

## The Joy Set Before Him

*"Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter the Kingdom . . . inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me"—Matthew 25:34-40*

THERE is one fact that grips the mind of every earnest brother and sister at this time, and that is the fact that Christ may appear in the earth now at any moment.

It would no doubt help us this morning as we come together again around this table to let our minds dwell at some length on the many implications that are to be considered in connection with this terrible and glorious event—the second coming of Christ.

What will it mean to us, to him, to the multitude of his saints who now sleep in the dust of the earth? What will it mean to each of the two classes of the living and the dead who will stand before him for life or death soon after his feet first touch the earth?

All of these things furnish rich material for consideration and sober reflection. We often think of the day of Christ in the narrow sense, as it will affect ourselves and our immediate brothers and sisters in the ecclesia; but it is seldom that we let our minds dwell for long on the others who will also be important actors in the great drama that will be enacted at that time.

The Lord Jesus has waited a long time to be re-united with his brethren whom he loved so much when he was here on the earth before. He has waited a long time for the glory that will be his when all things are put under his feet and he reigns supreme with his saints over all the earth.

It was for this, for the glory and joy that should be revealed in his brethren and in himself in the day of his coming; it was for this that he endured the cross, despising the shame.

He followed the mob willingly as he was led out to Golgotha to die on the cross because he well knew that his future glory, and that of his brethren whom he loved, could only, in the righteous purpose of God, be brought about in this way; for sin must be put away; it must be condemned, that everlasting righteousness might be brought in.

He endured those long hours of pain and agony at the hands of wicked men, cut off in the midst of his years, because, even in that dark hour, he could see the glory that would follow.

What a joy it will be to him, then, when the day comes that he can give the word that will bring his sleeping brethren from their graves; when he can send his angels to gather together his elect, from the four corners of the earth! Of all those that are there, no one will receive more fulness of joy, so long waited for, than the Lord himself.

Many of God's faithful servants died long before Christ was ever born. They all died in faith, waiting for the time when the Saviour would appear. It is said that Abraham rejoiced to see that day and he saw it and was glad (John 8:56). Job said—

"I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth"  
(Job 19:25).

David in his last words, spoke of Jesus as the—

"Light of the morning even a morning without clouds, when the sun riseth" (2 Sam. 23:4).  
"I shall be satisfied," (he said) "when I awake with thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15).

In the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus faced the terrible ordeal of the cross, he knew that all the hopes of the faithful ones of the past depended on the work he was about to do, that God had required of him.

It was not a responsibility that hung lightly on his shoulders, but one that grew heavier and heavier as he stood face to face with the terrible ordeal. But he must not fail.

We have in the Psalms his innermost thoughts at this crisis (Psa. 69:6)—

"Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of Hosts, be shamed for my sake; let not them that seek Thee be confounded for my sake."

He was hung on the cross. His life ebbed out. As the power of death took hold of him and passed across his countenance, he realized his work was done—

"It is finished," he said; and he died.

\* \* \*

IN that day when Abraham and David and Job look upon the Lord Jesus for the first time, when they see the wounds that were inflicted upon him as he strove against sin, when they see him then, standing resplendent in the glorious nature of the Father, they will know that they have not hoped and waited in vain.

No doubt the Lord Jesus is waiting now with joyous anticipation the time when he will come back to the scene of his former work, that he might call his waiting Bride to himself. Some of those who come forth in that day will be his personal friends and followers when he was on earth: John, the beloved disciple; the impetuous and ardent Peter; Martha and Mary; John the Baptist, who was early put to death in his righteous work.

Jesus loves every one of his brothers and sisters, every one who has served him faithfully, be they high or low, kings or shepherds, domestic servants or clerks: human differences will count for naught in that day—

"Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Christ's joy will be full when he is able to make them one like himself, spirit nature, his Bride (Psa. 45:13, 11—

"The king's daughter all glorious within, her clothing of wrought gold.

"So the King shall greatly desire her beauty."

We are not told the day or the hour when he will come. Jesus tells us that perhaps it will be at even, at midnight or in the morning.

If it comes in the evening, say on a Wednesday or a Sunday evening when we are all gathered here to worship, to praise the God of Israel in song and prayer, to study and talk upon His holy Word, assembled one with another in love and peace and unity: if he finds us so engaged, in the true and loving spirit of Christ, having our loins girded about as one that waits for his Lord, we believe that he will look with favor on such activity. Has he not told us to OCCUPY till he comes?

But he says he may come at midnight, while we are all asleep. If he does, it would be well for us if the previous day had been fruitful of good works in the Master's service, if we have been cultivating those spiritual graces that lead to perfection of character in holiness and righteousness.

We would like to know that on that night when he comes and finds us sleeping, that we had, before closing our eyes in sleep, approached Our Father in heaven in humble prayer and praise, asking that His blessings be upon us and that our past sins be put away.

Then we are awakened, as Peter was when he was in prison, when the words—

"Rise up quickly and gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. Cast thy garment about thee and follow me."

That is when a good conscience toward God, charity out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned, will certainly be a consolation to us that will quiet our anxious fears.

But this coming might be in the morning, after the day's work has been started. We may be called aside—

"Christ has come now. He wants you."

We do not mean to say that everything depends upon what we are doing at the moment when the call comes; but we do know that the state of our heart and mind in its relation to God, to His Word, is the factor that will determine in that day, whether we stand or fall.

We know that the call comes suddenly. We will not be given time to prepare ourselves for it; nor to set our affairs in order.

"Two shall be in the field, one shall be taken and the other left."

We do not know how the summons will come, nor how we shall reach the solemn place of judgment, but we do know that Christ will—

"Send forth his angels, to gather together his elect from the four corners of the earth"

(Matt. 24:31).

The command goes out—

"Gather my saints unto me" (Psa. 50:5).

We know that thousands of angels will be assisting Christ in the work he does at his coming. One of these angels will come to us. It may be an angel who has known about us for many years (Heb. 1:14)—

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Daily we are in the angels' care. It may be the one who looks after our affairs since we came into the Truth who calls us to the judgment.

Paul says that we who are alive and remain shall be caught away together with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord. The word "caught" here is the same in the original as we find in Acts 8:39—

"The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more. And Philip was found at Azotus, and passing through he preached in all the cities."

\* \* \*

THERE is another thing about our calling away and the sudden leaving of all our affairs. We need to remember that Britain and America will probably accept Christ long before the other Gentile nations. There are many in these countries who have heard of our teaching, but have not accepted it.

The sudden and unexpected disappearance of all Christadelphians with no explanation, will have a profoundly disturbing effect on those who are able to remember that we were expecting Christ to come and call us all before him to judgment.

When they see that we are gone, it will put them to thinking. Then, when the message goes out to all nations, kindreds and tongues, from the newly established throne in Jerusalem, the aionian Gospel, as it has been called, calling upon all nations to submit to the new King there, these people who knew something of our teaching, will be disposed to accept it.

It has been the belief of Christadelphians since the days of bro. Thomas that the place of judgment will be Mt. Sinai, in the Arabian peninsula, south of Palestine, and east of Egypt. Several passages in the Bible support this idea (Deut. 33:2; Isa. 63; Heb. 3; Psa. 68:17, etc.). This is a desert region almost totally uninhabited.

And since the judgment is to be an affair of no concern to the world, this would be an ideal place for it.

The things that happen there, when we all stand before Christ for life or death, will be behind closed doors as far as the world is concerned. It will all be over and the saints will stand with Christ in triumph over their enemies at Jerusalem before the world is aware that Jesus is here in the earth.

We do not know how long this judgment scene will go on at Sinai. We believe that it will be a matter of days rather than years.

\* \* \*

AT his first appearing in the "Lamb of God" phase of his work, Jesus was called the lowly Nazarene, and so it was written of him (Matt. 12:20)—

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and a smoking flax shall he not quench, till he bring forth judgment to victory."

But now he comes in the height of his power and glory, from the very presence of God. At that time he is called KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:16). He will be accompanied by multitudes of angels. Those who saw him before as he travelled on foot over the cities of Judea, may well say then—

"Can this be he who once did stray, a pilgrim on the world's highway?"

Yes, many angels will be assembled there with Christ when we come before him. And it will be in the presence of these angels that you and I will have to give our account.

But, brethren, we may be assured that when he searches our hearts in that day, if he finds in their innermost recesses a genuine love for him, and the record of a continual striving to do his will, he will be gracious and merciful to us in our many weaknesses; for he knows the frailty of our nature, the weakness of the flesh. He will not be an austere judge to such as love **AND OBEY** him, to his true friends.

But for the hypocrite and the merciless, there can be no compassion; for it is written—

"He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shown no mercy" (Jam. 2:13).

The real love of Christ means that we **keep our first love**. When we first came into the Truth we were full of eagerness and joy. We were anxious to please him, and Christ regards that state of mind, that first love as all important. His message to the ecclesia at Ephesus was (Rev. 2:4)—

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Christ will commend earnest contention for the Truth and separation from those who teach and uphold wrong doctrine. He told the ecclesia at Pergamos (Rev. 2:14)—

"I have a few things against you, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam."

He will commend our labor of love in the Truth, our patience and forbearance one with another. He will bring to our memory many little services we have done along the way (if we have done them) that we have forgotten, but he has not forgotten them—

"I was hungry and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me.

"I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

(Matt. 25:35-40).

Among those standing before Christ will be some who have fallen away; who have not kept their first love and enthusiasms; who have not sought FIRST the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

It were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to turn from the holy commandment. It will be a fearful thing to be turned away to the left hand side, to be a companion with Balaam, with Judas Iscariot, and the evil men who rejected Christ in his day. We are told to "Behold the goodness AND SEVERITY of God," and to be exercised thereby.

\* \* \*

BUT what of the great multitude on the right hand side of Christ? When the wicked have departed, there will be Christ left with his Bride—Jews and Gentiles—all counted as having been born in Jerusalem of the seed of Abraham (Psa. 87).

THEY WILL BE PILLARS IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD TO GO NO MORE OUT.

What a thrill will electrify that host as Christ commands the blessing, even life forevermore. What a change in the individual units—the bent backs will be made straight, the lame will leap like a deer, wrinkles will disappear. There will be no more hoary heads, no more dim sight, nor ears that are hard of hearing. No more tears or sorrow, no pain, for sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

There will be many glad reunions in that day, pure joy and laughter, anthems of praise and thanksgiving to God who is the Author of all these unspeakable blessings.

Jesus will survey this rejoicing mighty throng all aglow with the fulness and pleasure of that better life, all tears and sorrows removed, and with pleasure he will see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. He himself will lead the glorious anthem of praise, for it is written—

"I will declare Thy Name—Yahweh Elohim—unto my brethren, **in the midst of the congregation** will I sing praise unto Thee" (Psa. 22:22).

What a glorious picture! We are nearly at the end of the journey that will lead us there. Let us quicken our steps, purify our hearts and think of the love of Christ. Let us search our hearts this morning, and if there be any wicked way found there, may God take it from us and grant to each one of us this exceeding great and rich reward.

—E.W.B. 11/63

Berean

---