

## The Day Star

2 Peter 1: 19.

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(Pub. Weston, Chapter Two Archive.)

Many Christians are averse to God's revelation of the future. This is to be sadly prejudiced. Having known countless theories made and explained away, they consider it wiser to seek simply the blessing of their own souls. They may be right, if they have not yet peace and liberty, as Christians are entitled to by grace. But if they are Christians, they have Christ ; and all things are theirs. It is not wise or well to turn away from Him that speaks concerning the future, because men have often made mistakes. If I am to give up all that has been perverted, I am in danger of turning away from almost all the Bible.

Beyond controversy, on the other hand, not a few, being really unestablished in Christ, are apt to be taken up with prophecy in a light manner. They seem on the alert for things to suit their preconceptions. They start in quest of the Buonapartes, of the "last" Pope in their own day, of their country's destiny, etc. They are thus liable to deceive themselves as well as others. But, if we have confidence in God, and Christ be before our hearts, we shall not fail of the Spirit's guidance, through Whom, bowing to the word, we shall get the truth of things. When we have Christ as our object, the truth shines; for He is the true Light which makes all things manifest. Self only darkens everything. The love of God and of his neighbour was put clearly before the man that asked the Lord who his neighbour was. Our neighbour is whoever wants us and our help. If our eye be single, we shall soon know; then too we have a heart for God's will.

There is a great difficulty in becoming a fool in order to be wise; and this we must learn if we would go on in the things of God. No small quantity of dead matter may be unjudged, which hinders the Spirit of God. Not happiness only but every other good depends on our having Christ as the object and the standard whereby to judge. How am I to know the world? and why are people's minds so diverse with regard to it? Is it not because they have not taken their place as disciples, as learners, at the feet of Jesus? There is divine light in the Bible which stretches into eternity itself; and the simple soul can see it. But we must receive the word of God to learn of Him, instead of bringing our thoughts to it.

The world is not Christ's object at present, but those who are not of it. "I pray not for the world," etc. The Lord Jesus was born King of the Jews; but, being rejected He has since risen and gone to heaven, as truly man as God, the Beginning the First born from the dead. While He is at the right hand of God, He is also the Head of the church. The so-called Apostles' creed had nothing to do with the apostles; and it is moreover vaguely and loosely enough put together, while the Athanasian is too scholastic. The Nicene bids us believe the church instead of God. We are always called as Christians to confess the Lord Jesus; which is far beyond the merely formal way when men rise to say the creed, whether they believe on Him or not.

The Bridegroom is outside the world, while His bride is being formed from out of the world, and about to meet Him in the air. What a solemn yet blessed fact was Enoch's translation! Yet Christ's coming will be immeasurably more so. For all the saints of every age and from every land and tongue will be caught up to join the Lord Jesus. The last trump does not mean the end of the "world," but of the "age." The world will be outside its sound when He comes for us, as it will have nothing to do with Him. When the New Testament was written, the Roman army was familiar to every one in the civilised earth. According to their order, several trumpets were sounded; but the "last" summons they gave was

for immediate departure. This illustrates "the last trump" of our subject. God is going to take all His children to be with Christ Who will come in person to receive them to Himself. It is not the dead saints only, nor merely those who may be then alive, but both.

Christ's "shout" in 1 Thess. 4: 16 is a peculiar word. It was used for a general's call to his soldiers, an admiral's to his seamen, or even a huntsman's to his dog. The Lord will give this shout (κέλευσμα) to His own; and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we, the living saints surviving, will be changed, and all caught up to meet Him. The creed of Athanasius (so-called) did not enter truly into the blessed hope, which was practically lost long before his time; indeed this creed was probably centuries after him. While the primitive Christians were hated, persecuted, and slain, the hope was bright in their souls; but truth rapidly declined till in the time of Constantine Christians were given the place of honour in the Roman empire. The world seduced them from the truth; and the desire grew to remain here and enjoy earthly things. It was no longer the patient waiting for Christ. The world we are bound to view as rejected and guilty of the death of Christ. Although the outward sign of the cross meets us everywhere, what is it but profession and even profanity? For God still views the world as the place from whence His Son was cast out. When delivered, a soul begins to find what a ruin all is.

A man naturally wishes to make a figure in the world and to found a place for his children; but the Christian is only to be as a pilgrim and a stranger, like a man in a passenger ship passing from one country to another. If we belong to Christ, we belong to heaven and are not of the world. John gives the character to the world all through his writings; Paul, the church according to God with a heavenly stamp from the beginning. For Christ is the Head of the church; and the saints should be ever expecting Him.

But now, as of old, clever and learned people encourage one another to say that the early Christians erred in their hope. Alas! what is the good of abilities that leave the possessor banished from the presence of God for ever? The church ought always to be singing the songs, not of grace only, but of glory. Even Christians can be deceived by the infidel expectation of the world's improvement if not perfection. A smattering of divine things is not profitable. They who fix a date for the Lord's coming are entirely wrong. It is a matter of the Father's will concerning His Son to keep the Christian always waiting, certain that He is coming soon, uncertain when. If worldly-minded, we shall dislike waiting thus. But the Bride in Rev. 22: 17 says, "Come;" and again "he that heareth" is invited to say, "Come."

So the Lord in Luke 12 would have His servants on the watch, that, when He knocks, they may open to Him immediately. Figures are meant to be not loose but vivid expressions. The faithful should be as it were behind the door; that, when the Master's knock is heard, it may be opened forthwith. If Martha served, Mary waited at His feet. Martha was energetic in her way; but the work He prizes most is to begin and go on learning of Him, and in His absence to be waiting for Him. Only love can make a good servant; so Christ came in love and will return in victory. Love is intent on the good of another without a thought of self-seeking; and we best know what that is by seeing it perfectly in Him. But next to waiting is working; for love must for Him serve others in a world of sin and misery, as He did.

But it is of the greatest moment to believe that not the church merely, but "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." It is the Holy Ghost Who leads the church to welcome Christ. Whatever one's love to souls may be, Christ ought to be the first object. Can "the Spirit" ever make a mistake? Alas! those that expect progress and victory in the absence of Christ dishonour the Spirit, when He so distinctly inspires the Bride to say, "Come." It is not enthusiastic fancy, but the true hope, to be always saying, "Come." "The Spirit" and the Bride say so; the newly converted one also, he that hears, can and is called to join in the cry, "Come." For *he* has nothing to fear from the Saviour. Again, the waiting one

ought assuredly to be the most zealous in serving. Hence the invitation in the same verse to any sinner to "come and take life's water freely." It is a just reproach, if our hope of His speedy return does not make us more in earnest for souls than we should have been without it.

But it is not yet a question of the world. The Lord Jesus will ask the Father for the world (Ps. 2) and will then come to reign. Israel repentant shall in due time be restored to their own land. Hence, as we read in Num. 34, when He closes His present priesthood, He will surely cause the manslayer (typifying the Jew) to come before the judge, and then be reinstated in his inheritance. No Christian should be so ignorant of scripture as to think that this earth must ever abide as it now is groaning in its ruin and misery.

Yet the apostle (2 Thess. 2) is explicit that, ere deliverance comes, all these lands which boast of their light will unite to abandon revelation and Christ in "apostasy" or open rebellion against God. Thereon shall the Lord be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and on them that obey not the gospel. The old Roman Empire is to be revived (Rev. 17: 8): present changes are but preparatory to that crisis. Italy is not only to be an united kingdom, but will play a greater part than men look for who believe not the prophecies of God. Alas! the lands that have been signally favoured, ungrateful as they are, must become the darkest and most daring. Thus things will become worse and worse, as the apostle warned in 2 Tim. 3, till there is a godless and total wrench from the confession of Christianity.

Where did the church begin? Where was the central seat of empire when the Son of God was rejected and crucified? Apostasy will develop itself at Jerusalem, and the Beast at Rome will sustain the Anti-christ, or wilful king, in Jerusalem. Both will yet unite, as they did of old, against the Lord and His Christ. (See Rev. 13, Rev. 19).

The true value of prophecy is to believe, before, not after, it comes to pass. If you wait till its accomplishment, this will be your ruin. Do not occupy your mind with individual Jews returning to their own land; which is but to prepare a people for the Anti-Christ. Give the Jews the gospel. The Russian power covets the Holy Land. But we find in Ezekiel 38, 39 that, instead of succeeding, its ruler is to perish there. The Western powers will have been destroyed by the Lord Jesus even before Gog falls.

On the other hand, our place and privilege as Christians is to look for His receiving us to Himself for the Father's house, before He appears for the destruction of His foes wherever they be. The Jewish saints ever had the "lamp" of prophecy; and it is still a good light for the squalid place of this world, warning of judgment. But there is now a better; for daylight dawns in the gospel; and the hope of Christ's coming to fetch us on high is the day-star before the day. Has that hope arisen in your heart? This was what the apostle yearned to know in the saints he addresses, leading them beyond the old into the new things.