

Christ for the Saint and Christ for the Sinner

Rev. 22: 17.

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"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

There is a great deal more in this verse than most are apt to find, even though they may be dear, and even intelligent, children of God. Yet it is also remarkable that, although the depth is uncommon in presenting the brightest hope of the church, as well as encouraging the simplest individual believer, there is likewise the most ample expression of sovereign grace to the neediest of sinners, in whatever state he may be found. What can be more open than saying "He that will, let him take the water of life freely?" There is no more unrestricted invitation to perishing souls in any part of the Bible. Yet what grace shone when the Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria and announced — what man's hard heart is so slow to believe — the Father's love in seeking worshippers to worship Him. And the Son was there to manifest that He did not disdain, but even sought, that poor woman without a character. Some may have thought she avoided going at the hour when other women went to the well. If she had obvious reason for shunning them, they had not a kind word to say about her. But Christ made God known in love, even to one so wretched through sin. Yet He who thus loves is holy, whereas those who despised her were not.

Those who set up and cultivate sanctimonious expression of speech and ways have rarely any real sense of sin in themselves, any more than of grace in God. They make a fair show in the flesh, and have never learnt their own ruin as sinners. They desire to feel and appear holy, and fear to find out and own what they really are in God's sight. But is it not always the greatest weakness to wish to appear anything? The believer has no reason to hide when he is assured of the grace that forgives all his sins. If God justifies him, who is he that condemns? He can afford to appear what he really is. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from every sin." "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God," says the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, who had been amongst the most dissolute of mankind. Greece as a country was full of immorality; and there was no city in all that land so proverbially bad as Corinth. Yet the Lord, to encourage His servant in the face of opposing and blaspheming Jews, said, "Be not afraid but speak, and hold not thy peace . . . for I have much people in this city." It required a word by a vision at night from the Lord to the apostle to keep up his courage in continuing in a place so full of corruption as Corinth.

Ever bear in mind that in the gospel it is what the Lord brings to us, and not what we offer to Him, when received in faith, which is the turning-point and the substance of the soul's salvation. God has, and freely, given a perfect Saviour in Christ for the lost. Does any one of you doubt that His heart is so ready to forgive, even you, notwithstanding your sins which are many and great? You do Him a heinous wrong in doubting His word and His love. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not only can He afford to save you on believing, but He gives all with the freeness and fulness that becomes the God of all grace. "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all: how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

The figure employed, in the Revelation, is "the water of life;" as the Lord spoke of giving "the living water" in John 4: 10. The two books, the Gospel and the Revelation, are as different in character as can be; but who does not see how thoroughly the words tally, and how one Spirit reigns throughout

Scripture? The book of Revelation is as full of judgment, as the Gospel of John teems with grace; but it is the same Lord Jesus Christ, whatever the distinctness of design may require in each case. The prophetic visions vindicate His rights over all the universe, and therefore over all nations as well as Israel. Before they begin in Rev. 6 we are given to see the bright result of grace in the glorified saints gathered on high around the throne, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders in Rev. 4, and Rev. 5. But the book could not close without the words read in the text, which put the church and the believer in their present place of hope, and which continue to invite the sinner, whatever his state, to receive His grace as freely as ever. First of all, we hear "the Spirit and the bride" saying to Christ, "Come." For He loved the church and gave Himself for her; and she knows from His own lips that He is coming to receive her to Himself. Therefore we can understand how proper are the words, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." To whom does the Spirit animate the bride thus to speak? To the Bridegroom. It is indeed much to be noticed, and full of instruction.

Earlier in the book (Rev. 3: 11) the Lord says "I come quickly"; but the Spirit and the bride do not add "quickly" now — they join in crying to Christ, "Come." Those who compose the bride had already each submitted to the righteousness of God; they knew for their own souls that they were saved by grace through faith; and they were waiting in assured hope of Him to bring them into the Father's house, where He Himself now is, and whence He had promised to come and fetch them there. Remark then how important and how suited are the words, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Men, and even saints, are all liable to mistakes. Who, that knows himself or others, could rest his hope on the creature in its best estate? As we need Christ's work for saving us, so we cannot do without God's word for any appearance of solid worth, whether for faith or hope, for walk or worship. Therefore does the Spirit — that is, the Holy Ghost — prompt the word. He and the bride are represented as saying, "Come." Can anything be more comely or in character?

The Spirit of God has His place as directing and strengthening the heart of the church, the bride. He dwells in the believer as well as in the church. As this privilege never was enjoyed before redemption, so it never will be given in the same power and way again. Ample blessing awaits Israel and the nations by and by. The Spirit will be poured out again when the Lord reigns. It will be "the regeneration" for the earth, as the prophets predict, in the millennial day. But Scripture indicates again remarkable differences as compared with His presence now. And no intelligent soul can be surprised; for on the bright day that approaches for the world, there will be sight; and no such tests of faith as there are now. Everything will be joyous, peaceful, and prosperous in righteousness. Satan will be shut out from tempting and seducing; and Jehovah shall reign over all the earth without a rival or a rebel, His name one. But now the present is the evil age from which grace has delivered the Christian who has to make his way by faith and suffering for his Master's sake.

We ought to be like the fish swimming against the stream as living fish do: the dead ones are carried along with it. The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ever works in the sons of disobedience is still directing the many evil currents of the world; but every one is dead against the Lord Jesus, as Scripture warns us. Constantine did not alter that; and the Papacy only added another evil. There cannot be a better proof of the world's enmity to God than that it all, civil and religious, cast out and crucified His Son. For who were those who did the deed? Not Hottentots or Tartars, or Chinese. The Roman power of that day was misled by His own ancient people, the Jews. Herod was content with mockery. Even the ruthless Pilate wanted to let the Lord off, because he knew it was for envy, He was victimised; and by whose envy? The priests', the High Priest's — the very men set up of God to intercede for others. How evidently they were fallen under the power of Satan, and were interceding for his will and victory when they crucified the Son of God! Such was the real character of

their persistent outcry. And so it is that the world treats His name and truth. It may go on in apparent quiet for a time; but what brings its enmity to a head? Christ. As then, so ever and so now, it is Christ that Satan always opposes, drawing in his train the enmity of the world.

The judge of quick and dead is a reality they cannot stand. And so they gnash, not perhaps with their teeth, but in their hearts. They accordingly cannot, as they are now, but hate those identified with His truth, as they will hate you if you are faithful, but not if you compromise. Compromising is an insidious and especial danger for a Christian. The new nature he has in Christ makes him abhor sin, and just because he is born of God, he turns away from it and prays to God His Father to be delivered from all evil by virtue of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. The Holy Spirit was sent from heaven in manifested power after our Lord died, rose, and ascended. It is well to remember the words in John 7: 39, "The Holy Ghost was not yet [given] because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Is this the doctrine you usually hear? Alas! very commonly it is not, and this among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Let me speak of one no longer alive, an eloquent and celebrated preacher, a pious and prayerful man (a former dean of Ripon), who wrote a book to prove that the Holy Ghost's presence and action did not differ at Pentecost from what it was before. But this idea contradicted flatly the words cited and the truth generally in the New Testament. For the Gospels all look forward to that great gift as an immense and new privilege. When Jesus took His seat on high, the Holy Ghost came personally, and came to abide for ever. This had never been before, and never will be again in the same peculiar way. For the kingdom by and by there will be a larger work. The Spirit will be poured on all flesh; so that the extent will be far greater. "My people (Israel) shall be all righteous" in that day; and vast too will be the blessing among all the nations of the earth. How striking and how general the work of divine grace when the idols shall utterly pass away, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day!

But what the Holy Spirit occupies Himself with now is a most special work of concentration, rather than of world-wide action, though the testimony of the gospel is preached to every creature. And why? Because He is gathering souls in spiritual power round the true centre, the Lord Jesus. And this survives all man's failure and defection. "For where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them." Christ's name was the centre at Pentecost when the church began; and so it is still. When the Spirit is poured out at the coming of the Lord's world-kingdom (Rev. 11), He will adapt Himself to the work in hand. He will, for instance, enable God's people to walk according to God's laws under the new and divine government of the earth. For Israel it will be the new covenant, and a Messiah reigning in open power; and the Spirit will strengthen in that way. But what an enormous difference there will be when the Lord visibly governs, reigning as a king in righteousness, with princes that rule in judgment; and the vile shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful! How will not the presence of the Lord as a priest on His throne make everything to be in holy order and peaceful happiness in that day!

So He says, in the verse before the one read, "I [Jesus] am the root and the offspring of David." He will then assuredly accomplish all the old and glorious predictions for the earth. He will bless Israel to the full, and, after Israel, all the nations in general. Israel behaved shamelessly, and the other nations (previously rebellious) found no deliverance, no help, in a people that sinned along with them. In due time the gospel came in and lifted the believer above nationality, whether Jewish or Gentile. The gospel has for its aim to save the believer, and unite him to Christ in, and for, heavenly glory. Thus is the church formed by the present Holy Spirit. It is the richest expression of divine grace. Those who believe are called to be, and even now are, God's children, as they also are by one Spirit baptised into one body.

Do you ask, What of ourselves and our sins? I ask in reply, For what did Christ die? Did not His

death effect for the believer what God intended? Was He not offered for the remission of sins? Does He not blot them out before God for each believer, as in the type of the scape-goat (only a great deal better) they were borne away to a solitary land, where nobody would hear of them more? Remember there were two goats. There was one goat for Jehovah, and the other was for dismissal into the wilderness. The first was sacrificed for a sin-offering. The essential thing where sin is in question is, first of all, to vindicate God. If we are to have His grace, He must have His rights in order that His grace may flow without a jar or an obstacle. The first goat was therefore offered as a sin-offering to Jehovah. The second goat could have no efficacy save in virtue of the first; but after that offering, how invaluable its testimony that "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins" were sent away expressly to a land of forgetfulness! Such was the solemn type on the day of atonement (Lev. 16). And the Lord Jesus more than made it good, as all can find who receive Heb. 9, and Heb. 10 from God. On His work are founded the blessed words, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Do we, my friends, for ourselves believe these words? How few comparatively in this land of religious profession really believe? How many flatter themselves that they do, while manifestly unconverted! If you believe God's testimony to you as a guilty person, it would mark that His grace has awakened your soul. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Have you bowed in faith to the truth and the grace so plain in the gospel? Do you not see that God could afford to justify you righteously through Christ's blood, and in no other way? Till our Lord died, not a single sin was taken away; when He died and rose, a work was accepted by God which would leave not a single sin on any believer. But even God's children for the most part are only half-believers. They have generally slipped back to the condition of Jews before the Lord came. They think the efficacy is lost every time they break down, and that they must begin over again.

How sad to be in a measure always learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth! The Jew, under law, could not avoid this constant need of renewal; but what are Christians about, who so forget the gospel? It is unbelief of what grace now gives through Christ Jesus. What can more evidently weaken and darken the glad tidings God sends us? All spring is gone for a holy walk; and you cannot worship in the Spirit unless you know that all is clear between Him and you. Far am I from saying that you are to gloss over any failure. Confess all fully, and at once; but go to Him with the certainty that He welcomes you to His presence which you must have slighted when you sinned. But are you not in living relationship with Him, and with the Lord Jesus, His Son? You have dishonoured Him; but if He denies not your relationship, you should not, who need it more than ever for the restoration of your soul. Perhaps you may have said, or done something, wrong this morning. But is there no appointed remedy, no adequate way, of getting practically clear? Certainly there is. Retire into your closet, shut the door, and have it out with God. It is not that He revokes His grace, and that you are back in the world, but that having partaken of His grace in the gospel, you should humble yourself deeply for any sins into which carelessness has let you slip.

The apostle told the Corinthians that, "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." They then had not judged themselves, and the Lord was chastening them. How did He then deal with the Corinthians? "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and not a few sleep." This did not prove they were unbelievers, but rather the contrary. It was just because they bore His name that the Lord chastised them. He does not execute condemnation on the world yet: it will be judgment in strict unsparing righteousness. There will be no mercy (which men despised) mingling with the just award (which they did not fear). Now there is grace without judgment. Why? Because Christ undertook the judgment and bore it on the cross. Nothing is more righteous, if He undertook it;

nothing more gracious, nothing simpler than the gospel; while nothing is deeper, nothing surer, and nothing more blessed. Therein God gives complete rest for your conscience in what Christ has suffered for you, and in His love perfect rest for your heart. You are then free to have Christ Himself to enjoy.

What can compare with the privileges of the Christian? It is not merely hearing sermons, were they master-pieces, nor is it prayer individual or common, although you are sure to fall into sins if careless as to prayer and the word of God too. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" It is through the washing of water by His word. It admonishes and warns, corrects and rebukes, feeds and directs, revives and encourages us; yet how seldom one hears ordinarily about this cleansing by the word. All who believe do speak of Christ's blood; its need is too absolute for such souls to forget it. But children of God for lack of honouring the word must seem to be lingering about the door, as if they were not free to cross the threshold of forgiveness. There they are and there they stick; which tends at length to the forgetfulness of the purging from their old sins. It is the more sorrowful because we all are called to go forward in enjoying Christ, and to be filled with thanksgiving and praise.

Therefore, my dear friends, I cannot but press this upon your earnest heed, so that you who believe may be enabled to take in faith your due place. Never mind what man thinks; hearken to what the Lord says. Men count it strange if you go back to the standard of the only, the best, way. It looks eccentric when compared with modern thought or practice ever so old since apostolic days. But your wisdom is never to let such talk deprive you of the blessing of walking obediently in the truth. "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in Him." Delivered from a bad conscience and guilty fears, see that you move onward, dependent and confiding. Be assured of His grace whether you fall asleep, or live till He comes, when He will receive us all together to Himself and for the Father's house. Unless you know yourselves purged by His blood, and yourselves the objects of His love, how is it possible to be in a fit condition to worship the Father and the Son? You may fairly be described as no more than lying on the threshold, instead of entering into the joys of God's habitation in the Spirit; for He surely has pleasure in the happiness of His children. As things are, how many Christians are but borderers, whereas Christ suffered for our sins, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," and has given us the Spirit that we might enjoy the presence of God fully even now and here.

Is not this condition sanctioned in the New Testament? What did the apostle mean in desiring that the Colossians should be thanking "the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Are you thus thanking Him now? You, if a believer, have eternal life, your sins are forgiven, and yourself are a child of God, with the Spirit of His Son enabling your heart to cry, Abba, Father. To be a "door-keeper" now is falling short of what God bestows on you. Christ not only meets us where we were, but brings us even now in faith where He is — into the holiest. The salvation God gives, not to some, but to all that believe, is worthy of Himself and His Son. He leaves not a single spot or stain upon us; and we are thenceforward called in the strength of the heavenly meat of Christ to enjoy God's love unstinted and perfect. Christ's work may well banish every doubt on that score.

But what does He mean by saying, "I am the root and the offspring of David"? To be David's offspring not even an unbelieving Jew could deny to the Christ. But how could He be David's root when He was born more than a thousand years after David? Yet He says so, which is enough; as the Old Testament scriptures said the same, centuries before. Yes, He was David's root just as surely as, if more wonderingly than, He was David's offspring — *the* Son of David as well as David's Lord. Compare Psalm 110 and Matthew 22: 45. In one person now is He both God and man, as He loved to call Himself the Son of man, yet of David's lineage, and thus, inheriting Solomon's title. If He had

been only of His mother, this, though absolutely needed, would not have been sufficient. For, as is known, she was, through her father Heli, descended from Nathan, who had not the promise of the kingdom. It must be through Solomon's line. Here, therefore, Joseph furnished the missing link, being not only of David but through Solomon.

Hence, plainly as in Luke 3 we have His mother's line, so in Matt. 1 we have Joseph's title, and how it became His indisputably, on Jewish principles. Both met in Himself the Messiah, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." He was thus, and only thus, by any possibility, David's root as well as offspring. And yet if He had been Joseph's son in His humanity, as He was Mary's, all would have been sin and falsehood. For He could not then have been God's Son, His Only-begotten; He could not have been God, as truly as the Father is. But Joseph's son He was legally alone, because Joseph was affianced to the virgin Mary, though they never lived together till the wondrous Babe of Bethlehem was born, as scripture carefully states, and the prophet Isaiah had no less carefully foreshown.

Truly we may exclaim

"How wondrous the glories that meet

In Jesus, and from His face shine

His love is eternal and sweet,

'Tis human, 'tis also divine."

Yet, with an incomparably higher claim, He never had a kingdom here below from God, like David, or Solomon. He came to suffer for sins to God's glory, and thus lay the basis of redemption, not only for sinners and the church now, but for the kingdom by and by, and for all things, God being thus infinitely glorified. Oh, what a wonderful combination of glory, divine and human, past and present, future and everlasting! He died, not for that nation only, the poor Jewish people which had Him put to death on the cross. Yet He died for them. He prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." On that very ground they had the gospel preached, and many believed; on that very ground they will have forgiveness in the age to come.

And why are not you forgiven today? The word of this salvation is sent to you that you may believe it now. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Put not the word of reconciliation from you, but receive it into your souls. Believe that God made Him that knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

But my task is to show that there is another and very distinct character in which the Lord next presents Himself. He will verify and make good all that David's root and offspring can impart in His coming kingdom. Yet He is also the "bright, the morning star." This is never said in the Old Testament about the Lord Jesus. The only morning star we hear of there is His enemy, foreshadowed by the haughty king of Babylon in Isa. 14, the last holder of the imperial power which began in "the golden city." "Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit." It is because of his great words at the close that he will be given to the burning of fire. This appears to be the true identification of the "day-star, son of the morning," in the prophetic word of Isaiah. It is not Satan, as many have hastily thought. He is described as a great king, this king of Babylon. Thus the first king of Babylon is a type of the last who succeeds to the world-power which began then. It is not Nebuchadnezzar whose last appearance in scripture (Dan. 4) is as different as possible, both in humiliation and restoration. Nor did any other fully meet the terms of the prophet; but it surely will be in the little horn of the West (Dan. 7) He is the final holder of this world's imperial

power. Such is the man whom Old Testament prophecy describes as the "son of the morning, or the day-star" (Lucifer).

But the Lord for whom we wait now, the hope of the church and of the Christian, reveals Himself accordingly as "the bright, the morning star." Nor is it the first time. For, in an earlier part of this very book of Revelation, it is said of Him, "I will give him (the overcomer) the morning star." Here too the Lord distinguishes it from giving him power over the nations; just as we have His own title as "the root and the offspring of David" distinguished from His being "the bright, the morning star." Authority or power over the nations will be when the Lord takes the kingdom of the world, rising as the Sun of righteousness. But when He adds "and I will give Him the morning star," it is association with Himself when He receives His own to Himself before that day of outward universal power shall dawn. He thus promises to the overcomer something more, and higher, and more intimate than that. He is going to give us Himself in heavenly blessedness and in love truly divine before that day.

Such will be the morning star. This lovely harbinger is before the day breaks. The sun is not yet risen to dispel the darkness of the night. The morning star, oh! how it cheers those who watch while others sleep; and to watch now is what Christians are called to — to wait for Christ, sure that He is coming for His own, not knowing when He comes. This is the precious object for our hearts as we pursue the pilgrim path. It is the hope given us by Himself (John 14) If day by day we make it by the Spirit a living reality, what a power of raising our souls from toil and moil, from snares and troubles, to that which is before Himself! For He particularly awaits that moment. Impossible to be peacefully directed thus in heart, and to be also absorbed with earthly expectations, and clouded with worldly cares.

Whatever be the duty of the Christian, he is bound to do it thoroughly and with thanksgiving to the Lord. But he is not troubled if others run before him as they like; and whatever the trial, he can trust the Lord unqualifiedly. Where "the bright, the morning star" fills the heart, as its outlook, what comparable is anything you can win by labours night and day? The Gentiles seek after meat and drink and clothing; and the world holds out as prizes, gold and silver and precious things; but what are these compared with "the bright, the morning star"? To behold Christ at His coming to share with us His heavenly glory! to be in a moment, and for ever, associated with Him, before His judgments fall on the nations! Yet, in substance, it is the same hope He gave His own whilst He was here — the hope of His coming again to place us where He is in His Father's house. It is a quite different thing from His earthly glory as the root and off-spring of David, when He reigns by and by. He is in His Father's house, whither He went to prepare a place for us. He is coming to give him that overcometh the Morning Star.

Is this then your hope, my brethren? Or are you only occupied with the Jews and their movement toward the land? Many are expecting the world to get better by education and temperance, by art, letters, and science. But all such expectations are vain. Others with better feeling trust to the preaching of the gospel as the panacea in the hand of the Spirit. Have they forgotten that Pentecost has been fulfilled without any such effect on the nations of the earth? Did the world improve when the twelve apostles laboured here below, and the apostle Paul beyond them all? Can you imagine that the present generation of Christian preachers or any one else approaches within a measurable degree those whom God set "first in the church?" He who could tolerate a thought of comparison with them could only be a person as ignorant of himself as of them. Yet were they men filled with an abiding sense of their own insufficiency and with a like spirit of dependence on the Lord. They accepted, and held unflinchingly to, the path of pilgrims and strangers, as it was Christ's path. Yet even in their own time,

though lingering at first in Jerusalem, they went forth and preached the gospel everywhere, practically through the known world of that day. But nobody then dreamt of its improving the world. The true object and right effect of the gospel is to gather believers out of the world for heavenly glory with Christ. It is quite another thing which, if we believe scripture, will change the face of all here below on the earth according to the purpose of God. It is the coming of the Lord in power and glory. Then He shall chase away its darkness as the Sun of righteousness. Then "every eye shall see Him." But here He announces Himself as "the bright, the morning star." Only believing eyes shall see Him thus. It is the Christian's hope; and this is what we are awaiting now — Himself our hope.

Do not tell me that only some choice and intelligent Christians are to be caught up to meet Him. Read 1 Thess. 1, and learn how these young disciples "turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." Here was living reality. They were waiting by faith for the Lord Jesus to come, and receive them to heaven out of the world, not to improve the world by them. The genuine bettering of the world will be first by divine judgments, and then by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, when Christ rules the universe manifestly. The wicked will be smitten, and Satan for a thousand years shut out from the world. This has never been as yet. Think you that sermons, and tracts, and all the preachers that ever were could shut up Satan for even an hour? But the Lord will do it with ease, whatever the means He deigns to employ. He shall bruise the serpent's head, yea, under the feet of His saints. Satan during His reign is to be shut up in the bottomless pit, before he is let loose for his last temptation, and flung for ever into the lake of fire.

Scripture describes the present in one aspect as "night." Well might it be so! since our Lord was crucified. It is the night of man's day. But the light of God's glory in Christ has shone into our hearts, once utterly dark; and we can look up into the heavens, and by faith behold the One who is coming. And this hope brightens the heart before He comes, and makes us long for Him. The first object of the Christian's heart is Christ. This only the better fits us to seek the perishing, that they may be saved; as we have a yet nearer call of love toward brethren in Christ. But the first and deepest affection is and ought to be toward Christ. Our constant and due attitude is to be patiently waiting for Him, that is, for "the bright, the morning star."

Now, let me ask, Is it so with you that believe? What is the use of any truth if you do not make it your own, and live in it? It will otherwise only condemn you. Who can be said to set a just regard on God's truth if he does not earnestly act on it? We owe all to His love; and in fact it was His love that sent Christ to die and bring us salvation. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5: 8). So also just before, we were yet without strength, when "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This is God's gospel; and the proper hope of him that has received the gospel is Christ coming for us, when also we shall reign with Him. The Old Testament saints shall also share His reign; they suffered in faith. But none had the Bright, the Morning Star revealed, as Christ does it now. Hence see the force of "The Spirit, and the bride say, Come." For the Holy Ghost is in us now, and leads the church to say, Come; as he that hears, the individual believer, is invited to bid Christ come. But how could anyone ask the Lord to come, the Judge of quick and dead, unless he were justified by faith, and had peace with God?

Beware of the too common view which mixes up the coming of the Lord for the saints, with His appearing to judge the world. Shall I tell you what such a theory is like? It actually makes the Lord, when He comes to receive His bride, array Himself as it were with the black cap of the Judge. To him who knows the symmetry of God's word there can scarce be a sadder perversion of the truth. The Lord coming with a black cap to meet His bride! Oh, what folly man can conceive when he slips from Scripture into his own thoughts!

There are two parts in Christ's coming. First, He will receive His saints and take them to heaven. There is the great importance of the fourth chapter of the Revelation. None can find the church on earth after Rev. 3; for the concluding word in Rev. 22 goes back of course, and is no exception to the fact named. The second and third chapters of the Revelation show the churches in seven different types, which furnish a somewhat prophetic view of what it seemed good to the Lord to notice therein until He comes. The next chapter (Rev. 4) lets us see all the saints glorified in heaven. How did they get there? The Lord had translated them. It does not belong to the purpose of the Revelation to give a vision of the Lord's coming to receive them to Himself. The vision we have in Rev. 19 is of the Lord coming from heaven *with* the saints following Him when He executes judgment.

Confessedly, the only way (and how happily!) believers can be caught up to heaven is by Christ's presenting them there at His coming. The fullest revelation of it is in 1 Thess. 4, in 2 Thess. 2: 1, and in 1 Cor. 15. In these three scriptures, which ought to more than suffice, we have the proof that in this way only are the saints to be taken in a moment together out of the world; as they will at a later season leave heaven — at the time of His appearing to execute judgment. There is thus not the least mixing of the Bridegroom's coming for the bride, and of the Judge's execution of judgment on the world. This enforcing of judgment might suit such a cap of condemnation (at least in human style). But think of so grotesque an array for one meeting and marrying a bride, even though he were a judge! Yet this reflects symbolically what such a system of confusion makes of our Lord's coming. It is as contrary to Scripture as to the nature of things. Distinguish the two parts, and you have, Christ coming for His saints, and in due course His other act of coming with them to judge the world.

The distinction preserves the hope in its constant power. We may always wait if there be no revealed events to intervene. Such is the unquestionable impression formed by the Gospels and the Epistles, and confirmed, not impaired, by the Revelation rightly understood. Still more profuse again are the references to His appearing to judge the world, before which important events must necessarily be fulfilled. Then in the Revelation we have the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials, to say nothing of signs and solemn facts which the Lord and the apostle declare must be before that day. But the coming for His own is carefully apart, that it may be a simple hope, and not an event of providence or of prophecy. They are both true, but distinct, parts of His Second Advent.

Hence the moment the bride hears of Him as the Bright, the Morning Star, she answers, "Come." She knows of no revealed delay; she asks for no tokens; she thinks of no preparation further in this world. The church alone (and so the Christian individually) has the Spirit thus guiding in perfect peace and confiding affection before the Lord comes. Whatever outpouring of the Spirit the Jews receive is after He appears. It is therefore eminently characteristic of the bride, the church, that the Spirit is shown here leading her to say, Come. It is not a mere expression of her own feeling (which might be enthusiasm), but a Spirit-given and sanctioned call to Christ, as the fruit in her of His grace and truth. And what has ever wrought in saints effects more acceptable to God than the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ? The bride is, without doubt, the church, longing for Christ to come, and rightly interpreting by the Spirit His way of revealing Himself.

It is not at all doubted that Jerusalem will be in a similar relation comparatively on the earth. Jerusalem is the bride referred to in the Canticles, as well as Ps. 14 and elsewhere in the Old Testament. There the associations are all earthly. Of course it is a figure in either case, meaning the one dearest to the Lord respectively in heaven or earth. There is no real difficulty; only we must not confuse the two. When we have as here, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come," the words can apply only to the church waiting for Christ. But the words that follow are of much moment, and serve to guard us from over-valuing knowledge in comparison with the possession of Christ by faith.

I have seen people rather proud of their knowledge, which then bred worms and stank; but grace never despises those who may not know as much as others. We ought to love dearly Christ's own who know but little — to cherish them all the more because they are short. Do you not see this in the mother who has a child not so pretty or bright as the rest? She tries to make up for its defect by the most marked affection. She knows that the beauties of the family can get on very well for themselves. Most people like a handsome boy or girl; but the plain one is apt to fare ill with strangers. Not so with the mother, who cleaves to it, so that sometimes even the poor little soul is in danger of getting a little conceited or selfish, because so much love is showered upon it. But without question grace would lead one to care especially for the feeble among God's children. Those who are strong do not well to overlook the weak and please themselves. It is according to Christ that we help the needy in this way, and take pains to lead them on.

Here we have a special addition that illustrates His grace in a practical shape. "And let him that heareth say, Come." There are not a few who have never understood, never enjoyed, the pledged relationship of the bride. Are they then to be silent? Are they forbidden to welcome Christ's coming? Not so. If one has really heard the voice of Christ, without appreciating the bridal place, let him not hesitate. He believes in Christ and His work, he knows His love already, and that He is coming to consummate His love; for He will change the body of our humiliation, so as to be conformed to the body of His glory, and have us thus like Himself, and with Him where He is. Here the word warrants the weakest one "that heareth" to say, Come. This is grace indeed, as it disproves the theorists who slight the deficient in knowledge. They are more to be blamed than those they look down on. "Let him that heareth say, Come," is an encouraging word to the feeble believer.

But this is not all. Having now set in their place those who answer with bridal love, and such as hear Christ but know not that relationship, the revealing Spirit is careful even here to insist on zeal for the gospel, and warm interest in souls who are strangers to Christ and in danger of perishing. There are those of the world or such as look like the world, as the publican did to the Pharisee in the temple. For the publican, not the Pharisee, bitterly bewailed his condition and cast himself on God's sovereign mercy. Far different he who despised and hated him with a hard and haughty bearing, most hateful to God. But the Lord entered into the publican's need; and just because he did not justify himself, he is declared to have gone down to his house justified rather than the other. Some such state seems described in the next words of our text, "Let him that is athirst come." It is an address to one who is no longer indifferent, but thirsting for what would relieve his soul. He could scarcely be athirst if unawakened to feel it; but a sense of want, a craving for the blessing he does not yet know, there is. And here is the invitation of grace — "Let him that is athirst come." He is not told to say, Come, as in both the former cases. How could a man in his misery ask the Lord to come? He is just realising his wants and his ruin; and the question for him is how to assuage his burning thirst. "Let him come." For the water of life is here to be taken freely. Nothing but life's water can refresh the thirsty soul. Let him come and drink then without money and without price.

W.K.