

The Second Coming of Christ Luke 12:34-59

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of watching for the Lord and expecting His coming as a present reality, highlighting the rewards of serving Him and the nature of the inheritance and the kingdom.

Scripture: Luke 12:34

Topics: "Living in Expectation", "Second Coming Of Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of the Second Coming of Christ, urging believers to live in a state of expectation and readiness. He explains that true Christian life is characterized by waiting for the Lord, which involves both watching and serving while He is away. Darby highlights the personal relationship with Christ, noting that the anticipation of His return should transform our hearts and detach us from worldly concerns. He reassures that Christ will come to gather His followers, emphasizing the joy of being with Him and the importance of living a holy life in preparation for that day. Ultimately, the sermon calls Christians to maintain a vibrant hope in Christ's return, which shapes their daily lives and actions.

Transcript

The previous part of the chapter is addressed to the world, as to laying up treasure for themselves. At verse 32 the Lord begins with the disciples.

The coming of the Lord does not present itself, when we think of it rightly, as a thing we learn; but I see in Scripture that it is constantly identified with all the feelings and character of a Christian, "as men that wait for their Lord." It does not say, "As men that believe in the Lord's coming." The feeling indeed of those who had grown cold was not that the Lord would not come, but that He delayed His coming. (v. 45.) Now in the beginning of 1 Thess. they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. He was a living, personal reality to them. There is a great deal more in the passage; but that is the first thing; they were converted for that. Expecting Him is the state that becomes a Christian. I do not say there is no other motive; for the blessed love He has shown in His death would lead us to follow Him too; but still the Christian is a person between Christ's first coming to save him and His second coming to fetch him out of this scene, and what characterizes him (if he takes the word of God) is, that he is waiting for Christ.

It is gone into in detail in Luke 12. You first get the "watching," and then, secondly, "doing," while He is away; that is, serving Him. Those who are watching (v. 37), with their hearts upon Himself, He makes them sit down to meat (a figure, of course), and He girds Himself and serves them. But when you come to doing (v. 43), then it is He makes them "rulers" over all that He hath. You first get the blessedness of

heaven (v. 37), and then joint-heirs with Him (v. 44), two distinct things - one watching for Him, and the other doing. You see the Christian knows (if he has really got into his place) that he is a person in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, who is the seal to us of the full efficacy of Christ's work on the cross (and our part in it too), and waiting for Christ to come, which will put us into possession. Christ enters into possession not of all things in the inheritance yet, but He is sitting on the Father's throne till the joint-heirs are gathered, and then He will put them into glory.

With regard to the way the coming of the Lord connects itself, not merely as a doctrine, but interweaves itself with all the thoughts and feelings of the Christian, there are only two epistles where it is not put before them as an object. In one (Galatians) they were too low, and the apostle had to begin at the very foundations with them; and in the other (Ephesians) they were looked at as already sitting in heavenly places. In 1 Thess. 1:10 it was part of their conversion. Christ had suffered for them, and was going to come and receive them to Himself. In 1 Thess. 2:19 it is the joy of the apostle's service in ministry. These Thessalonians were dreadfully persecuted, and he longs to know how they were getting on. When he thinks of his service and labour and ministry for them he says, "When the Lord comes, that is the time when I shall have my joy and crown." Then, in 1 Thess. 3:13, it is connected with holiness - another great element in Christian life. We must walk in holiness now if it is to come out "at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints," and the thing the apostle looked for was that they should be unblameable at that day. In 1 Thess. 4 it comes in again (vv. 13-18); for the Thessalonians thought that those who had died would not be able to meet the Lord. They were so looking for the Lord's coming, every moment, that they thought those who died would be out of the way, and not meet Him. Of course, they did not know everything clearly, for Paul had only been a short time with them; yet they had learnt this much, and a good bit more. So Paul tells them that the dead in Christ are not left out; for when the Lord comes from heaven, they will come with Him. If a person died, they were to comfort one another with the words, "Well, the Lord will bring them with Him when He comes." You see from this epistle how the coming of Christ connects itself with the conversion, ministry, holiness, and sorrows of the Christian; and in chap. 5 it is a warning, still held out as the end they were looking for.

The thing I find most precious in the coming of the Lord is, that the Person of the Lord becomes so prominent. It makes Him more precious. He is coming to take me to be with Himself. It is the Person who is the object of our affections as Christians. But it will be a grand thing when we are with Him, and of course we cannot be separated. It is not our glory that is the great satisfaction, but being with Him. It sets Christ personally as the One before our eyes.

There is another thing it does. This expecting Him every moment detaches from the world; the life of every one would be changed, all their thoughts and plans gone. There are two things needed in order to look for the Lord in that way - peace with God, and that we love Him enough to care for His coming, and that makes all the difference, of course. If a person was to tell me that some East Indiaman was coming here, it would produce no effect on me; but if a mother were told that her son was coming, she would be on the look-out for the arrival of the packet. Of course we must have peace with God to be able to look for His coming; but it hangs a great deal on the affection of heart to Christ. "To you that believe He is precious." It is wonderful how distinctly Scripture makes being with Christ the thing to hope for. Of course it is heaven, because He is there; but except the word "paradise" you never get the expression heaven in Scripture. Of course, if I go to Christ, and He is in heaven, it is heaven I go to; but the thing that is spoken of is going to Christ. To be sure heaven itself is a paradise, but to "depart and be with Christ is far better." That is what He brings before us as the object - the loving Saviour, who is going to bring us to be with Himself. It

exercises the conscience, of course; because if I was looking for the Lord, evidently it would keep my conscience awake, lest I should have anything that would produce a jar in my own heart when He did come.

It is a striking thing as regards the present expectation, that in all the parables, whether it be Christ Himself speaking, or the apostles by the Holy Ghost, it never supposes beforehand that His coming is beyond the life of the people He is speaking to. It is the present expectation. The virgins that slept were the same that woke. Those who received the talents were the same reckoned with. He would never present to them beforehand a thing that was beyond present expectation. It is evident we should like to be found, whether absent or present, agreeable to Him when He does come. It gives Christ the place. We are poor things; but if we heard Him saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant," what a thing it would be to us! Not that I pretend to expect it - except that they are His own words. There is a little more than waiting in this chapter. "Loins girded about." These flowing garments were to be tucked up, not loose, in going on with things as they are in the world; but hearts in order, according to the word of God - "loins girt about with truth," and then "lights burning" - a full profession of Christ. The first thing He takes is having our affections on Christ, and our delight in seeing Him, while we are watching for Him.

There is another thing quite distinct, a very blessed, touching expression of the Lord's love. Here we have to have our loins girded (our hearts in order); but that is now when the Lord is not yet come, but is sitting on the Father's throne; but then "He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." He says, "You won't have to have your loins girded when you come into my house. I shall make you sit down to meat, and serve you." He will make us sit down and feed upon the things that are in heaven at the table there, and He will minister the blessings to us - infinitely more precious. Not merely the giving us things to eat, but Christ Himself ministering them to us. In that sense Christ never gives up the form of a servant; and when we think that Christ the Son of God takes this place, and has taken it, and never gives it up, what a wonderful thing!

If you look at Phil. 2 you see His path. There are the two parts of Christian life - like Christ in coming down (chap. 2), and like Him, in Him, now He is gone up. (chap. 3) He made Himself of no reputation. He was made in the likeness of man, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and He never gives that up. He never ceases to be a Man, and He always goes down. His first act was to come down from "the form of God" to the cross. John 13 gives one step, and Luke 12 another. Love likes to serve, selfishness likes to be served. John 13 brings out the service He is doing for us now. He could not be the companion of His disciples down here any longer, and what about them when He goes back to heaven? "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." The time was come for Him to go back to heaven, but He was loving them right on the end, and He would have them with Him where He was going, to God, but they must be fit for His presence. He must have them fit to have a part with Him where He was going, so He sets about washing their feet. They were walking about here in this world picking up dirt and defilement, and He washes their feet. He is our Servant now, our Advocate, and, in virtue of that, when we have failed, the Spirit applies the Word, and we get humbled. As regards our practical state there is this daily cleansing which comes when I have let in an idle word or an ungracious thought, and I want cleansing. The Spirit then applies the Word to our consciences, and we get humbled and broken down.

Here, in Luke 12, it is the blessing: "Blessed are those servants," &c. (v. 37.) He will make them enjoy themselves, for His satisfaction is to make them happy. We do not enough believe in Christ's heart towards us, and we have not enough heart for Him either. He values our affections: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." What a Saviour He is! It is constant expectation; not waiting

merely, but watching. The second part is doing (v. 43); in a certain sense an inferior part. He has entrusted us with talents, perhaps it may be "giving a cup of cold water;" but it is, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing." The Lord has committed a service to all. Take an apostle, of course he is entirely given up to service, or it comes down to a cup of cold water. The reward is not sitting down and enjoying heaven here, but it is the kingdom, or more than the kingdom. The Father has set Christ over all the works of His hands, and He makes us joint-heirs. But it is much more blessed to be with God Himself, and enjoy Him, than to be heir with Christ, though, of course, that is a wonderful thing. It is especially in the kingdom that the ruling takes place, because Christ gives up the kingdom to the Father after. There will then be no need for power to be reducing a kingdom to order then, for it is all done.

There are two ways of looking at the inheritance. In Peter and Hebrews, as a man walking in this world in trials and difficulties, and looking out for an inheritance reserved in heaven; and then in Ephesians, where I get into the inheritance, I am looked at as sitting in heavenly places, and going to inherit all that Christ possesses. (See Ps. 2) There you get the counsels of God about Christ, and whatever the heathen do, God will make Him king. It is Christ set up in royalty over the earth. If you look at the promise to Thyatira you get that, and also the heavenly part. (vv. 26-28; cf. Rev. 2) A heavenly Christ as well as a royal Christ. That takes the place of what the Church was on earth - the kingdom. The morning star is Christ, as He is known to us; but the characteristic of the sun risen is judgment. A man that is awake at night sees the dawn of the morning; but when once the sun is risen the morning star is not seen. If you look at the sun risen in Mal. 4:2, &c., you will see it is deliverance by judgment. And that is the reason you get in the Psalms these desires for judgment; that is the kingdom part. Ps. 8 brings out a wider result than Ps. 2: "Above the heavens." He is crowned with glory and honour, according to Hebrews 2:5-8. It is more than the kingdom; for the kingdom rule has to do with this earth. But in this wonderful counsel of God He is getting joint-heirs for the same glory as Himself. When Peter was walking on the earth, the inheritance was in heaven; but when I am in heaven, the inheritance will be on earth. We know ourselves that we are nothing, at least, worse than nothing - badness in ourselves, yet God says that in the coming ages He is going to "show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus;" but it all supposes we are settled in redemption. It is a blessed thought, that the Father has given us to Christ. The Father says, "Now I want to have my heart satisfied by having them all around me;" and so He gives us to Christ that He may bring us back fit to be with the Father in that way. "Bringing many sons unto glory" - poor, feeble, wretched creatures that we are that He should take us up, but it shows the greatness of His love. But the best part is sitting down to meat, though the other is wonderful too - sovereign grace taking up worms like us and associating us with Christ.

The kingdom part you get in Moses and Elias. (Luke 9) There was Christ along with the saints in glory manifested to the earth. In Luke (which brings out our present place more than the other gospels) it says "they entered into the cloud." The cloud was what had separated Pharaoh from the Israelites; it had directed them through the wilderness; it hung over the tabernacle; it was where God was; and out of this shekinah comes the voice - I may say it was the Father's house practically - "And they feared as they entered into the cloud." It is only in Luke that you get that bit of the transfiguration. The "they entered" refers to Moses and Elias, but it is a difficult matter of interpretation.

Well, there is what belongs to us in Christ. We can sit down quietly at home in heaven, with Christ exercising hospitality to us there, ministering to us - a wonderful thing I am sure. What little, petty things turn us away from God's thoughts! We have to go through them; for "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world."

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