



Waiting for Christ

A sermon preached by George Müller

The topic suggested for consideration at this day's Conference was, - "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." - *Luke* xxi. 31; *I Cor* : xv. 24; *Rev.* xi. 15.

May I be allowed to read once more the last verse of the hymn we have just sung, -

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace; -
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

This brings before us the subject of personal attachment to the Lord Jesus. And if I might be allowed to ask for myself one thing more than another, it is a deep, personal attachment to Jesus. And if I were to express what I most desire on behalf of all my beloved fellow-disciples, it is a deep, personal attachment to Jesus. Oh! if we all had a hundred times more of real, true deep, personal attachment to Jesus, how delighted should we be to hear of our blessed Lord, how we should long to see Him, how it would be the one thing uppermost in our hearts to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Beloved in Christ, let this be our prayer, that the Lord, in the riches of His grace, would bring it more habitually, more deeply, more fully before us - what this blessed One did for us, when He emptied Himself and came down to this world, and went about in the form of a servant, and laboured and toiled and suffered, and at last shed His precious blood for the remission of our sins. For the more this is present to our hearts, the more will our hearts be filled with personal attachment to that blessed One, and the more shall we long to be with Him. That blessed One who is now at the right hand of God interceding for us and who remembers all the infirmities and weaknesses which mingle with our attempts to speak for Him, to sing His praise, and to listen to what beloved brethren bring before us, will not always be at the right hand of God. After His ascension to heaven, the promise was given to the disciples: "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." Now for this blessed One, - for the personal return of this blessed One, - we have to wait. He said, before He ascended: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." We all know He did go to the Father; but He will not be satisfied till He returns to take His Church to Himself, that where He is, she may be also.

As to the time when this will take place, what can we say? If we attempt to say it will be next month, it will be next year, we should not stand on scriptural ground; for it is written, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven." I remember

well the mistake into which many fell, about the time when it pleased God first to reveal to me the truth with regard to the return of the Lord. In July, 1829, as many will remember, there was war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Many beloved brethren whose minds had just been opened to look for the return of their Lord, said, "Now is the time when Israel will be restored," "You will see," they said, "in a short time how all this Turkish Empire will be destroyed." Having had my mind recently directed to the subject of our Lord's return, I fell into the same mistake as many of my older brethren. What was the result? Six weeks more, and peace was restored between Russia and the Turkish Empire; forty-one years and three months have passed since then, and the Turkish Empire still exists, and Israel has not been restored. Why do I refer to this? Not to indicate that we are not to look at the circumstances around us. It is the will of the Lord that we should do so, and not shut our eyes to what is passing around us. But this I affectionately say, that we should not be too hasty in at once forming a judgment, that because such and such an event has taken place, therefore in such and such a time it is certain the Lord Jesus will return; lest, when such and such a time shall have passed, and after all our adorable Lord has not been revealed, unbelievers should turn round and say, "The time has passed, and the Lord Jesus, of whose return you talked so much, has not come; and after all, is there anything in the truth about His return?" We should be careful not to give a handle to those who speak evil of the truth; and not lay too much stress on certain events which may not be God's instruments in ushering in the return of the Lord.

What we need is the right state of heart. We should seek to have our hearts kept practically in such a state, that in any hour of the day or night we should be willing to give up everything; and when the last trump shall sound, to say, "Oh, my blessed Jesus, for many a long day and year I have waited for Thy return, and now I am delighted to see Thee." There should be no plans of ours regarding which we should not like to be interfered with by the coming of our Lord. If this were so, it would be a plain indication that we preferred our plans to the person of Jesus, that we were seeking our own honour and glory instead of the honour and glory of the Master. However great our work, however manifold our labours, unless we could say with all our heart, - "Lord, if Thy name may be more magnified by my being instantly taken out of the work, or the whole being broken to pieces, let it be so," - it would be clear that we preferred our own honour and glory to that of Jesus. In so far as we seek our own honour and glory in His work, - though in a little degree only, - just in so far are we unfitted ourselves to be His instruments in promoting the glory of His name. We must go down, down, down, deeper still, if we wish to be used by Him. We must be willing to give to God all the honour and glory; and just in the measure in which this is so, God will delight to take us up. Why? Because we are willing to give Him all the honour and glory. He cannot share it with the creature; it would be derogatory to the Godhead to do so. But if we are willing to give God all the honour and glory, what will He do? Most assuredly He will take the greatest delight in putting honour on us.

Further: if we have our plans, and on this account wish to put off the return of the Lord, it betrays a want of proper attachment to Jesus. If our affections are set on something here below, as were those of Lot's wife who looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt, it shows that something is wrong with us. Our blessed Lord referred to this, and warned His disciples of the danger of engaging their hearts too much with the pursuits of this life, - their business, their wealth, their farms, their plantations, their families or family connections, or the pursuit of anything connected with this world. I do not mean to say that it is wrong to be occupied with the affairs of this life. Far otherwise. A precious opportunity has the dear

brother in Christ in that profession or at that shop to serve the Lord! A precious opportunity has the dear brother who in that counting-house seeks to bring honour to the Lord! A precious opportunity has the servant maid in the kitchen to bring honour to the Lord! A precious opportunity has the mother seeking to bring up in the fear of the Lord six, seven, or eight children! It is the will of the Lord that we should attend to these things, and at the same time that we should be waiting for His return. And notwithstanding that His return is the hope of the Church, it is the will of the Lord that we should be occupied in these things. He says Himself, "Occupy till I come;" therefore in whatever position in life we are, we are to occupy till He comes. We must not suppose, because in connection with the return of the Lord, planting and building, and marrying and giving in marriage are spoken of, therefore these things are wrong. What the Lord means is, that the ordinary affairs of life will go on up to the day of His return. The sun will rise as at other times; and, when least expected, and when things are going on perhaps as smoothly as usual, the last trump will sound, and that blessed One will be revealed. We are to attend to the things of this world, but in a right spirit, as the children of God, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, as not of the world, but redeemed out of it; ever remembering what price it cost - the laying down of His life, the shedding of His precious blood for the remission of our sins. So long as what it cost to purchase us is present to the heart, we say, "Here am I, precious Lord! Thou hast bought me. Now tell me what Thou wilt have me to do, and I will do it." The heart must be ever in this state, in order that we may be willing, gladly to labour for Him till He returns.

Now, as it is entirely unknown how soon that blessed One may return, it must not be said, - Mr. Müller has just told us that forty-one years and three months ago he first began to look for the return of the Lord, and these forty-one years and three months have passed away, and the Lord has not come, therefore we need not look for Him for another century or half a century. No! How soon, how very soon, may that blessed One be revealed from heaven! We are to be living like men and women waiting for the return of their Lord. And if the Lord yet tarry for a while, what a privilege, if life is continued to us, to have the opportunity of living for the Lord, of labouring for the Lord! And what a blessed privilege to be allowed to live and labour for the Lord! So then we are not to be cast down because the Lord has not yet come. If He comes, how glad shall we be! But if He tarries, here am I, witnessing for the Lord, and allowed to witness for Him yet for another day, another month, or another year, in this Christ-denying world, in this evil world which is lying in the wicked one. How precious! to rise in the morning to say, "Blessed Lord Jesus; the night is past; Thou hast not yet come; another day is before me; help me to be Thy witness this day; help me in word and spirit, and yet to wait for Thy return." The day passes, and we may yet have to retire for rest. Another day comes, and in the same spirit we should go on day by day, everyone in his particular sphere doing something for Him. Are we to go to sleep if the Lord tarries, and give up the precious truth of His return? Far be it from us! Though for forty-one years and three months I have been looking for the return of the Lord, by His grace I am not tired of waiting for His return, I have not given up the truth; but my soul steadily says, This is the hope of the Church - not death, but the return of the Lord Jesus, and to wait for the same from heaven, to wait for the morning of the resurrection; because when we die, only individually we are ushered into the presence of the Lord, and we leave brethren and sisters behind - the whole Church is not gathered. Moreover, none of the saints have their glorified bodies yet, which they will have at the return of the Lord Jesus; therefore the full redemption, the redemption of the body, is not come to pass yet. We must wait for this for the return of the Lord. When our blessed Lord said, "After this manner pray ye," He gave one petition, "Thy kingdom come," and meant something by it. We have to wait for the kingdom to which there are frequent references in Daniel, the Revelation, the Epistles, and other portions of the Scriptures, where the glorious things connected with the return

of the Lord are spoken of. But if He delays His coming, one way of glorifying Him is, by patiently waiting for His return, and each of us in the meantime in our particular sphere seeking to occupy till He comes.

Are we occupied? Are we living for the Lord? Are we labouring for the Lord? Is it our one great business of life to live for Him? How many objects have we set before us, on account of which we desire to live on earth? To please our God and Father, and to seek to imitate the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, this is the one business of life - the only one business of life. The man in trade seeking this - to bring honour to Christ! The one in a profession, or in any occupation in life, seeking to live, to labour, to bear fruit for the Lord! Is this the one business of life, beloved in Christ? Ask yourselves, What am I living for? Am I living for the Lord? Is my one great business of life to be a fruit-bearer, to live to the praise of Him who purchased us with His precious blood? Remember, these hands and feet and ears and eyes are not ours, they belong to Jesus - He bought them. Our tongue is His, and our brain is His; our time is His, all our talents are His. All He has given us belongs to Him, and at His feet we have to lay it down. And what will be the result of this? Ah! we shall have true wealth; we shall have true joy. I do not mean by this, that as soon as you get money you are to throw it out of the window; or when God gives a business, to put it all aside and say you have nothing to do with the world. The very reverse of this. We are to do all to the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus, "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do." This is true liberty, true joy, and true happiness. And when Jesus comes, and we are found in such a state, how delighted we shall be to see Him; and, oh! what joy to the heart of our blessed Master to find us in such a state. And then this will be for eternity. Our little brief time here will then be gone, and we shall have entered upon that period which will never come to an end. How blessed to spend one happy thousand years after the other with that precious One who laid down His life for us! Do we not long to see Him?

And now, are we all prepared to spend a happy eternity with Jesus? I trust that nineteen out of twenty here present, if not forty-nine out of fifty, are true disciples of Jesus; but I cannot help feeling, peradventure there are a few present as yet strangers to Him. Ah! let me tell you, dear friends, who are strangers to Jesus, that the blessed Jesus stands with open arms ready to receive you. Do but own before Him that you are poor miserable sinners, but trust in His atonement for the salvation of your souls, and all your sins shall be forgiven you.



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