multitude of people had actually so used the words (see Matt. 21: 8-11); but Jerusalem refused her King, and sentence was pronounced by the Lord upon the nation. He immediately left the temple, and did not enter it again. He went out, and departed to the Mount of Olives. When seated there, the disciples, full of anxiety as to what had fallen from his lips, came to him privately and said, Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of *thy coming*, and of the end of the world?" That is, of *the coming of which he had just been speaking*; when, as he had intimated, the nation should see him once more, and say, "Blessed is *he that cometh* in the name of the Lord." Now, the disciples do not ask the Lord respecting the end or destruction of the world, as is sometimes incorrectly and vaguely imagined, but they inquire of him as to the end of the *age*, for "*aion*" is the word used; that is, as to the end of the age or period when Jerusalem was to be "left desolate." You observe it is the same word that is used here as in the thirteenth chapter, and, as scholars admit, it has reference to *time* or *duration* rather than to *matter*. Further, the close of the period here referred to is spoken of by Christ himself as the time of Israel's conversion, which must be at the commencement of the millennium, and not at the end of it. Now, dear friends, mark what follows in Matt. 24. The Lord goes on to answer the other question that had been put to him, as to "the sign of his coming." "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; *and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.*" (See verses 29 and 30.) Such is the Lord's own description of his return, which he himself had declared should take place when the Jewish nation shall repent; that is, at the commencement of the millennium. Do consider well the bearing of this Scripture. Examine thoroughly the whole

of the magnificent prophecy of which it forms a part. It is related, not only in this and the succeeding chapter of Matthew, but also in Mark 13 and Luke 21. Read the whole carefully. I am aware that it is said, that the advent mentioned here means, mystically, the coming of the Romans to destroy the city. But let me ask of any one who may say so, what then, in such case, is meant by the words, "*Immediately after the tribulation of those days*, the sun shall be darkened — and *then* shall they see the Son of Man coming"? If you say the coming here spoken of means the coming of the Romans to destroy the city, and that the tribulation resulted from the siege and the taking of it by them; how is it that this coming is said to be "after the tribulation"? By your own interpretation you place this coming *before* the tribulation; but the Lord says it shall be "immediately after" it. Do you not see, then, that since this coming is *after* the tribulation, it cannot possibly be intended to denote the coming of the Roman armies?

And surely it is a personal return that is spoken of. Words cannot be more explicit. "And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." He comes for the overthrow of his enemies, and the establishment of his kingdom. The plain and oft-repeated declarations of Scripture are not to be explained away by mystical interpretations. Is not this certainly a personal advent? If not, what passage is there in the whole Bible which *does certainly* foretell any future event?

Further, if we refer to Luke's narration of this wonderful prophecy, we shall find that he places the advent of the Lord at the close of "the times of the Gentiles," the times during which Jerusalem is to be trodden down by them. (Read Luke 21: 20 to 27.) Mark specially verses 24 and 25. If we supply a few words from Matthew's account of the same portion of the prophecy, those verses will read as follow: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, and (immediately after the tribulation of those days) there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And *then* shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory." Mark well the sum of this testimony. "Immediately after the tribulation," when the times of the Gentiles close, the Son of Man shall personally come. The times of the Gentiles we know are still in course: Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles. But a time shall come when that treading down shall cease, and *the Lord shall come* for their deliverance. Israel, in deep repentance, shall see their Lord once more, and, receiving him as their own Messiah, shall believingly say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." That will be the Lord's second, personal appearing. Till then Israel shall be blinded and scattered; yet the "generation shall not pass away"* — the *race*, the natural *seed of Abraham* shall, through all those dreary centuries, be miraculously kept distinct; and at the return of their Lord — and not a thousand years previously — shall they be converted, and restored to their own land. Then follows the millennium. How simple is all this! How clearly and conclusively it supports our position.

* Matt. 24: 34, and Luke 21: 32.

10. The parable of the ten virgins, though included in the discourse under consideration, may be taken as a further and distinct proof that, before the return of the Lord, there will be no millennium. (Read Matt. 25: 1-13.) "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

When did the professing Church — the company of wise and foolish virgins — fall asleep? When did the Church of God begin to say, "My Lord delayeth his coming?" Was it not very shortly after the Lord had gone away? Certainly within two or three short centuries, the Church at large had fallen into slumber. There is abundant proof in history of this. Even in Revelation 2 and 3 the fatal sleep is seen fast settling down upon the Churches addressed therein. When, then, is the Church to be aroused? *Not until the midnight cry is heard.* After that cry, the bridegroom came; the wise virgins went in unto the marriage, and the door was shut. Surely it is a personal return that is here alluded to. No one can rationally question it. Were any one to do so, let him consider how the parable is introduced. It forms part of the discourse we have just noticed, and it commences thus: "THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins." When? Read what goes before. This parable is preceded by the description of the glorious personal appearing which we have been just considering. (Read specially verses 29-31.) "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven." "THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins." The slumbering Church, then, will not be aroused, except by that midnight cry, which almost immediately precedes the personal return of the bridegroom. There can be no millennium, then, previously to the advent of the Lord; for there can be no millennium while the professing Church remains asleep in worldliness and sin. Such a Church needs to be itself converted. Such a Church assuredly cannot convert the world. But till the Lord returns, such the Church will be. This proof too is therefore most conclusive.

11. We will now turn to Luke 17. (Read verses 20 to 37.) The Pharisees demanded, when the kingdom of God should come. The Lord replies *to them*, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation . . . the kingdom of God is within you" (*among you*, see the margin). But immediately thereupon, the Lord turned to his disciples, and *told them of a coming* which should be of universal observation. "For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in his day." Here then a two-fold coming of the kingdom is distinctly intimated; the one not with observation, or outward show; (see margin;) the other to be visible as the lightning, unto all. To the Pharisees the Lord would speak only of the former: "Behold the kingdom of God is *among you*" — the king stands among you even now — already he is come; but you will not receive him. The kingdom assuredly was not *within* those Pharisees. Their condemnation was, that they would not receive it. Only by being converted could they enter it. But repent they would not. Therefore the Lord tells them nothing further as to the kingdom. The *disciples* however were informed as to the coming of the kingdom; but the Son of Man must first suffer and be rejected. Then would ensue a period which would resemble the days of Noah, and the days of Lot. Until Noah went into the ark, and the flood came, the world went on carelessly in sin. Until Lot went out of Sodom, and the fire and brimstone fell from heaven, the inhabitants of that city ran greedily in the depths of wickedness. Even thus, said the Saviour, will the world do, until "the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed." Can there be an intervening period of a thousand years of universal righteousness? Impossible. "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

During those days, true disciples would desire to see the return of their Lord; but for a while their hopes would not be realized. Then if any man should say unto them, "See here; or see there," they must not hearken to such deceivers. For false Christs and false prophets should arise ever and anon, through the period during which the Lord should remain away. But whatever these deceivers might pretend; whether they should say, he is in the city, or he is in the desert; disciples are told not to "go forth," nor "follow," them. The advent, when it took place, would be visible to all — visible as the vivid lightning's startling flash. It would be a revelation through the clouds of heaven. In that day, it would be of no avail to flee in this direction or in that; for whether in bed, or grinding at the mill, or in the open field, the taking and the leaving would inevitably take place. The judgments of that fearful day would as surely take away all those that "do iniquity," as the waters of the flood took all the guilty inhabitants of the world in the days of Noah. just as the flood took away all except the few that the ark preserved — preserved in order to the re-peopling of the earth — so will the judgments, like a second flood, at the return of Jesus, take all away but a remnant, who shall form the nucleus of the millennial population of the earth. Some shall be "left" then, even by the judgments of that great day. The world therefore does not come to an end when the second advent takes place. There is a people "left" still; and the millennium ensues.

But when the Lord had given this solemn intimation, the disciples exclaimed, "Where, Lord?" He had spoken of "two in one bed; one taken, and the other left; two at a mill; one taken, and the other left; two in a field; one taken, and the other left." And they ask, Where will this taking and leaving be? The answer was, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." As if the Lord had said, "*Where?*" how strange a question! When the eagles seek their prey, where do they go? Wheresoever there is a carcass to be found. When these eagle-judgments are abroad in search of the wicked, where will they rest? Of course, wherever any wicked one is to be found. If he be in bed, or at the mill, or in the field, whatever righteous ones may be his companions, even *there* shall those judgments go; "one shall be taken, and the other left."

It is not my view, dear friends, that "taking" here means the taking up of *the church* to glory. That we shall see hereafter. The taking here is effected by something which comes as the flood in the days of Noah, and as the fire and brimstone in the days of Lot. It must therefore denote judgment. In the one case the family of Noah, and in the other, the family of Lot, were spared — were left. The righteous remnant of the latter day, then, must be meant in this passage, by those who shall be "left." But more on this subject in a future lecture.

It has been held by many, that by *the eagles*, the Lord meant the Roman armies, whose standard, it is said, was surmounted by an eagle. But how untenable is this notion, when fairly looked at. The Lord says, "One shall be taken, and another left." It is said this was fulfilled when the Christians, forewarned by Christ, fled from the city of Jerusalem to Pella, and when the Romans came and took away the rest. Was that one taken, and the other left? No; it was — some fled, and all the rest were taken. These eagle-judgments take some, and leave the rest; but the Romans took all that had not previously escaped. What inconsistencies accompany this mistake!

But throughout this whole prediction there is not the most distant allusion to any intervening period of a thousand years of universal righteousness. The whole tenor of it is against

such a notion. Till the revelation of the Son of Man, the world holds on its careless way. Till then, wickedness prevails as in the days of Noah, and the days of Lot. No millennium, then, before the Lord's return!

12. I would next invite your attention to the parable in Luke 19, of a nobleman who went into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to return and take possession of it. Jesus "added and spake a parable, because he was nigh unto Jerusalem, and *because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*" The parable was spoken to correct that erroneous expectation. They were mistaken. The kingdom of God was not "immediately" to appear. The Lord said, therefore, "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." And "when he was returned, having received the kingdom," he rewarded his servants, each with a share in the government of that kingdom; and the enemies which would not that he should reign over them he slew. Now the kingdom, in such a case, could not "immediately appear." The nobleman must first go into the far country, and return. Who is signified in the parable by the nobleman? Assuredly the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Whither has he gone? Into the far country, into heaven. For what purpose has he gone thither? "To receive a kingdom, and return." Now *how, in what manner*, did he go? Merely in some spiritual sense? No. He went away *in person*. Then so shall he return, when he shall come to take possession of the kingdom which he has gone into the far country to receive. It is a personal return, then, that is here spoken of; and that return is placed as a consequence of the *reception* of the kingdom, not, as many in this day believe, as a consequence of his *having delivered up* that kingdom, his reign having closed. When he has *received* the kingdom, he returns. He then allots "ten cities" unto one, and "five cities" to another of his faithful servants. The distribution of rewards surely cannot be regarded as taking place when the kingdom has come to its close, and has been delivered up. We cannot, with any shadow of reason, so regard it. The whole of this passage, like so many others, proves that the personal return of the Redeemer will be pre-millennial. The kingdom will be established, and the enemies put down, only when the nobleman returns.

13. There is a passage in the twelfth chapter of this Gospel which we must not overlook. It may very suitably be referred to here, to crown the mass of evidence which the gospels, briefly as we have glanced through them, have afforded us. It will prepare us for a better appreciation of the state of mind and heart which the whole tenor of apostolic preaching and teaching afterwards inculcates. Read Luke 12: 32-48. The first portion of the instruction therein given we must quote; nothing in the whole Bible is more affecting or more solemn. Even those who greatly mistake and misapply the chief portions of the passage, recognize it as most blessed and profitable. Those who imagine that it refers to *death* find the warning given in this most solemn passage continually occurring to their minds. We must read part of it. — "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he Cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the

goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also.. for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Now there is not one word as to *death* in this whole passage. Death may come. Woe to him that is not ready when it does come! But death is not spoken of here. It is the return of the Lord in person to fulfil the Father's pleasure concerning the little flock. Nor is there any intimation as to the conversion of the world at any intervening period. The whole tenor of the passage is inconsistent with such a notion. The faithful are termed a little flock, to which, at the Lord's return, the kingdom shall be given. "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is a little flock, but the kingdom shall be given to it. This is the character of Christ's people until his return. It is not said, "Fear not, little flock; for the people of the earth shall shortly be converted to thee." It is not said, "Fear not, little flock; for all the wolves by which thou art surrounded shall shortly become sheep." No; the consolation addressed in this passage to Christ's true followers is, that the bridegroom should soon return, and take the "little flock" here spoken of unto himself. Therefore all needless treasure was to be disposed of, and laid up in heaven. A stranger, pilgrim course was the one marked out during this present dispensation. The attitude of the disciple was to be that of readiness and expectation. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding." This position was to be maintained whilst the bridegroom was absent. "Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." "And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." The passage quoted ends with the emphatic words, "BE YE THEREFORE READY ALSO; FOR THE SON OF MAN COMETH AT AN HOUR WHEN YE THINK NOT." Read this passage again and again. All that we have been considering hitherto has tended to prepare the way for this solemn closing exhortation. All that we have still to look at will tend to show its powerful influence upon the hearts, and teaching, and lives of the apostles. It *ought* to produce a similar effect upon ours. My brethren, will it be so?

All this teaching of Scripture is very different in its character from that which is the continually repeated boast of our day, as to the world's conversion during this present dispensation, by the existing Church. It is said that the little flock has become a great one. Well, we grant that a certain association, which at the first was constituted wholly of the sheep of Christ — which *was* the "little flock" at first, has indeed become a great one. But that association, or aggregate of associations (for now it is broken and divided), is not *the flock of Christ*. The people of Christ, indeed, are mingled with it. But the unregenerate multitude, which is called the Church, is rather *Babylon the Great*, than the "little flock." For the true flock is still a little one; "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life." This declaration marks the true character of the way of life throughout the present dispensation. There will be a dispensation after the return of Jesus, the *way* of which will be a broad one, and all the nations of the earth shall walk therein. All this will be seen at length, God willing, in future addresses. But now, and until the Saviour comes again, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and (alas!) few there be that find it." This passage of itself affords a strong proof of our position. But in connection with the picture of a little flock, which waits in a hostile world for the coming of its Lord from heaven, it is yet more convincing. Now, in all this, my friends, you must admit, there is not a hint about a millennium before the advent of the Lord.

As to the notion that *death* is often meant when the expression "coming of the Son of Man" is used, we have already said that it is not correct. It cannot be proved that there is one single occurrence of such a use of the expression in the whole New Testament. Certainly there is no such general use of it. The apostles believed, that to "tarry till the Son of Man came" was "not to die." Instead of supposing that the coming of the Son of Man very frequently meant the coming of death, they concluded at once, that "to tarry till I come" meant not to die at all. When the Lord (see John 21: 18-23) had predicted what mode of death Peter should undergo, Peter said, in allusion to the disciple whom Jesus loved, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Jesus replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Then the saying went abroad that that disciple should never die. Jesus, however, had not said he shall not die; but, "If I will that he tarry till I come." The idea which was attached to these words here comes clearly out; to tarry till he came, according to their view, would be *not to die*. How different is this from the notion of modern days!

14. We must pass now from the gospels to the epistles; and our survey of them must be brief. All that has been looked at, connected with the teaching of the Lord to the apostles, we are told in John's gospel, was to be brought afresh to their remembrance by the Holy Ghost. How, then, did they, after their reception of the Holy Ghost, regard the truth of their Lord's promised return? Throughout the remainder of the New Testament you will find it is presented as a matter of present, pressing, blessed moment. Two truths, indeed, make up a great portion of the apostolic teaching, and the second coming of the Lord is one of them. The "sufferings of Christ" is one, and the "glory which should follow" is the other. Between these two events the Church is placed. Such is our position! We look backward to "the sufferings," and forward to "the glory." The first advent of the Lord was to endure the sufferings, the second advent will be to bring the glory. The Church occupies the interval. Most blessed place wherein to rest, and wait, and watch until Jesus comes!

Such, we say, is the position in which the apostles place the Church. The making ready of the bride for the Bridegroom occupies the space between the two advents. The world's conversion — the subjugation of those who are to be brought beneath the sceptre of Christ, is not the subject of the epistles. It is to the Old Testament we must look. *There* we learn much respecting the promised King who should reign in righteousness, not only over his people Israel, but, as we are told, over all the nations of the earth. All this and much more do the prophets of the Old Testament unfold; but it was not revealed to them, that from among the fallen sons of men a people should be taken who shall be associated with Christ in closest union, and reign with him in royal dignity and heavenly glory over a happy and renovated world. This glorious mystery was not made known until apostolic days. Let this blessed special revelation, dear friends, be kept before our minds. It will be found to be, as it were, a *key* to almost the whole range of the prophetic Scriptures. Future lectures will more fully unfold this "mystery." We must now rapidly glance through the epistles.

15. In the eighth of Romans we have a passage bearing fully on our subject. Read it carefully. It is as to the glory which shall be revealed "at the manifestation of the sons of God;" that is, at the day when the sons of God shall appear in open, manifested glory, with their exalted Lord, for it is "when he appears that we also shall appear with him in glory." (Col. 3: 4.) This "manifestation of the sons of God" is termed, in verse 23, "the adoption, to wit, the redemption

of our body," that is, the period of the resurrection of the just. Our souls do now receive "the adoption," and know the power of "the redemption" already. But our bodies also must attain to both. Mark then what else is stated here. It is this: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." And it is expressly declared that this universal groan will only cease at the period here spoken of. Then, and not until then, "the *creation* (for it is the same word in the original) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God;" and this deliverance ushers in the millennial kingdom. How, my friends, can the world enjoy a period of universal rest, and peace, and exemption from evil, whilst "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain?" Impossible! This groaning and travailing is the lot of creation at this very day. All the world groans beneath a still accumulating load of sin, and misery, and woe. Man groans; his soul groans — his body groans. Animals groan; the earth itself groans. The whole creation is here personified and represented as sending up to heaven a loud and agonizing groan. God in heaven hears that groan. A day of liberation hastens on. It is predicted expressly and most clearly in the passage before us; and that day brings on millennial blessing, when the saints shall be revealed with Christ in glory. All these events take place at one and the same time. They all wait upon the return of Christ, the great deliverer. His advent, therefore, must be pre-millennial.

16. In 1st Corinthians we have much that bears upon our subject. They "came behind in no gift, *waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (See 1 Cor. 1: 7.) Such was their position. They were a waiting people, but it was for the return of the Lord they were waiting, not for the commencement of an intervening thousand years of blessing without him. Indeed they appear rather to have been in danger of falling into an opposite error, which some had fallen into, in supposing that "there is no resurrection of the dead," or that "the resurrection was past already." Paul corrects this error, and at considerable length instructs the Corinthians as to the resurrection as the object of their hope. He leads their expectations onward to a day when they that had fallen asleep in Christ should be raised, and the living in Christ should be changed. And he tells them expressly, that these events take place "AT HIS COMING."

17. To the Philippians it is said, "Our conversation is in heaven, *from whence 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." (See Phil. 3: 20 and 21.) This passage is another striking illustration of the hopes of the early believers. They were "looking for" the return of the Lord, as the era for the manifestation of their resurrection glory. The advent of Jesus, not an intervening thousand years of blessing, is the immediate object of their hope.

18. Both the epistles to the Thessalonians are full of truth as to the second coming of the Lord. Every chapter in each epistle presents it as matter of present hope, and not of distant accomplishment. They had turned from idols to "serve the living and true God, *and to wait for his Son from heaven.*" (See 1 Thess. 1: 9 and 10.) In 1 Thess. 4 we have the blessed revelation as to the taking up of all the "dead in Christ, and all the living in Christ, to meet the Lord in the air, to be for ever with the Lord." All this will receive further and fuller attention (D.V.) in future lectures. We have already seen (see page 47), that the "mystery of iniquity" would work until the "man of sin" should be manifested; and that this "man of sin" would be destroyed *only* by the personal revelation from heaven, in flaming fire, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

19. Peter furnishes much evidence as to the fact, that until the advent of Christ, evil will continue and go on; and that that event only would bring it to a close. But we must pass on to James 5: 1 to 8. This whole passage affords a strong corroboration of the same truth. The rich, it is said, have "heaped treasures together for the last days." The oppressed people of God are exhorted to "be patient to *the coming of the Lord.*" Till then patience would be needed, for evil and sorrow would continue until then. All this shuts out the possibility of an intervening period of, the universal cessation of crime, and of the removal of evil.

20. John points to the appearing of Jesus as the blessed and purifying hope of all the sons of God. (1 John 3: 1, 3.) No previous millennium is even glanced at. "When he shall appear," are his words, "we shall see him," and "we shall be like him." What a gladdening prospect, my friends! What a glorious hope! May we know its purifying power.

21. The Apostle Jude, instead of depicting a period of universal righteousness, describes the very reverse as prevailing in the last days. The grace of God was to be turned into lasciviousness, ungodliness was to be universal, and to be removed only by the judgment of the Lord Jesus, coming with ten thousand of his saints to clear out of his kingdom all things that offend, and to establish it under his own righteous rule. How visionary is the notion, my friends, that a millennium of righteousness is to precede the coming of the Lord!

The book of Revelation closes the sum of Scripture testimony; and from beginning to end it is one vast proof that the advent of Christ will be premillennial. Its great burden is the judgments which precede and usher in the millennial reign of Christ. The closing judgments which fall on man's climax of iniquity are executed by the Lord Jesus in person. Glance through this wondrous book. It opens with the announcement, "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." This is the burden of the book. In the letters to the Churches, the coming of Christ is continually held out to view, both as a matter of warning and of joyful hope. In chaps. 6, 11, 14, 16 and 19 it is specially described. The eleventh chapter furnishes us with evidence which, were there none other in the book of God, is abundantly sufficient to establish our position, for there it is revealed that it is upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and the closing of the judgments, that "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." The millennial kingdom of Christ commences when the awful judgments of this book have run their course. The twentieth chapter tells us, in words as explicit as language can furnish, the glorious truth that when Satan is bound, that he should deceive the nations no longer, and the righteous dead are raised, that "they shall REIGN WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS." This book, indeed the Bible itself, closes with the sweet words of parting comfort to the Lord's waiting saints, "Surely I come quickly." May our hearts in unison reply, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

I leave with you, my friends, this reiterated Scripture testimony on this most solemn and glorious truth, so pregnant with practical consequences on our walk as Christians. I commend it to your prayerful attention. If it be the truth of God, as it indubitably is, we cannot slight it, or wantonly reject it with impunity. We are responsible to God for the reception of the truth which he has seen meet to reveal for our instruction and guidance; and our true position, he has told us, in words so plain that a little child cannot mistake them, is that of men who wait for their Lord, with girded loins, and lights vigilantly trimmed and ever brightly burning. We know neither the

day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh; but blessed indeed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. T. S.