

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE.

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ST. MATTHEW.

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MATTHEW XXIV. 1-14.

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

THESE verses begin a chapter full of prophecy: prophecy of which a large portion is unfulfilled; prophecy which ought to be deeply interesting to all true Christians. It is a subject to which the Holy Ghost says, we "do well to take heed." (2 Peter i. 19.)

All portions of Scripture like this ought to be approached with deep humility, and earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit. On no point have good men so entirely disagreed as on the interpretation of prophecy. On no point have the prejudices of one class, the dogmatism of a second, and the extravagance of a third, done so much to rob the Church of truths, which God intended to be a blessing. Well says a certain divine, "What does not man see, or fail to see, when it serves to establish his own favourite opinions?"

To understand the drift of the whole chapter we must carefully keep in view the question which gave rise to our Lord's discourse. On leaving the temple for the last time, the disciples, with the natural feeling of Jews, had called their Master's attention to the splendid buildings of which it was composed. To their surprise and amazement, He tells them that the whole was about to be destroyed. These words appear to have sunk deeply into the minds of the disciples. They came to him, as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, and asked Him with evident anxiety, "Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the

world?”—In these words we see the clue to the subject of the prophecy now before us. It embraces three points: one, the destruction of Jerusalem; another, the second personal advent of Christ; and a third, the end of the world. These three points are undoubtedly in some parts of the chapter so entwined together that it is difficult to separate and disentangle them; but all these points appear distinctly in the chapter, and without them it cannot be fairly explained.

The first fourteen verses of the prophecy are taken up with general lessons of wide range and application. They seem to apply with equal force to the close of both Jewish and Christian dispensations, the one event being strikingly typical of the other. They certainly demand special notice from us, “on whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Cor. x. 11.) Let us now see what those lessons are.

The first general lesson before us is *a warning against deception*. The very first words of the discourse are, “Take heed that no man deceive you.”

A more needful warning than this cannot be conceived. Satan knows well the value of prophecy, and has ever laboured to bring the subject into contempt. How many false Christs and false prophets arose before the destruction of Jerusalem, the works of Josephus abundantly prove. In how many ways the eyes of man are continually blinded in the present day, as to things to come, it might easily be shown. Irvingism and Mormonism have been only too successfully used as arguments for rejecting the whole doctrine of the second advent of Christ. Let us watch, and be on our guard.

Let no man deceive us as to the leading *facts* of unfulfilled prophecy, by telling us they are impossible,—or as to the *manner* in which they will be brought to pass, by telling us it is improbable, and contrary to past experience. Let no man deceive us as to the *time* when unfulfilled prophecies will be accomplished, either by fixing dates on the one hand, or bidding us wait for the conversion of the world on the other.—On all these points let the plain meaning of Scripture be our only guide, and not the traditional interpretations of men. Let us not be ashamed to say that we expect a literal fulfilment of unfulfilled prophecy. Let us frankly allow that there are many things we do not understand, but still hold our ground tenaciously,—believe much, wait long,—and not doubt that all will one day be made clear. Above all, let us remember that the first coming of Messiah to *suffer* was the most improbable event that could have been conceived, and let us not doubt that as He literally came in person to suffer, so He will literally come again in person to *reign*.

The second grand lesson before us is *a warning against over-sanguine and extravagant expectations as to things which are to happen before the end comes*. It is a warning as deeply important as the preceding one. Happy would it have been for the Church if it had not been so much neglected.

We are not to expect a reign of universal peace, happiness, and prosperity, before the end comes. If we do, we shall be greatly deceived. Our Lord bids us look for “wars, famines, pestilence,” and persecution. It is vain to expect peace until the Prince of peace returns. Then, and not till then, the swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and nations learn war no more; then, and not till then, the earth shall bring forth her increase. (Isa. ii. 4; Psal. lxxvii. 6.)

We are not to expect a time of universal purity of doctrine and practice in the Church of Christ, before the end comes. If we do, we shall be greatly mistaken. Our Lord bids us look for the rising of “false prophets,” the “abounding of iniquity,” and the “waxing cold of the love of many.” The truth will never be received by all professing Christians, and holiness will never be the rule among men, until the great Head of the Church returns, and Satan is bound: then, and not till then, there will be a glorious Church, without spot or blemish. (Ephes. v. 27.)

We are not to expect that all the world will be converted before the end comes: if we do, we shall be greatly mistaken. “The Gospel is to be *preached* in all the world for a witness unto all nations,” but we must not think that we shall see it universally *believed*. It will “take out a people,” wherever it is faithfully preached, as witnesses to Christ, but the full gathering of the nations shall never take place until Christ comes. Then, and not till then, shall the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Acts xv. 14; Habak. ii. 14.)

Let us lay these things to heart, and remember them well. They are eminently truths for the present times. Let us learn to be moderate in our expectations from any existing machinery in the Church of Christ, and we shall be spared much disappointment. Let us make haste to spread the Gospel in the world, for the time is *short, not long*.—The night cometh when no man can work. Troublous times are a-head. Heresies and persecutions may soon weaken and distract the Churches; a fierce war of principles may soon convulse the nations; the doors now open to do good may soon be shut for ever: our eyes may yet see the sun of Christianity go down like the sun of Judaism, in clouds and storm. Above all, let us long for our Lord’s return. May we all have a heart to pray daily, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. xxii. 20.)

MATTHEW XXIV. 15–28.

<p>15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)</p> <p>16 Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains:</p> <p>17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:</p> <p>18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.</p> <p>19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!</p> <p>20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:</p> <p>21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor, ever shall be.</p> <p>22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for</p>	<p>the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.</p> <p>23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here <i>is</i> Christ, or there; believe <i>it</i> not.</p> <p>24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if <i>it were</i> possible, they shall deceive the very elect.</p> <p>25 Behold, I have told you before.</p> <p>26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold <i>he is</i> in the secret chambers; believe <i>it</i> not.</p> <p>27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.</p> <p>28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.</p>
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ONE main subject of this part of our Lord's prophecy is the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans. That great event took place about forty years after the words we have now read were spoken. A full account of it is to be found in the writings of the historian Josephus. Those writings are the best comment on our Lord's words; they are a striking proof of the accuracy of every tittle of His predictions.¹ The horrors and miseries which the Jews endured throughout the siege of their city exceed anything on record. It was truly a time of tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world."

It surprises some to find so much importance attached to the taking of Jerusalem. They would rather regard the whole chapter as unfulfilled. Such persons forget that Jerusalem and the temple were the heart of the old Jewish dispensation. When they were destroyed, the old Mosaic system came to an end. The daily sacrifice, the yearly feasts, the altar, the holy of holies, the priesthood, were all essential parts of revealed religion, till Christ came,—but no longer. When He died upon the cross, their work was done. They were dead, and it only remained that they should be buried.—But it was not fitting that this thing should be done quietly. The ending of a dispensation given with so much solemnity at mount Sinai, might well be expected to be

¹ These are the words of Josephus. They are the more remarkable when we remember that he was not a Christian. "No other city ever suffered such things. All the calamities which have ever happened to any from the beginning, seem not comparable to those which befel the Jews."

marked with peculiar solemnity; the destruction of the holy temple, where so many old saints had seen “shadows of good things to come,” might well be expected to form a subject of prophecy and so it was. The Lord Jesus specially predicts the desolation of “the holy place.” The great High Priest describes the end of the dispensation which had been a schoolmaster to bring men to Himself.

But we must not suppose that this part of our Lord’s prophecy is exhausted by the first taking of Jerusalem. It is more than probable that our Lord’s words have a further and deeper application still. It is more than probable that they apply to a *second siege of Jerusalem*, which is yet to take place, when Israel has returned to their own land; and to a *second tribulation* on the inhabitants thereof, which shall only be stopped by the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a view of this passage may sound startling to some.² But those who doubt its correctness would do well to study the last chapter of the prophet Zechariah, and the last chapter of Daniel. These two chapters contain solemn things: they throw great light on these verses we are now reading, and their connection with the verses which immediately follow.

It now remains for us to consider the lessons which this passage contains for our own personal edification. These lessons are plain and unmistakable: in them at least there is no darkness at all.

For one thing, we see that *flight from danger may sometimes be the positive duty of a Christian*. Our Lord Himself commanded His people under certain circumstances “to flee.”

The servant of Christ undoubtedly is not to be a coward. He is to confess his Master before men. He is to be willing to die, if needful, for the truth: but the servant of Christ is not required to run into danger, unless it comes in the line of duty. He is not to be ashamed to use reasonable means to provide for his personal safety, when no good is to be done by dying at his post. There is deep wisdom in this lesson. The true martyrs are not always those who court death, and are in a hurry to be beheaded or burned. There are times when it shows more grace to be quiet, and wait, and pray, and watch for opportunities, than to defy our adversaries, and rush into the battle. May

² I think it well to say that Irenæus and Hilary among the Fathers, and Ferus in the sixteenth century, all refer the fulfilment of this part of our Lord’s prophecy to the end of the world, when a personal Antichrist shall appear. Hilary considers that the verse which speaks of “the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place,” will be fulfilled by the rise of a mighty personal Antichrist who shall be worshipped by infidels. In connection with this verse, 2 Thess. ii. 4, deserves attentive study.

we have wisdom to know how to act in time of persecution! It is possible to be rash, as well as to be a coward; and to stop our own usefulness by being over hot, as well as by being over cold.

We see, for another thing, that *in delivering this prophecy, our Lord makes special mention of the Sabbath.* “Pray, ye,” He says, “that your flight be not on the Sabbath day.”

This is a fact that deserves special notice. We live in times when the obligation of the Sabbath upon Christians is frequently denied by good men. They tell us that it is no more binding on us than the ceremonial law. It is difficult to see how such a view can be reconciled with our Lord’s words on this solemn occasion. He seems intentionally to mention the Sabbath, when He is foretelling the final destruction of the temple and the Mosaic ceremonies, as if to mark the day with honour. He seems to hint that, although His people would be absolved from the yoke of sacrifices and ordinances, there would yet remain the keeping of a Sabbath for them. (Heb. iv. 9.) The friends of a holy Sunday ought carefully to remember this text. It is one which will bear much weight.

We see, for another thing, *that God’s elect are always special objects of God’s care.* Twice in this passage our Lord mentions them. “For the elect’s sake the days of tribulation are to be shortened.” It will not be possible to deceive the “elect.”

Those whom God has chosen to salvation by Christ, are those whom God specially loves in this world: they are the jewels among mankind. He cares more for them than for kings on their thrones, if kings are not converted. He hears their prayers. He orders all the events of nations, and the issues of wars for their good, and their sanctification. He keeps them by His Spirit. He allows neither man nor devil to pluck them out of His hand. Whatever tribulation comes on the world, God’s elect are safe. May we never rest till we know that we are of this blessed number! There breathes not the man or woman who can prove that he is not one. The promises of the Gospel are open to all. May we give diligence to make our calling and election sure! God’s elect are a people who cry unto Him night and day. When Paul saw the faith, and hope, and love of the Thessalonians, then he knew “their election of God.” (1 Thess. i. 4; Luke xviii. 7.)

Finally, we see from these verses, that *whenever the second advent of Christ takes place it will be a very sudden event.* It will be “as the lightning coming out of the east, and shining even to the west.”

This is a practical truth that we should ever keep before our minds. That our Lord Jesus will come again in person to this world, we know from

Scripture; that He will come in a time of great tribulation, we also know: but the precise period, the year, the month, the day, the hour, are all hidden things. We only know that it will be a very sudden event. Our plain duty then is to live always prepared for His return. Let us walk by faith, and not by sight; let us believe on Christ, serve Christ, follow Christ, and love Christ: so living, whenever Christ may return, we shall be ready to meet Him.

MATTHEW XXIV. 29–35.

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall

gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

IN this part of our Lord's prophecy He describes His own second coming to judge the world. This, at all events, seems the natural meaning of the passage: to take any lower view appears to be a violent straining of Scripture language. If the solemn words here used mean nothing more than the coming of the Roman armies to Jerusalem, we may explain away anything in the Bible. The event here described is one of far greater moment than the march of an earthly army. It is nothing less than the closing act of the present dispensation,—the second personal advent of Jesus Christ.

These verses teach us, in the first place, *that when the Lord Jesus returns to this world He shall come with peculiar glory and majesty*. He shall come “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Before His presence the very sun, moon, and stars shall be darkened, and “the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

The second personal coming of Christ shall be as different as possible from the first. He came the first time as “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He was born in the manger of Bethlehem, in lowliness and humiliation. He took on Him the form of a servant, and was despised and rejected of men. He was betrayed into the hands of wicked men, condemned by an unjust judgment, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns, and at last crucified between two thieves.—He shall come the second time as the King of all the earth, with royal majesty: the princes and great men of this world shall themselves stand before His throne to receive an eternal sentence: before Him every mouth shall be stopped, and every knee bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. May we all remember this! Whatever ungodly men may do now, there will be no scoffing, no jesting at Christ, no infidelity at the last day. The servants of Jesus may well wait pa-

tiently: their Master shall one day be acknowledged King of kings by all the world.

These verses teach us, in the second place, *that when Christ returns to this world He will first take care of His believing people*. He shall “send His angels,” and “gather together His elect.”

When Christ returns in glory and the judgment begins, true Christians shall be perfectly safe. Not a hair of their heads shall fall to the ground: not one bone of Christ’s mystical body shall be broken. There was an ark for Noah, in the day of the flood; there was a Zoar for Lot, when Sodom was destroyed; there shall be a hiding-place for all believers in Jesus, when the wrath of God at last bursts on this wicked world. Those mighty angels who rejoiced in heaven when each sinner repented, shall gladly catch up the people of Christ to meet their Lord in the air. The day of Christ’s second advent no doubt will be an awful day, but believers may look forward to it without fear.

When Christ returns in glory, true Christians shall at length be gathered together. The saints of every age and every tongue shall be assembled out of every land. All shall be there, from righteous Abel down to the last soul that is converted to God,—from the oldest patriarch down to the little infant that just breathed and died. Let us think what a happy gathering that will be, when all the family of God are at length together. If it has been pleasant to meet one or two saints occasionally on earth, how much more pleasant will it be to meet a “multitude that no man can number!” Surely we may be content to carry the cross, and to put up with partings for a few years. We travel on towards a day, when we shall meet to part no more.

These verses teach us, in the third place, that *until Christ returns to this earth the Jews will always remain a separate people*. Our Lord tells us, “This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.”³

The continued existence of the Jews as a distinct nation is undeniably a great miracle. It is one of those evidences of the truth of the Bible which the Infidel can never overthrow. Without a land, without a king, without a gov-

³ I see no other interpretation of these much controverted words, “this generation,” which is in the least satisfactory, and is not open to very serious objections. The word “generation” admits of the sense in which I have taken it, and seems to me to be used in that sense in Matt. xii. 45, xvii. 17, and xxiii. 36; Luke xvi. 8, and xvii. 25: and Philip, ii. 15. The view that I have propounded is not new. It is adopted by Mede, Paræus, Flacius, Illyricus, Calovius, Jansenius, Du Veil, Adam Clarke, and Steir.

Chrysostom, Origen, and Theophylact consider “this generation” to mean “true believers.”

ernment, scattered and dispersed over the world for eighteen hundred years, the Jews are never absorbed among the people of the countries where they live, like Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Germans,—but “dwell alone.” (Numb. xxiii. 9.) Nothing can account for this but the finger of God. The Jewish nation stands before the world a crushing answer to infidelity, and a living book of evidence that the Bible is true. But we ought not to regard the Jews only as witnesses of the truth of Scripture. We should see in them a continual pledge, that the Lord Jesus is coming again one day. Like the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, they witness to the reality of the second advent, as well as of the first. Let us remember this. Let us see in every wandering Jew a proof that the Bible is true, and that Christ will one day return.

Finally, these verses teach us *that our Lord’s predictions will certainly be fulfilled*. He says, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Our Lord knew well the natural unbelief of human nature. He knew that “scoffers would arise in the last days, saying, Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet. iii. 4.) He knew that when He came, faith would be rare on the earth. He foresaw how many would contemptuously reject the solemn predictions He had just been delivering, as improbable, unlikely, and absurd. He warns us against such sceptical thoughts, with a caution of peculiar solemnity. He tells us that, whatever man may say or think, His words shall be fulfilled in their season, and shall not “pass away” unaccomplished. May we all lay to heart His warning! We live in an unbelieving age. Few believed the report of our Lord’s first coming, and few believe the report of His second. (Isaiah liii. 1.) Let us beware of this infection, and believe to the saving of our souls. We are not reading “cunningly devised fables,” but deep and momentous truths: may God give us a heart to believe them!

MATTHEW XXIV. 36–51.

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no <i>man</i> , no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.	would not have suffered his house to be broken up.
37 But as the days of Noe <i>were</i> , so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.	44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.
38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,	45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?
39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.	46 Blessed <i>is</i> that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.	47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.
41 Two <i>women shall</i> be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.	48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;
42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.	49 And shall begin to smite <i>his</i> fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;
43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and	50 The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for <i>him</i> , and in an hour that he is not aware of,
	51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint <i>him</i> his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

THERE are verses in this passage which are often much misapplied. “The coming of the Son of man” is frequently spoken of as being the same thing as death. The texts which describe the uncertainty of His coming are used in epitaphs, and thought suitable to the tomb: but there is no solid ground for such an application of this passage. Death is one thing, and the coming of the Son of man is quite another. The subject of these verses is not death, but the second advent of Jesus Christ. Let us remember this. It is a serious thing to wrest Scripture and use it in any but its true meaning.

The first thing that demands our attention in these verses, *is the awful account that they give of the state of the world when the Lord Jesus comes again.*

The world will not be converted when Christ returns. It will be found in the same condition that it was in the day of the flood. When the flood came, men were found “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,” absorbed in their worldly pursuits, and utterly regardless of Noah’s repeated warnings. They saw no likelihood of a flood. They would not believe there was any danger, but at last the flood came suddenly “and took them all away.” All that were not with Noah in the ark were drowned. They were all swept away to their last account, unpardoned, unconverted, and unprepared

to meet God. And our Lord says, "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Let us mark this text, and store it up in our minds. There are many strange opinions current on this subject, even among good men. Let us not flatter ourselves that the heathen will all be converted, and the earth filled with the knowledge of God, before the Lord comes. Let us not dream that the end of all things cannot be at hand, because there is yet much wickedness both in the Church and in the world. Such views receive a flat contradiction in the passage now before us. The days of Noah are the true type of the days when Christ shall return. Millions of professing Christians will be found thoughtless, unbelieving, Godless, Christless, worldly, and unfit to meet their Judge. Let us take heed that we are not found amongst them.

The second thing that demands our attention is *the awful separation that will take place when the Lord Jesus comes again*. We read twice over, that "One shall be taken and the other left."

The godly and the ungodly at present are mingled together; in the congregation, and in the place of worship, in the city and in the field, the children of God and the children of the world are all side by side: but it shall not be so always. In the day of our Lord's return, there shall at length be a complete division. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, each party shall be separated from the other for evermore. Wives shall be separated from husbands, parents from children, brothers from sisters, masters from servants, preachers from hearers. There shall be no time for repentance, or a change of mind, when the Lord appears. All shall be taken *as they are*, and reap according as they have sown. Believers shall be caught up to glory, honour, and eternal life; unbelievers shall be left behind to shame and everlasting contempt. Blessed and happy are they who are of one heart in following Christ! Their union alone shall never be broken: it shall last for evermore.—Who can describe the happiness of those who are taken, when the Lord returns? Who can imagine the misery of those who are left behind? May we think on these things, and consider our ways!

The last thing that demands our attention in these verses, is *the practical duty of watchfulness in the prospect of Christ's second coming*. "Watch," says our Lord, "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."—"Be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

This is a point which our blessed Master frequently presses upon our notice. We hardly ever find Him dwelling on the second advent without adding an injunction to "watch." He knows the sleepiness of our nature. He knows how soon we forget the most solemn subjects in religion. He knows

how unceasingly Satan labours to obscure the glorious doctrine of His coming again. He arms us with heart-searching exhortations to keep awake, if we would not be ruined for evermore. May we all have an ear to hear them!

True Christians ought to live like watchmen. The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. They should strive to be always on their guard. They should behave like the sentinel of an army in an enemy's land: they should resolve by God's grace not to sleep at their post. That text of St. Paul's deserves many a thought; "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thes. v. 6.)

True Christians ought to live like good servants, whose master is not at home. They should strive to be always ready for their Master's return. They should never give way to the feeling, "My Lord delayeth His coming;" they should seek to keep their hearts in such a frame, that whenever Christ appears they may at once give Him a warm and loving reception. There is a vast depth in that saying, "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing." We may well doubt whether we are true believers in Jesus if we are not ready at any time to have our faith changed in-to sight.

Let us close the chapter with solemn feelings. The things we have just been reading call loudly for great searchings of heart. Let us seek to make sure that we are in Christ, and that we shall have an ark of safety when the day of wrath breaks on the world. Let us strive so to live that we may be pronounced "blessed" at the last, and not cast off for evermore. Not least, let us dismiss from our minds the common idea that unfulfilled prophecy is a speculative and not a practical thing: if the things we have been considering are not practical, there is no such thing as practical religion at all. Well might St. John say, "Every man that hath *this hope in him* purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John iii. 3.)