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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

FOR HIS PEOPLE.

An Address (revised) at

65, St. Mary Axe, E.C.

2nd January, 1914.

by

PERCY W. HEWARD.

Correspondence welcome:

Scriptural literature for Believers

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THE COMING OF CHRIST FOR HIS PEOPLE.

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

At 65, St. Mary Axe, E. C.

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OU LINE:-

1. The Continual Preciousness of That Blessed Hope.
2. The Manner in which it is Presented in Scripture.
3. Surrounding Events.
4. One Star Differing from Another in Glory, with Notes on "Suffering Loss".
5. "His Wife hath made herself ready": and Practical Exhortations.

Our subject, beloved friends, is the Coming of Christ for His people. There is a continual preciousness in that Blessed Hope, as it is Scripturally called, - as HE is Scripturally called, one might almost say, for not only is the Hope a fact, the Hope is a Person. The continual preciousness? Yes, beloved friends, Truth is not Truth simply for special occasions; there is nothing merely official in Truth; Truth is meant to be food for the Lord's dear people at all times. Truth is meant to appeal to their hearts at all times. Salvation in its wondrous results brings about a continual newness, - "Old things are passed away; new things have come to pass, and all things are of God". Therefore there is a continual preciousness of that Blessed Hope. We keep on loving because He first loved; and because we keep on loving, we long to see Him Whom we love. It is a poor love that desires to be away from those who are loved, and if the Lord Jesus occupies our love, it must be our heart's desire to see Him. Again, there is a continual preciousness because we are continually feeling ourselves out of harmony with the world where He was crucified. This, sad though it is, makes a background for that Blessed Hope. The return of our beloved Lord is delightful when we realise earth's

ruin without Him, hurrying on to a greater climax. Earth's ruin? Aye, very markedly. We know how prophecy is being fulfilled, how time is running its course, how the empires of which the Scripture speaks have risen and fallen, and now in these latter days we can see the signs of the times which are more than signs of the times to us, - they point us off themselves unto Him. That Precious Hope is a Resting Place amid such confusion. Shall we seek, like Lot, to be in the gate of Sodom, and to reform, reform, reform? Nay, this is vain. The fabric of earth's civilization is tottering, we cannot put things right. That Blessed Hope is the precious prospect. Shall we seek to educate, shall we seek to try and win the world? Nay. That Blessed Hope is in front of us. Yet not only when we look on a ruined world in general, but when we look particularly on the ruins among God's dear people, this precious Hope is wondrously refreshing. Not that I mean we are to settle down in the ruin. I see nothing in Scripture to suggest that we if we bear the Name of the Lord are to sit still and say, Ruin has come in, it will not be right among the saints till the Lord comes back; I will therefore wait in isolation. Scripture always shows that when there is a coming out and being separate it should be followed by a fellowship. Mark two crucial passages, - "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"; and the next chapter goes on to say, "Receive us". Likewise is it in 2 Tim. 2." If anyone shall have purged himself away from these he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and useful to the Master, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also newer desires, but follow (ah, then we have a list of wondrous graces to be followed) WITH those who call upon the Name of the Lord out of a pure heart". Here is not isolation as a goal, but isolation as a path with a view to that holy identification with others who call upon the Name of the Lord out of a pure

heart. When Josiah was told that there was no hope for Israel, that its kingdom must come down, that judgment was decreed, he did not say, I will sit still and do nothing; but he rallied those who were faithful for a passover unto the Lord. So should it be now. Those who feel these things are not to settle down in isolation, not to settle down in laziness, miscalled spirituality; but they are, nevertheless, to look beyond the promised reviving unto the Reviver Whose coming will be more than a partial reviving inasmuch as in that Day He will put right His whole work. He will see where there has been the failure and He in perfect righteousness, yet in perfect love, will deal with His blood-bought people, and there shall be a twofold position, for we read, Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the many, i.e. those who are in Christ; - AND He shall divide the spoil with the STRONG. A second blessing, a reward only for strong and faithful ones. There will be diversities in that Day, as we shall shortly see. The Lord will deal with everything perfectly, and we turn aside from the confusion of creeds and practices of men, we turn aside to that Blessed Hope. But I think we may go a step farther. There is the continual preciousness of this Blessed Hope when we come down to the smallest world of our own lives. In us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. When we have done that which is commended us, we feel how we have fallen short in the execution of it, and if we had done it perfectly, we should have no boasting, for God demands perfection, and has a right to it; but how many blemished there are in our work. Surely the loaves baken with leaven need the sin offering. And if we walk in the light, the blood must keep on cleansing from every sin. Do we look to our service? - I suppose that every believer who has anything of spiritual enthusiasm delights in work for his Lord. It is a pleasure to do something for Him Who did everything for us. It is not a healthy condition when we can sit still and do nothing. I do not mean that there is

to be the rushing forward, - many run unspent, and many "babes" begin to speak too soon, rather than to cry with a sense of need. The word "babe", which the Holy Spirit uses for a young Christian, is compounded of two words which signify "not speak". Undoubtedly there is too much activity, energy of the flesh, which is not the inworking, the energizing of God. But as believers grow in grace they are delighted to do something for Him Who for their sins died and rose again. Aye, and in the widest sense of the word "service", as soon as one is born from above, he must seek to bring forth fruit, for if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation, and new things come to pass at once. But we turn off our "best", we turn aside from the service that we love so well, and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly", for our best service is so poor to offer to Him, our best service is so marred with failures of word or thought, and when others may look on, and sometimes, as we often rightly feel, think more of us than is just, we can look into the failures and bow before our Lord, can feel not only that confession of sin which befits those who are redeemed, but also that intense longing, "Lord Jesus come, then no longer shall I serve imperfectly, then no longer shall I think those thoughts which grieve and separate from that fulness of communion towards which I long, O Lord Jesus come!" There is the continual preciousness of this Blessed Hope, therefore, in all the varied and ^{yet changeless} changing circumstances of this world, in which God has placed us as pilgrims and strangers. Beloved friends, beware of truth as a theory, beware of truth as a mere head belief. We read of some that they knew the truth, and yet were lost; but we do not read of any who had the love of the truth being lost. The love of the truth is the mark of a Divine inworking. ^{Let that Blessed Hope be a Blessed Hope in your experience} It is not everything to be able to draw a prophetic chart, it is not everything to be able to make a calendar of prophetic events, it is more important so to walk with the Lord that one longs to see Him. But I am not pleading for ignorance of that which God has revealed. Every word of God is pure, pure gold. Add not to His words lest

He reprove thee, but diminish not a word from them. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,- Profitable not only in one way but in several ways. We come to Scripture for doctrine, we come to it for reproof, we come to it for instruction, and for discipline in righteousness, and every fraction of it may appeal to us in all these varied ways. The Holy Spirit works graciously in this connection, and surely our hearts must acknowledge that Truth not only feeds our hearts, but also gives us that whereon our minds, subject to the Lord, can meditate, so that we may become acquainted with what our Father has revealed. It is a shame for His children to be ignorant. The apostle several times said, "I would not have you ignorant, brethren". It is notable that in more than one of these places he is dealing with certain parts of truth which are much neglected to-day, about which a believer does not mind being ignorant; but let us be ashamed not to know what our God has revealed.

In what way then is that Blessed Hope presented in Scripture? It is presented as the individual and collective anticipation of the redeemed in the present dispensation. The apostle says, "WE which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord", "WE shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump", for everywhere there is the thought of believers waiting, expecting the Lord in their lifetime. It is only the wicked servant who says, My Lord delayeth His coming. The believer with a true faith enters into the meaning of this both individually, and with regard to other of God's people as well. There should be the collective hope, and when we meet one another we should exhort, and so much the more as we see the day approaching; and every assembling is a prophecy of that assembling; every time we have the Lord's Supper it is an anticipation of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and every Lord's Day tells us that soon the Day of the Lord will be here. Thus believers have That Blessed Hope presented in Scripture as that which they should anticipate

while

they are themselves upon this earth. Do not misunderstand me. Scripture is equally clear that many believers must seal their testimony with their blood. It is equally clear that the Blessed Hope of the Lord's return takes place in accord with the Divine arrangement, and will neither be too late nor too soon. God has not told us the day nor the hour, but He has marked out certain signs. In the early church we find that Peter's death was prophesied, and so, at the end of his life, was Paul's. A clear indication, I think, that unless we are told prophetically we shall die (and WE do not claim revelations), unless we are told prophetically we shall die, we look for that Blessed Hope in OUR lifetime. But two of the most prominent faithful servants of God in the present dispensation were informed, one many years before he died, and the other a little while before he died, that they should not live till the Coming of Christ. Peter was told he would become old and then would be led whither he naturally would not, though the tense may imply he would be enabled to be willing at the appointed time. God is never in a hurry with His work. The Lord Jesus will come at the appointed time. Faith does not need human bolstering up, faith does not indulge in human logic so as to hurry that bright and Blessed Hope; there is not impatience. "He That shall come will come and will not tarry". God has marked out the time, and we are to live looking, to live expecting Him Who will come when it is His good pleasure so to do. Further, the Hope is presented to us in Scripture as a contrast with dying. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, at the LAST trump. In John 21 we find that the saying went out among the disciples that John would not die. Their application of the Lord's statement was wrong, but the Lord's statement was right. If I will that he tarry till I come. Now the Lord's statement contrasted death with His coming. He presented there two goals before His people; one death for His sake, and the other His coming; and I believe these two alternatives should be very real in the experience of the Lord's people. It is only through

degeneracy that we find an absence of persecution. If there had been faithfulness, FAR fewer saints would have died of illnesses, and far more saints would have died under persecution. It is only because of sin and wandering that we have so little of tribulation. I know that now all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer tribulation, and there are petty irritations and aggravations which make beautiful backgrounds for Divinely inwrought patience - since the believer has in Christ that which transforms everything that comes to him. Hence I do not use the word "beautiful backgrounds" merely glibly, - everything that reaches a child of God who is characterised by loving Him, is part of a whole of which the portions are working together for good. Nothing can be in vain. Behind every trial there is a Father's hand of immeasurable love. This hope then is a contrast with death, it is the expectation of the Lord's redeemed. It is, moreover, presented to us as that which should daily occupy our minds. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch". We look for a Saviour, Who shall change this body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto His body of glory. I think it is sometimes helpful to temporarily leave out words in reading a verse, that we may see its grammatical structure. In Titus 2 we read that the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men teaching us that denying ungodliness and desires of adornment, we should live ... looking for that blessed Hope. Live looking. Those words have often come to my own heart, and I trust they may to yours. Live looking. This should be the attitude of believers. Undoubtedly we shall not live looking unless we have that living which is sober, righteous and godly, of which the context speaks. So this blessed Hope is brought before us in Scripture as that which should affect us in all our circumstances. It is not merely to be a part of our belief in the background, but that which is to be brought prominently before young Christians. The Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the living

and true God, and to WAIT for His Son from heaven Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus Which delivereth us from the wrath to come. Furthermore, this wondrous return of the Lord Jesus is presented as a warning if there is anything of unfaithfulness. If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come over thee as a thief. Again, Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame. There are many warnings attached to the Lord's return. Here is not only a hope to cheer and to brighten, but a goad, and that which would make clear to us the danger of wandering. The Lord's return is not simply linked with the bright hope of seeing Him, but with the solemn Judgment Seat of Christ, which we shall shortly consider. This know that if the good man of the house, (the master of the house, - the word "good" is liable to be misunderstood), if he had been acquainted with the hour the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Undoubtedly such Scriptures bring before us unsaved ones to whom the Lord's coming will be as a thief, but believers if they at all wander, have IN MEASURE to be treated as unsaved ones, for separation from Christ brings us to a position nearer the world, and we must be treated as our lives are, and by warnings the Lord severs His faithful ones from the world to which they sometimes foolishly cling. The believer, therefore, though he knows that he is not in darkness that that day should overtake HIM as a thief, nevertheless he is to show that if there is a loving of this present age instead of a loving of the appearing of the Lord, there will be a surprise awakening, and a shaming away from Him in His coming, when believers shall be put in the background, for if any man's work be burned up, HE SHALL SUFFER LOSS, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. There is nothing in that passage of a triumphal reward, there is nothing of an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our God and Saviour, but rather the thought of

distinct loss, a distinct "find" or forfeit. Though we must notice the expression is strikingly changed from that in another Scripture. Here is the same word^s as is used in the Gospel where we read that if any man gains the world and centres himself on earth, and pays a fine of HIS SOUL, he will be in a terrible condition. The Holy Spirit employs that word in 1 Cor. 3 - pay a fine, - but he never says "of his soul", for he himself shall be saved, but he pays a fine, as it were, of much else. There is no stress on INDIVIDUAL glory, but there is shame. If we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption, for God is not mocked. He can by no means excuse sin; there must be positive loss.

But it is well to notice in passing, the surrounding events which Scripture frequently emphasizes as to the Lord's people. We find a preparatory event, the getting ready of the redeemed. Oh, beloved friends, that day is very near when our Lord will come. But what has He said? He has said, He is waiting for something. He has not said He will wait 40 years, as with Israel in the wilderness. We can thank Him that He has not put a long period of this nature. He is not slack concerning His promise, but He is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The word "usward" or "youward" in that passage limits the primary interpretation. Here we have the repentance of believers, and the Lord waits till His people repent. Ah, this is a solemn matter. We say we look for His coming. Are we individually repenting? Are we concerned to rouse up others to repent? for the Lord has said He is waiting till His people repent. Various passages show that the Lord's redeemed will prepare, drawn by grace, will prepare just before He returns; afterwards there will be the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the sharing of the kingdom spoils. To Israel there are marked out certain preparations:- we see them now going back to their land, so that I presume

there are nearly twenty times as many Jews in Jerusalem as there were a hundred years ago. It is marked out that they will rebuild their temple, but the Lord will come to that temple, and He will deal there with His enemies, as Isa. 66 shows. Israel, seeing Him in the air, will mourn for Him Whom they pierced:- THEN as He breaks through the clouds once more, and, coming in judgment on their enemies, stands as the Exalted King at Jerusalem, they will not only say, Lo, This is our God, we have waited for Him, but they will realise the preciousness of that precious promise "And so all Israel shall be saved". For the nations within the limits of Antiochrist's control, there is coming a strange period. Doubtless frontiers will be altered, kingdoms will rise, and kingdoms will fall. In the clay-iron times of a surging democracy there will be the exalting of MAN, until the man of sin rears his temple and rears himself against the Son of Man, but of that conflict there can be no doubt. The Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful. Antichrist will be laid low. The blood will reach to the horses' bridles, for the Lord has a sacrifice in Idumea, and there will be nigh two hundred miles of battle in judgment. Bones will be buried for months afterwards, but those who are spared from the nations - not Antichrist's army - will be graciously privileged, for we are told ten men out of every nation of the earth shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, and say, We will go with you. Many peoples shall come and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the house of the Lord. Then will they worship at the feast of Tabernacles, and the Lord exalted with Israel as His near ones will cause that the Gentiles shall be the ploughmen and vinedressers, and the very kings of the Gentiles shall bring ^{some} of the escaped of Israel as a present to the Lord, - not only bring them in their litters, but consider it an honour to bear personally the children of those who are graciously preserved from Israel, for all nations shall

serve Him Who is the true Israel, and Who will be Israel's Lord, and reign at Mount Zion before His ancients gloriously. But, O beloved friends, we think particularly just now, of the prospect for us, if we have confessed His Name, when He shall return to our joy. 1 Cor. 15 brings before us very definitely the Lord's Coming. We read there that God has given in nature a parable of resurrection, and we have brought before us that there are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial, but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another. Israel will not have the same position as we shall, but even among celestial bodies there are diversities. There is one glory of the sun - our beloved Lord is here before us. Undoubtedly the righteous shall shine forth AS the sun, for they will be linked with Him and share His honour, but if we think of Himself personally and leave out that word AS, there is one glory of the sun and another glory of the MOON. The united saints will have a reflected glory, and they will be wondrously clothed with a perfect whiteness. They will have on the righteousness of God, for the fine twined linen is the righteous requirements of the most Holy Place. On the day of atonement the high priest of Israel went into the most holy place with the white linen robe. His usual garments were put on one side, and in Rev. 19 there is a reference to this. The fine twined linen, the righteous requirements of the most holy place, the only robe that went into that holiest of all was the High Priest's, therefore we shall have on HIS robe. The Lord will decorate His people with Himself, and He will decorate Himself with them, in that wondrous unity when He presents to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Among the people of Israel a marriage is consummated under ONE canopy, and it has been, I believe, common to throw the BRIDEGROOM'S robe over the bride. So in that day when the Lord presents to Him His people, it will be manifest that their righteousness is of God, and that they are made the righteousness of God in Christ.

But this one glory of the moon is not the only thought here brought before us. We read afterwards "Another glory of the stars". Apart from His personal glory, apart from our united glory in Him, there will be individual glories. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, that is as the sun, which is the brightness. All believers are in measure wise, for they have been made wise unto salvation. But they that turn many to righteousness - here is the second promise - They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. We know how that believers who are faithful to the Lord can be called stars in advance in Rev. 12 as well as in Daniel 8. Stars are of different magnitude. The star is distinct from the moon, for whereas the moon depends for its glory on another, the star has a glory of its own, I am sure you will agree with me that our power to do faithful service comes first from the Lord, but there is a difference between that which is given to us in Christ and that which is wrought by the spiritual use of powers which God grants. That which is wrought by the spiritual use of powers which God grants, is capable, in His own infinite mercy, of reward. I say "His mercy", for, as Psalm 62 puts it, "Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for Thou renderest to every man according to His works", - for He has given us the power wherewith to do such acceptable service. Believers who are faithful in different measure will differ in glory. If the seed brings forth a hundredfold this will be more than if the seed brings forth thirtyfold or sixtyfold, and the Lord will deal accordingly. We know how we have two servants who are alike rewarded in Luke 19, but who are not rewarded alike. We find in the one case an authority over ten cities, in the other over five. To the first there are added words "Well done". From the second these are withdrawn. The Lord knows just how to reward, and He will deal with His people ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS. He cannot call disobedience obedience, nor can He reward for that which does not exist. He will not reward for that

which is not present. The Judgment Seat of Christ is marked by stainless purity and holiness, and rectitude; it must be in harmony with the character of Him Who occupies it. One star will therefore differ from another, even though both shall be in glory. If believers are even lower than in glory, if they have shame, they shall nevertheless collectively be in that company of which we are told Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might present her to Himself not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. A glorious church! A church in glory! The apostle is clear upon this. We are told that whether we watch or sleep, we shall LIVE together with Him, but only IF we remain under shall we reign together. This is explained by the parables. Reigning on the EARTH is brought before us. The righteous, says Proverbs, shall be recompensed in the earth. All believers will be in the heavenly kingdom, but not all believers will have the added privilege of service in the earthly kingdom. If any man purge himself away from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and useful to the Master and prepared to every good work, i.e. in the kingdom; for the thought is, we have the foundation NOW. The completed HOUSE is the kingdom, and the usefulness to the Master will be there. The meek shall inherit the earth. All the redeemed are in heavenly places, made to sit there, nor shall they be thrust out, but only the meek shall inherit the earth. If a child of God seeks to right himself now, though he be in the kingdom glory with his Lord, in its heavenly aspect, he will not inherit the earth, and in special office, reign with Christ upon it. This will be a severe loss. What may be the full extent of that meaning "He shall pay a fine", I am not prepared to say. It means a giving up of something that belongs to one, for you cannot be found of "nothing". A position is taken away. He shall pay a fine. God knows how to arrange the profit and loss accounts of His people, and He will work in a way which is perfectly righteous, though wondrously gracious, for it is a mercy, as I have already said,

way would suggest those who in II Timothy were religious. They had turned away from Paul, but they were still "religious," and still talked about the things of God, (as you rightly say) in verse 16. There was the prevalence in those days of empty phrases. THEIR WORDS will eat as doth a canker, and we know that the whole congregation were ruined awhile by the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Their word will eat as doth a canker, and the apostle adds in verse 25 "In meekness disciplining those that oppose themselves". Those of old opposed themselves to Moses, but Moses answered so meekly. "Peradventure God may give them repentance". Beloved friends, I am sure of this, that if we go to those that oppose themselves and try to patch up a difference, we are unkind to ourselves, and to them, and dishonouring our Lord; but that if we seek to realise the difference before God, that God will often give the one who is in error repentance, and there will be a unity in the Truth. We do not count on God enough. We are afraid of offending others, and afraid of being thought pharisaic, but it is most sinful to identify ourselves with that which is not the mind of the Lord, for the fear of being CALLED pharisaic. In the law if any man touched what was wrong, he himself was unclean, and treated in measure like that which he touched. I know people say you cannot separate from every sin. You have to separate from yourself. That misses a deeply important point. We are to separate from every known sin. It is assumed that if we are led of the Spirit, if we see evil in ourselves, we are to put it away. It is a very difficult path. The Lord give grace.

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