

Watchfulness

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being watchful and ready for the return of the Lord at any moment, and warns against the peril of delay, which leads to a life of sin and indulgence.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:1

Topics: "End Times", "Christian Living"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches on the believer's attitude towards the possible return of the Lord at any moment, emphasizing the importance of constant watching and waiting for His coming. He highlights the need for believers to be ready and prepared for the Son of Man's arrival, as the penalty is in proportion to the light sinned against. The heart of the lesson focuses on the imminent return of Christ as a motive for right living, urging Christians to be sober, patient, moderate, charitable, diligent, pure, and always abiding in Jesus, while warning against the danger of believing in a delayed return of the Lord, which leads to complacency and worldly living.

Transcript

(Luke xii:35-48.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The Believer's Attitude in View of the Possible Return of the Lord at Any Moment (verses 35-40).--Doubtless, there is an especial word here for the converted Jewish remnant who will be the "servants" during the great tribulation --that period of universal woe (Jer. xxx:4-8; Joel ii:2; Matt, xxiv:15-22), which is to be terminated by our Lord's return from His wedding to the church (Rev. xix:7, 8), but this attitude is, if possible, more absolutely that of the church (Phil. iii:20, 21; 1 Thess. i:9, 10; iv:14-17; Titus ii:11-13)-

2. Service now is unto Joint Rulership with Christ in the Kingdom (verses 41-44).--It cannot be too clearly held that (1) the church is not the kingdom. That so far from now seeking subjects for the kingdom, the Lord is calling out the co-rulers over the future kingdom (1 Pet. ii:9; Rev. i:5, 6; 2 Tim. ii:11, 12; Rev. iii:21). (2) That the church is not now reigning, but suffering and serving.

3. Any teaching which says: "My Lord delayeth His coming" is "evil" (Matt. xxiv:48). Verses 45, 56. The thought here evidently is that any teaching which involves such a "delay" of the Lord's return as destroys

the attitude of constant "watching" and "waiting" is forbidden. How can it be possible for a servant to "watch" and "wait" for an event which cannot possibly occur till after the millennium?

4. Penalty is in proportion to light sinned against (verses 47,48).

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

Presumably, the present lesson was selected as the temperance lesson for the quarter because it contains the word "drunken." It is, of course, a lesson on the second coming of Christ, and only by inference a temperance lesson, and yet the inference is a perfectly sound one, for the Holy Spirit elsewhere bases a direct appeal to sobriety in respect of intoxicants on the very ground of our Lord's imminent return (1 Thess. v:1-7). The cogency of that expectation as a motive to all right living is, therefore, the heart of this lesson. In considering it no attention will be given to discussions as to the nature and time of our Lord's return.

Let it suffice, then, to say, first of all, that which all agree in saying, that the fact of our Lord's return is invariably stated as an event for which all Christians are to "wait" and "watch." That appears sufficiently from our present lesson. Believers are to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord." That company may be "in the second watch," or, "in the third watch," but whether it be soon or late, "blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."

That is the parable, and the application of it (verse 40) is natural and simple: "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." The coming of the Lord, an event predicted by the Lord Himself, but the time of which is nowhere revealed, gives, therefore, the characteristic attitude of the Christian. This is the uniform teaching. The Thessalonians are reminded that they "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i:9, 10). Titus is taught that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus ii:11-13).

But this truth is not revealed as a mere curiosity of the Divine purpose, still less as a theme for theologic controversy, but is invariably charged with the highest ethical and practical bearing. The Christian is to be sober because of it (Luke xii:45; 1 Thess. v:1-7); patient under wrong (James v:7, 8); moderate (Phil. iv:5); charitable (1 Cor. iv:5); diligent (Luke xii:42, 43); pure (1 John iv; iii:2, 3); and always abiding in Jesus (1 John ii:2[^]).

One great peril besets this mighty motive, and of this peril we are warned. Men will say, "My Lord delayeth His coming." The picture is a household expecting the master's return, but in ignorance of the time. So far as they know, it may be at any time. The effect upon the servants of this combined certainty and uncertainty--the certainty that he is coming, the uncertainty of the time--is evident they must be always ready. The lights must be burning and themselves girded.

But the case is supposed that one of the servants may succeed in convincing the other servants that some delay has occurred--that the master cannot come until some other event which they may observe has transpired. Obviously the lights will go out, the servants will lay aside the girdle of service, and a servant taking the place of the absent master will begin to lord it over the other servants, and to live the mere life of the senses--"to eat and to drink, and to be drunken." It is the one peril to this mighty motive against which we are warned. It is, therefore, a grievous thing to say, "my Lord delayeth His coming." As all know,

precisely this thing occurred historically. For three centuries the church was in the attitude of expectation. Then, with the rise of false priesthood heading up in the papacy, the evil servant began to say: "Thy Lord delayeth His coming," and the predicted result followed. The child of God does not need to be an expert in the prophetic casuistries; he needs only to know that any theory which destroys his watching attitude is of the evil servant.

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