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Dwight Lyman Moody

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No. 16

THAT GOSPEL SERMON

ON THE BLESSED HOPE.

BY D. L. MOODY.

A Sermon delivered by D. L. MOODY, _the Evangelist, at the Great Chicago
Tabernacle, Jan. 5, 1877. Repeated in the Boston Tabernacle, April
29th._

In 2 Timothy, 3:16, Paul declares: "All scripture is given by
inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for
correction, for instruction in righteousness;" but there are some people
who tell us when we take up prophecy that it is all very well to be
believed, but that there is no use in one trying to understand it; these
future events are things that the church does not agree about, and it is
better to let them alone, and deal only with those prophecies which have
already been fulfilled. But Paul does not talk that way; he says: "All
scripture is ... profitable for doctrine." If these people are right, he
ought to have said: "Some scripture is profitable; but you can not
understand the prophecies, so you had better let them alone." If God did
not mean to have us study the prophecies, he would not have put them in
the Bible. Some of them are fulfilled, and he is at work fulfilling the
rest, so that if we do not see them all completed in this life, we shall
in the world to come.

I do not want to teach anything to-day dogmatically, on my own

authority, but to my mind this precious doctrine--for such I must call it--of the return of the Lord to this earth is taught in the New Testament as clearly as any other doctrine is; yet I was in the church fifteen or sixteen years before I ever heard a sermon on it. There is hardly any church that does not make a great deal of baptism, but the New Testament only speaks about baptism thirteen times, while it speaks of the return of our Lord fifty times; and yet the church has had very little to say about it. Now, I can see a reason for this: the devil does not want us to see this truth, for nothing would wake up the church so much. The moment a man takes hold of the truth that Jesus Christ is coming back again to receive his friends to himself, this world loses its hold upon him; gas-stocks and water-stocks, and stocks in banks and horse-railroads, are of very much less consequence to him then. His heart is free, and he looks for the blessed appearing of his Lord, who at his coming will take him into his blessed kingdom.

In 2 Peter 1:20, we read: "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." Some people say: "O yes, the prophecies are all well enough for the priests and doctors, but not for the rank and file of the church." But Peter says: "The prophecy came not by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and those men are the very ones who tell us of the return of our Lord. Look at Daniel 2:45, where he tells the meaning of that stone which the king saw in his dream that was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold. "The dream is certain and the interpretation thereof sure," says Daniel. Now we have seen the fulfillment of that prophecy all but the closing part of it. The kingdoms of Babylon and Medo-Persia and Greece and Rome have all been broken in pieces, and now it only remains for this stone cut out of the mountain without hands to smite the image and break it in pieces till it becomes like the dust of the summer threshing floor, and for this stone to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.

BUT HOW IS HE GOING TO COME?

We are told how he is going to come. When those disciples stood looking up into heaven at the time of his ascension, there appeared two angels, who said Acts 1:11: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." How did he go up? He took his flesh and bones up with him. "Look at me; handle me; give me something to eat; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have; I am the identical one whom they crucified and laid in the grave. Now I am risen from the dead and am going up to heaven," Luke 24:39,43. He is gone, say the angels, but he will come again just as he went. An angel was sent to announce his birth of the virgin; angels sang of his advent in Bethlehem; an angel told the women of his resurrection; and two angels told the disciples of his coming again. It is the same testimony in all these cases.

I do not know why people should not like to read the Bible, and find out all about this precious doctrine of our Lord's return. Some have gone beyond prophecy, and tried to tell the very day he would come. Perhaps that is one reason why people do not believe this doctrine. He is coming, we know that; but just when he is coming we do not know; Matt. 24:36, settles that. The angels do not know; and Christ says that even he does not know, but that is something the Father keeps to himself. If Christ had said: "I will not come back for 2,000 years," none of his disciples would have begun to watch for him, but it is the proper attitude of a Christian to be always looking for his Lord's return. So God does not tell us just when he is to come, but Christ tells us to watch. In this same chapter we find that he is to come unexpectedly and suddenly. In the twenty-seventh verse we have these words: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth unto the west, even so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." And again in the forty-fourth verse: "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

Some people say that means death: but the Word of God does not say it means death. Death is our enemy, but our Lord hath the keys of death; he has conquered death, hell, and the grave, and at any moment he may come to set us free from death, and destroy our last enemy for us; so the proper state for a believer in Christ is waiting and watching for our Lord's return.

In the last chapter of John there is a text that seems to settle this matter. Peter asks the question about John: "Lord what shall this man do? Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die." They did not think that the coming of the Lord meant death; there was a great difference between these two things in their minds.

CHRIST IS THE PRINCE OF LIFE.

There is no death where he is; death flees at his coming; dead bodies sprang to life when he touched them or spoke to them. His coming is not death; he is the resurrection and the life, when he sets up his kingdom there is to be no death, but life forevermore.

There is another mistake, as you will find if you read your Bible carefully. Some people think that at the coming of Christ everything is to be done up in a few minutes; but I do not so understand it. The first thing he is to do is to take his Church out of the world. He calls the Church his bride, and he says he is going to prepare a place for her. We may judge, says one, what a glorious place it will be from the length of time he is in preparing it, and when the place is ready he will come and take the church to himself.

In the closing verses of the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians, Paul says: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.... We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." That is the comfort of the church. There was a time when I used to mourn that I should not be alive in the millennium; but now I expect to be in the millennium. Dean Alford says--and almost everybody bows to him in the matter of interpretation--that he must insist that this coming of Christ to take his church to himself in the clouds is not the same event us that to judge the world at the last day. The deliverance of the church is one thing, judgment is another. Now, I cannot find any place in the Bible where it tells me to wait for signs of the coming of the millennium, as the return of the Jews, and such like; but it tells me to look for the coming of the Lord; to watch for it; to be ready at midnight to meet him, like those five wise virgins. The trump of God may be sounded, for anything we know, before I finish this sermon--at any rate we are told that he will come as a thief in the night, and at an hour when many look not for him.

Some of you may shake your heads and say, "Oh, well, that is too deep for the most of us; such things ought not to be said before these young converts; only the very wisest characters, such as ministers and professors in the theological seminaries, can understand them." But my friends, you find that Paul wrote about these things to those young converts among the Thessalonians, and he tells them to comfort one another with these words. Here in the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians Paul says, "Ye 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 delivered us from the wrath to come," To wait for his Son; that is the true attitude of every child of God. If he is doing that he is ready for the duties of life, ready for God's work; aye, that makes him feel that he is just ready to begin to work for God.

Then in 1 Thessalonians, 2:19, he says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?" And again, in the third chapter, at the thirteenth verse, "To the end that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Still again, in the fifth chapter, "For ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." He has something to say about this same thing in every chapter, indeed I have thought this Epistle to the Thessalonians might be called the gospel of Christ's coming again.

There are three great facts foretold in the word of God: First, that Christ should come; that has been fulfilled. Second, that the Holy Ghost should come; that was fulfilled at Pentecost, and the church is able to testify to it by its experience of his saving grace. Third, the return of our Lord again from heaven--for this we are told to watch and wait "till he come." Look at that account of the last hours of Christ with his disciples. What does Christ say to them? If I go away I will send death after you to bring you to me? I will send an angel after you? Not at all. He says: "I will come again and receive you unto myself." If my wife were in a foreign country, and I had a beautiful mansion all ready for her, she would a good deal rather I should come and bring her unto it than to have me send some one else to bring her.

THE CHURCH IS THE LAMB'S WIFE.

He has prepared a mansion for his bride, and he promises for our joy and comfort that he will come himself and bring us to the place he has been all this while preparing.

My friends it is perfectly safe to take the word of God as we find it. If he tells us to watch, then watch! If he tells us to pray, then pray! If he tells us he will come again, wait for him! Let the church bow to the word of God, rather than trying to find out how such things can be. "Behold, I come quickly," said Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," should be the prayer of the church.

Take the account of the words of Christ at the communion table. It seems to me the devil has covered up the most precious thing about it. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show forth the Lord's death _till he come_." But most people seem to think that the Lord's table is the place for self-examination and repentance, and making good resolutions. Not at all; you spoil it that way; it is to show forth the Lord's death, and we are to keep it up till he comes.

Some people say, "I believe Christ will come on the other side of the millennium." Where do you get it? I cannot find it. The word of God nowhere tells me to watch and wait for the coming of the millennium, but for the coming of the Lord. I do not find any place where God says the world is to grow better and better, and that Christ is to have a spiritual reign on earth of a thousand years. I find that the world is to grow worse and worse, and at length there is to be a separation. "Two women grinding at a mill, one taken and the other left; two men in one bed, one taken and the other left," Luke 17:34,36. The church is to be translated out of the world, we have two examples already, two representatives, as we might say, of Christ's kingdom, of what is to be done for all his true believers. Enoch is the representative of the first dispensation, Elijah of the second, and, as a representative of the third dispensation, we have the Saviour himself, who is entered into the heavens for us, and become the first fruits of them that slept. We are not to wait for the great white throne judgement, but the glorified church is set on the throne with Christ, and to help to judge the world.

Now, some of you think this is a new and strange doctrine, and that they who preach it are speckled birds. But let me tell you that most of the

spiritual men of Great Britain are firm in their faith. Spurgeon preaches it. I have heard Newman Hall say that he knew no reason why Christ might not come before he got through with his sermon. But in certain wealthy and fashionable churches, where they have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof,--just the state of things which Paul declares shall be in the last days,--this doctrine is not preached or believed. They do not want sinners to cry out in their meeting, "What must I do to be saved?" They want intellectual preachers who will cultivate their taste, brilliant preachers who will rouse their imagination, but they do not want the preaching that has in it the power of the Holy Ghost. We live in the day of shams in religion. The church is cold and formal; may God wake us up! And I know of no better way to do it than to get the church to looking for the return of our Lord.

Some people say, "Oh, you will discourage the young converts if you preach that doctrine." Well, my friends, that has not been my experience. I have felt like working three times as hard ever since I came to understand that my Lord was coming back again. I look on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a life-boat, and said to me, "Moody, save all you can." God will come in judgment and burn up this world, but the children of God do not belong to this world; they are in it, but not of it, like a ship in the water. This world is getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer and nearer; if you have any friends on this wreck unsaved, you had better lose no time in getting them off.

But some will say: "Do you then make the grace of God a failure?" No, grace is not a failure but man is. The antediluvian world was a failure; the Jewish work was a failure; man has been a failure everywhere, when he has had his own way and been left to himself.

CHRIST WILL SAVE HIS CHURCH.

But he will save them finally by taking them out of the world. Now, do not take my word for it; look this doctrine up in your Bible, and if you find it there, bow down to it and receive it as the word of God. Take Matthew 24:48,50: "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming ... the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Take 2 Peter 3:4,5: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Go out on the streets of Chicago and ask men about the return of our Lord, and that is just what they would say: "Ah, yes, the Lord delayeth his coming!"

"Behold, I come quickly," said Christ to John, and the last prayer in the Bible is, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly." Were the early Christians disappointed then? No; no man is disappointed who obeys the voice of God. The world waited for the first coming of the Lord; waited for 4,000 years, and then he came. He was here only thirty-three years and then he went away; but he left us a promise that he would come again; and as the world watched and waited for his first coming and did not watch in vain, so now to them who wait for his appearing shall he appear a second time unto salvation. Now let the question go round, "Am I ready to meet the Lord if he comes to-night?" "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

There is another thought I want to call your attention to, and that is this: Christ will bring all our friends, with him when he comes. All who have died in the Lord are to be with him when he comes in the clouds of heaven. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years," Rev. 20:6. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were past; this is the first resurrection" (verse 5). That

looks as if the church were to have a thousand years with Christ before the final judgment, when Satan shall be cast out, and there shall be new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Now, I want to give you some texts to study.

When we eat the Lord's supper we show forth his death, until he come. 1 Cor. xi. 26.

We are using our talents, until he come. Luke xix. 13.

We are fighting the good fight of faith, until he come. 1 Tim vi. 12-14.

We are enduring tribulation, until he come. 2 Thes. i. 7.

We are to be patient, until he come. James v. 8.

We wait for the crown of righteousness, until he come. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

We wait for the crown of glory, until he come. 1 Pet. v. 4.

We wait for re-union with departed friends, until he come. 1 Thes. iv. 13-18.

We wait for Satan to be bound, until he come. Rev. xx. 3.

And so let us watch and wait till he comes.

D. L. Moody, who is perhaps the most popular and efficient preacher of the gospel of Christ in the world, to-day, is evidently fully committed to a belief in the speedy coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, to judge the world and establish his eternal kingdom. Looking over the published reports of his sermons in Great Britain and in this country, since the beginning of 1874, I give extracts which go to show in a plain light the man's inner love and hope as relates to the last things, and his warm, bold, consistent manner of expressing the same. Thousands pray, God bless D. L. Moody.

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4. That the fifth kingdom of Daniel is God's, to come in its order as the fifth, to overthrow all previous kingdoms, to be a visible and eternal kingdom, and to be established by Christ in person at his second coming.

5. That the stone cut from the mountain denotes "Christ himself," "at his appearing and kingdom," whose advent "is not far distant," and for whose advent "the whole creation groans." Rom. 8:19-22.

6. That the last days, described by our Saviour in Matt. 24:37-39 as resembling the days of Lot and Noah, are already here; observing, "I do not think the day is far distant when our Lord will return." And again, "just as judgment overtook

Belshazzar carousing at his feast, so will judgment come suddenly and swiftly upon the world revelling in its sins."

* * * * *

The foregoing he preached in the City Hall, Glasgow, March 15th, 1874, before three thousand people. On the same day he preached on "Christ's Second Coming" in the Free church (Pres.), telling the churches that every thirtieth verse in the New Testament bears on that glorious coming; and says the London Christian, "With his usual power he showed what a mighty motive this doctrine is to all who are winning souls. He himself had found it rousing him to ten-fold more effort to save all that could be rescued from the coming wreck."

In Philadelphia, in a discourse on Daniel's second chapter, he said: "This dream has been nearly fulfilled as Daniel interpreted it. In the present age the prophecy is nearly completed, and the hour of the Lord's second coming is close at hand." D. T. T.

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