

BETWEEN THE TWO APPEARINGS NO. 2194

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1891,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”
Hebrews 9:26-28.

THE two great links between earth and heaven are the two advents of our Lord, or, rather, He is the great bond of union, by these two appearances. When the world had revolted, and God had been defied by His own creatures, a great gulf was opened between God and man. The first coming of Christ was like a bridge which crossed the chasm and made a way of access from God to man, and then from man to God. Our Lord's second advent will make that bridge far broader, until heaven shall come down to earth, and ultimately earth shall go up to heaven. At these two points a sinful world is drawn into closest contact with a gracious God. Jesus herein is seen as opening the door which none can shut, by means of which the Lord is beheld as truly Emmanuel, God with us.

Here, too, is the place for us to build a grand suspension bridge, by which, through faith, we ourselves may cross from this side to the other of the stormy river of time. The cross, at whose feet we stand, is the massive column which supports the structure on this side, and as we look forward to the glory, the second advent of our Lord is the solid support on the other side of the deep gulf of time. By faith we first look *to* Jesus, and then *for* Jesus, and herein is the life of our spirits. Christ on the cross of shame, and Christ on the throne of glory, we dwell between these two boundaries; these are our Dan and Beersheba, and all between is holy ground. As for our Lord's first coming, there lies our rest; the once-offered Sacrifice has put away our sin, and made our peace with God. As for His second coming, there lies our hope, our joy, for we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The glories of His sacred royalty shall be repeated in all the saints, for He has made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign with Him forever and ever. At His first advent we adore Him with gratitude, rejoicing in “God with us,” as making Himself to be our near kinsman. We gather with grateful boldness around the infant in the manger, and behold our God. But in the Second Advent we are struck with a solemn reverence, a trembling awe. We are not less grateful, but we are more prostrate as we bow before the majesty of the triumphant Christ! Jesus in His glory is an overpowering vision. John, the beloved disciple, writes, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” We could have kissed His feet till He left us on Olivet, but at the sight of the returning Lord, when heaven and earth shall flee away, we bow in lowliest adoration. His first appearing has given us that life and holy confidence with which we press forward to His glorious appearing, which is the crown of all.

I want, at this time, to bring before you those two appearances of our Lord. The text says, “He has appeared,” and again, “He shall appear.” The twenty-sixth verse speaks of His unique manifestation already accomplished, and the twenty-eighth verse promises the glorious second outshining, as it promises, “He shall appear.” Between these two lights—“He has appeared” and “He shall appear”—we shall sail safely, if the Holy Spirit will direct our way.

My first head is this, *once, and no second*; and my other division of discourse will make a kind of paradox, but not a contradiction—*yet a second*.

I. Our first theme is, ONCE, AND NO SECOND. Now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself.” This He has done once and He will never repeat it. Let us dwell on the subject in detail.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has once appeared, and though He will appear again, it will not be for the same purpose. On His first appearing, fix your thoughts, for the like of it will never be seen again. In the bosom of the Father He lay concealed as God, as the second person of the divine Trinity in Unity He could not be seen, for “no man has seen God at any time.” It is true that “without Him was not anything made that was made,” and thus His hand was seen in His works, but as to Himself, He was still hidden, revealed in type and prophecy, but yet in fact concealed. Jesus was not manifest to the sons of men, until one midnight an angel hastened from the skies, and bade the shepherds know that unto them was born in Bethlehem a Savior, that is Christ the Lord. Then the rest of the angelic host, discovering that one of their number had gone before them on so wonderful an errand, were swift to overtake him, and in one mass of glittering glory, they filled the midnight skies with heavenly harmony as they sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Well might they sing, for the Son of God now appeared. In the manger He might be seen with the eyes, and looked upon, and handled, for there the Word was made flesh, and God was incarnate. He whom the ages could not contain, the glorious One who dwelt with the Father forever unseen, now appeared within the bounds of time and space, and humble shepherds saw Him and adored. By Gentiles He was seen, for wise men from the East beheld and worshipped Him whose star had led them. As He grew up, the children of Nazareth beheld Him as a child obedient to His parents, and by and by He was made manifest to men by the witness of John and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at His baptism. God bore Him witness as He went up and down the hills of Palestine preaching the kingdom and proclaiming salvation to the sons of men. Men saw Him, for He spoke among them openly, and walked in their midst. His was not the seclusion of dignity, but the manifestation of sympathy. “He went about doing good.” He was seen of angels, for they came and ministered to Him, and He was seen of devils, for they trembled at His word. He dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory; He was the revelation of God to men, so that He could say, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” He was made still more manifest by His death, for in His crucifixion He was lifted up from the earth, that all might behold Him. He was exalted upon the cross, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness on purpose that whosoever looked to it might live. There and then He opened those four conspicuous founts of cleansing blood which were made to flow by the nails. See how it flows from hands and feet! There, too, He laid bare His side, and set His heart open for dying men, and forthwith there flowed forth blood and water. Thus we may look into His inmost heart. High on the cross the Savior hung, without veil or curtain to conceal Him. “Once in the end of the world has He appeared.” I know of no appearance that could have been more complete, more unreserved. He moved in the midst of crowds, He spoke to men and women one by one. He was on the mountain, and by the sea; He was in the desert, and by the river; He was both in house and in temple; He was everywhere accessible; in the fullest sense “once in the end of the world has He appeared.” Oh, the glory of this gracious epiphany! This is the greatest event in history; the invisible God has appeared in human form.

The text tells us very precisely that in this first coming of our Lord *He appeared to put away sin*. Notice that fact. By His coming and sacrifice He accomplished many things, but His first end and object was “to put away sin.” You know what the modern babblers say; they declare that He appeared to reveal to us the goodness and love of God. This is true, but it is only the fringe of the whole truth. The fact is that He revealed God’s love in the provision of a sacrifice to put away sin. Then, they say that He appeared to exhibit perfect manhood, and to let us see what our nature ought to be. Here also is a truth, but it is only part of the sacred design. He appeared, they say, to manifest self-sacrifice, and to set us an example of love to others. By His self-denial He trampled on the selfish passions of man. We deny none of these things, and yet we are indignant at the way in which the less is made to hide the greater. To put the secondary ends into the place of the grand objective is to turn the truth of God into a lie. It is easy to distort truth, by exaggerating one portion of it and diminishing another; just as the drawing of the most beautiful face may soon be made a caricature rather than a portrait by neglect of proportion. You must observe proportion if you would take a truthful view of things and in reference to the appearing of our Lord, His first and chief purpose is, “to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” The great objective of

our Lord's coming here was not to live, but to die. He has appeared, not so much to subdue sin by His teaching, as to put it away by the sacrifice of Himself. The master purpose which dominated all that our Lord did was not to manifest goodness, nor to perfect an example, but to put away sin by sacrifice. That which the moderns would thrust into the background, our Lord placed in the forefront. He came to take away our sins, even as the scapegoat typically carried away the sin of Israel into the wilderness that the people might be clean before the living God. The Lord Jesus has come here as a priest to remove sin from His people, "You know that He was manifested to take away our sins." Do not let us think of Jesus without remembering the design of His coming. I pray you, brethren; know not Christ without His cross as some pretend to know Him. We preach Christ; so do a great many more; but, "we preach Christ *crucified*," so do not many more. We preach concerning our Lord, His cross, His blood, His death, and upon the blood of His cross we lay great stress, extolling much "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." We know no past appearing of God in human flesh except that appearing which ended with a sacrifice to put away sin. For this our Savior came, even to save sinners by putting away their sin. We will not deny, nor conceal, nor depreciate His master purpose, lest we be found guilty of trampling upon His blood, and treating it as an unholy thing. The putting away of sin was a God-like purpose, and it is a wellspring of hope to us, that for this reason Jesus appeared among men.

Let us go a step further with our text; *only once does the Lord appear for the purpose of putting away sin*. He came once to do it, and He has done it so well that there is no need for Him to offer any further sacrifice. "This man, after that He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down." He will never appear a second time for the putting away of sin. It was His purpose once, but He has so fulfilled it that it will never be His purpose again. The high priest, as you know, came every year with blood for the putting away of sin. He has slain the victim this year, but next year he must come in the same manner, and the next, and the next, and the next, because the sacrifice had not really removed the guilt, but our Lord has come *once* for this divine purpose, and He has so achieved that purpose that He could truly cry, "It is finished," for the work is done once for all. He has so perfectly put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself that He will never need to offer a second sacrifice. That our Lord should ever come a second time as He came the first time is inconceivable by those who love Him. He will come a second time, but in a very different style, and for a very different purpose; not as a sacrifice for sins, but as King and Judge.

And here learn yet further, that *once only is sin put away*. Jesus died to finish transgression and make an end of sin. Our Lord made atonement for sin when He died the just for the unjust; He made peace for us when the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. When the Lord had laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, divine wrath fell upon Him on account of our sins, until He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Then sin was put away. There, but never anywhere else, was full atonement presented, and iniquity was blotted out. There is no other place of expiation for sin but the place of our Lord's sacrifice of Himself. Believing in Him that died on the cross, our sins are put away, but without faith in Him there is no remission of sin. Beyond our Lord's, other sacrifice there is none; other sacrifice there will never be. If any of you here are entertaining some "larger hope," I would say to you—hope what you please, but remember, that hope without truth at the bottom of it, is an anchor without a hold-fast. A groundless hope is a mere delusion. Wish what you will, but wishes without promises from God to back them, are vain imaginings. Why should you imagine or wish for another method of salvation? Rest assured that the Lord God thinks so highly of the one sacrifice for sin that for you to desire another is evil in His sight. If you reject the one sacrifice of the Son of God, there remains no hope for you; nor ought there to be. Our Lord's way of putting away sin is so just to God, so honoring to the law, and so safe for you, that if you reject it your blood must be on your own head. By once offering up Himself to God, our Lord has done what myriads of years of repentance and suffering could never have done. Blessed be the name of the Lord, the sin of the world, which kept God from dealing with men at all, was put away by our Lord's death! John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." God has been able to deal with the world of sinners in a way of grace, because Jesus died. I thank our Lord even more, because the actual sins of His own chosen—even of all those who believe on Him in every age—have been put away. These sins were laid on Him, and in Him God visited

man for them. “He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” and so put them away forever, and they are cast into the depths of the sea. The putting away of my guilt as a believer was really, effectually, and eternally accomplished by the death of our great Substitute upon the bloody tree. This is the ground of our everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Jesus did it alone, He did not only seem to do it, but He actually achieved the putting away of sin. He blotted out the handwriting that was against us. He finished transgression and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness when once for all He died upon the cross.

Beloved, there is a further note here; observe that *once only has He made a sacrifice of Himself*. “Now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” The very best way to describe the death of our Lord is to call it, “the sacrifice of Himself.” It may be well rightly to divide the sacrifice, as the priest cut up the bullock or the ram. You may speak of our Lord’s bodily sufferings, His mental griefs, and His spiritual anguish, but for the most part we are not able to go far in this detailed appreciation of the wondrous sacrifice. We are such poor folk in spiritual things that instead of bringing a bullock which could be anatomized and its vital organs all laid bare, we are content to bring a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons, and these were not carefully divided asunder, but burned upon the altar. The most of us have to take our Lord Jesus Christ as a whole, since, from lack of understanding, we cannot go into detail. What did He offer to God? He made a sacrifice of *Himself*. Truly He sacrificed His crown, His rest, His honor, His reputation, and His life, but the essence of the sacrifice was *Himself*. Himself took our iniquity, and bore our sorrows. “He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Your sacrifice, O Christ, is not to be measured unless we could compute the infinity of Your Godhead. It was not only Your labor, Your pain, Your shame, Your death; Your sacrifice was Yourself; what more could even You offer? There, on the altar, the Son of God did place Himself, and there He bled and died that He might be the victim of punitive justice, the substitute for guilty men. There was He unto God a sweet-smelling savor, because He vindicated the law and made it possible for the Lawgiver to be justly merciful. This, according to our text, was done once, and only once, and it never will be repeated, so that the whole business of our Lord’s appearing to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, is confined to one appearing and one offering. I want that word “ONE” to ring in your ears. “By one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.” I would have the adverb “once” go through every ear, and abide in every heart. “By His own blood He entered in *once* into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Peter says, “Christ also has *once* suffered for sins.”

Once it is, and not more often. To suppose the contrary would be, first, to break away from the analogy of human things. Read the twenty-seventh verse, “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” A man dies once, and after that everything is fixed and settled, and He answers for His doings at the judgment. One life, one death—then everything is weighed, and the result declared, “after this the judgment.” So Christ comes, and dies once, and after this, for Him also the result of what He has done, namely, the salvation of those who look for Him. He dies once, and then reaps the fixed result, according to the analogy of the human race, of which He became a member and representative. Men come not back here to die twice, men die once, and then the matter is decided, and there comes the judgment. So Christ dies; He does not come back here to die again, but He receives the result of His death—that is, the salvation of His own people. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” “You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.” The Christ is so completely man that He follows the analogies of manhood, as the apostle here observes, and we must not break away from them.

To suppose a second death for our Lord would be to forget what He came to do. The punishment of sin was, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” One death was the sentence. It is true that we have to speak of that one death as divided into the first and the second death, but it is judicially one sentence of death which is pronounced on man. When Christ comes, therefore, He bears the one sentence of death. He laid down His life for us. The penalty due to sin was death, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die”; Christ, therefore, must die, and die He did, “By the grace of God He tasted death for every man.” But it was not said, “You shall die twice.” No, and Christ does not die twice. “Christ, being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He

died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God.” He has borne the full sentence which was pronounced on sin, and thus He has put away the sin which involved us under the penalty.

To suppose that our Lord should be made a sacrifice again is a supposition full of horror. When you study deeply the death of your Lord, unless your heart is like an adamant stone, you must be bowed down with grief. The visage of Him who was heaven’s glory was more marred than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men. He whose brow was from the beginning surrounded with majesty, had His forehead and temples torn with a coronet of thorns. Those blessed cheeks that are as beds of spices were distained with spit from the lips of menials. His face, which is the joy of heaven, was buffeted and bruised by mockers. His blessed shoulders, which bear up the world, they scourged with knotted whips until the blood ran down in crimson rivers as the plowers made deep furrows. How could they flout Him so? Was it possible that my Beloved should be scorned and slandered, spit upon and condemned as a felon? Did they lay the shameful cross upon His blessed back, and lead Him through the streets amid the ribald mob? He who knew no sin was numbered with the transgressors. Found guilty of nothing save excess of love to man, He was led away to be crucified. They hurried Him off to die at the common place of the gallows. The rough soldiers nailed Him to the cross, and lifted up the rough tree for all to gaze upon. I wonder the angels bore it. It seems extraordinary that they could look on while men were taking their Lord and Master, and driving bolts through His hands and feet, and lifting His sacred body upon the cruel tree. But they did bare it, and the Christ hung on the tree of doom in a burning heat, through the fierce sun, and the inflammation of His wounds, and inward fever. He was so parched that His tongue was dried up like a potsherd, and was made to cleave to the roof of His mouth. There He hung amid derision, His bones all dislocated, and His very flesh dissolved with faintness as though it were turning back to its native dust. Meanwhile His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,” and the Father’s face, which has sustained thousands of martyrs, was turned away from Him until He cried, “Lama Sabachthani.” And is there heart so brutal as to suggest a repetition of this divine agony? Repeat this! Repeat this! O sirs, we rise at once, as one man, in mutiny against an idea so revolting. One Calvary is glorious, for it has accomplished the grand deed of our redemption, but two Calvaries would mean double shame, and no glory. Shall the Son of God, after all that He has done, come down on earth to be a second time “despised and rejected of men”? Shall He a second time be dragged through mire and blood? It must not, cannot be. God forbid! He has trod the winepress once for all. No more shall He stain His garments with His own blood.

To suppose a repetition of the sacrifice is to cast suspicion upon the work and efficacy of the great offering of Himself. Was not that sacrifice infinite in value? It must have been, for it was the sacrifice of God Himself. Why, then, present it again? Unless the first was altogether or measurably a failure, why repeat it? The repetition of the cross would destroy the cross. O man, you have taken away from the death of the Lord all its virtue if you would dream of His dying yet again. As to that invention of the Church of Rome—the continual offering of the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass—it is a dead thing, for the “blood is the life thereof” and it is as gross an insult to the one great sacrifice as could well have been devised by His cruelest enemies. He has forever put away the sin of His people by His one offering, and now there remains no more sacrifice for sin.

My brethren, the idea that our Lord Jesus did not effectually perform the work of taking away sin removes the foundation of our faith. If by one offering He did not put away sin, shall it be repeated? Suppose for a moment that He died twice; why not three times? Why not four times? Why not fifty times? Why not forever the rehearsal of Calvary, forever the doleful cry, forever the tomb of Joseph, and the dead body wrapped in linen? And yet, even after a thousand repetitions, how could we know that we were saved? How could we be sure that the sacrifice sufficed, and that sin was really put away? If the one offering of Himself did not satisfy justice, what would or could do it? Then are we without hope, and of all men most miserable, for a golden dream of the putting away of sin has come to us, and, lo! It has melted away. Once yonder tree, once yonder tomb; once the broken seal and the frightened watch; on that one sacrifice and justification we rest securely, and we need no repetition of the work. It was enough, for Jesus said, “It is finished.” It was enough, for God has raised Him from the dead.

I do not need, I hope, to linger here to warn you that it is of no use to expect that God will put away sin in any other way than that which at so great a cost He has provided. If sin could have been removed

in any other way than by the death of His dear Son, Jesus would not have died. If there had been within the range of supposition any method of pardon except by the sacrifice of Himself, depend upon it Jesus would never have bowed His head to death. The great Father would never have inflicted death upon the perfect One if it had been possible that the cup should pass from Him. He could never have inflicted upon His Beloved a superfluous pain. His death was needful, but, blessed be God, having been once endured, it has once and for all put away sin, and hence it will never be endured again.

II. We come now to look at the rest of the text. Once, and no second; AND YET A SECOND. "He shall appear a second time." Yes, Christ Jesus shall appear a second time, but not a second time for the same purpose as before.

He will appear. The appearing will be of the most open character. He will not be visible in some quiet place where two or three are met, but He will *appear* as the lightning is seen in the heavens. At His first appearing He was truly seen; wherever He went He could be looked at and gazed upon, and touched and handled. He will appear quite as plainly by and by, among the sons of men. The observation of Him will be far more general than at His first advent, for "every eye shall see Him." Every eye did not see Him here when He came the first time, for He did not travel out of Palestine, save only when, as an infant all unknown, He was carried down into Egypt. But when He comes a second time all the nations of the world shall behold Him. They that are dead shall rise to see Him, both saints and sinners, and they that are alive and remain when He shall come shall be absorbed in this greatest of spectacles. Then Balaam shall find it true, "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not near." Though they cry, "Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne," they shall cry in vain, for before His judgement seat they must all appear.

His second appearing will be without sin. That is to say, He will bring no sin-offering with Him, and will not Himself be a sacrifice for sin. What need that it should be so? We have seen that He once offered Himself without spot to God, and therefore, when He comes a second time, His relation to human guilt will finally cease. He will then have nothing further to do with that sin which was laid upon Him. Our sin, which He took to Himself by imputation, He has borne and discharged. Not only is the sinner free, but the sinner's Surety is free also, for He has paid our debt to the utmost farthing. Jesus is no longer under obligation on our account. When He comes a second time, He will have no connection of any sort with the sin which once He bore. He will come, moreover, without those sicknesses and infirmities which arise out of sin. At His first advent, He came in suffering flesh, and then He came to hunger and to thirst, to be without a place where to lay His head; He came to have His heart broken with reproach, and His soul grieved with the hardness of men's hearts. He was compassed with infirmity; He came unto His God with strong crying and tears; He agonized even unto bloody sweat, and so He journeyed on with all the insignia of sin hanging about Him. But when He comes a second time it will be without the weakness, pain, poverty, and shame which accompany sin. There will then be no marred visage or bleeding brow. He will have re-assumed His ancient glory. It will be His glorious appearing.

When our Lord comes to the fullest in His glory, there will remain no sin upon His people. He will present His bride unto Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The day of His appearing will be the manifestation of a perfect body as well as a perfect Head. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, when their Lord's countenance, is as the sun shining in his strength. As He will be "without sin," so will they be "without sin." Oh, what a glorious appearing is this! A true appearing, and yet the very opposite of the first. Then the text adds, "He shall appear without sin *unto salvation.*" What does that mean? It means that He will then display the perfect salvation of all those who put their trust in Him. He will come to celebrate the great victory of mercy over sin. At His coming He will set His foot upon the dragon's head, and bruise Satan under our feet. He will come to have all His enemies put under His feet. Today we fight, and He fights in us; we groan and He groans in us, for the dread conflict is raging. When He comes again the battle will be ended; He shall divide the spoil of vanquished evil and celebrate the victory of righteousness.

But the resurrection is the salvation principally intended here. Alas, what evil sin has done! How many of our best beloved lie rotting beneath the clay! The worms are feeding on those whose voices were the music of our lives. The scythe of death has cut them down like grass; they lie together in rows in yonder cemetery. Who slew all these? The sting of death is sin. But when our Lord comes, who is the

resurrection and the life, from beds of dust and silent clay our dead men shall rise; they shall leap up into immortality. “Your brother shall rise again.” Your children shall come again from the land of their captivity. Not a bone or a piece of a bone, of a saint shall be left as a trophy in the hand of the enemy. When our Lord brought forth Peter from the prison, He did not let him leave his old shoes behind him, but the angel said, “Gird yourself, and bind on your sandals, and follow me,” and when the Lord Jesus shall come and open wide the door of the sepulcher, He will bid us come forth in the entirety of our nature, and leave nothing behind. Salvation shall mean to us the perfection of our manhood in the likeness of our Lord. No aching hands and weary brows then, but we shall be raised in power. Our vile body shall be changed, and made like His glorious body. Though sown in corruption, our body shall be raised in incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. What a glorious prospect lies before us in connection with the day of His appearing a second time unto salvation!

Now notice that this appearing and this salvation will *chiefly belong to those who look for Him*. Will you bear with me patiently a minute or two here? I wonder how many there are in the Tabernacle who are looking for Him? The text says, “Unto them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation.” Beloved, I will put the question again; How many here are looking for our Lord’s second coming? I am afraid if conscience has her perfect work many will have to say, “I am afraid I am not among the number.” I will tell you what it is to look for that second appearing. It is to love the Lord Jesus, to love Him so that you long for Him as a bride longs for her husband. Why are His chariots so long in coming? Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Strong love hates separation, it pines for union. It cries, “Come, Lord! Come, Lord!” Longing follows on the heels of loving. To look for His coming is to prepare for Him. If I were asked to visit you tomorrow evening, I am sure you would make some preparations for my call—even for one as commonplace as myself. You would prepare, because you would welcome me. If you expected the Queen to call, how excited you would be! What preparation good housewives would make for a royal visitor! When we expect our Lord to come, we shall be concerned to have everything ready for Him. I sometimes see the great gates open in front of the larger houses in the suburbs, and it means that they are expecting company. Keep the great gates of your soul always open, expecting your Lord to come. It is idle to talk about looking for His coming if we never set our house in order, and never put ourselves in readiness for His reception. Looking for Him means that you stand in a waiting attitude, as a servant who expects his master to soon be at the door presently. Do not say, “The Lord will not yet come, and therefore I shall make my plans irrespective of Him for the next twenty or thirty years.” You may not be here in the next twenty or thirty minutes, or, if you are, your Lord may be here also. He comes; He is on the road; He started long ago, and He sent on a herald before Him to cry, “Behold, I come quickly.” He has been coming quickly over the mountains of division ever since, and He must be here soon. If you look for His appearing you will be found in an attitude of one who waits and watches, that when his Lord comes he may meet Him with joy. Christ is coming, I must not sin; Christ is coming, I must not be rooted to the world. Are you thus expecting Him? I am afraid I shall only be speaking the truth, if I say that very few Christians are in the highest sense *waiting* for the appearing of the Lord. My friend Mr. Govett, in his Commentary on my text, reminds us of the story of Moses, when God told him to take seventy men up the hill with him. We read of these honored men, that “they saw God, and did eat and drink.” What a privilege! They were all the Lord’s guests. As Moses went up to God into the thick darkness, he said to them “Tarry you here until we come again unto you.” Moses was gone for forty days, and how many waited for him? I do not know when they began to slip down from the hill, or whether they went one by one, or in groups, but when Moses returned not a soul of them was left, save Joshua, whom Moses had taken up with him to still higher ground. The seventy had gone down among the people, and probably spread that unbelief among them which led to the making of the golden calf. None can do so much mischief as those who have been with God, but cannot wait for the glorious appearing. You tell me Moses was gone a long time—well-near six weeks! Yes, and that is why many cannot wait for the Lord now, because the delay is so long; it is nearly nineteen hundred years since He went away. True, *four* thousand years rolled away before He came the first time, but two thousand quite wear out the watchers for His second coming. Men cannot wait, and therefore go down to the world and help to fashion its idols. Only here and there do we see a Joshua who will abide in his place till his leader appears.

As to *watching*, this is rarer than waiting. The fact is, even the better sort of believers who wait for His coming, as all the ten virgins did, nevertheless do not watch. Even the best sort of the waiters slumbered and slept. You are waiting, but you are sleeping! This is a mournful business. A man who is asleep cannot be said to *look*, and yet it is “unto them that look for Him” that the Lord comes with salvation. We must be wide-awake to look. We ought to go up to the watch-tower every morning, and look toward the sun rising, to see whether He is coming. Surely our last act at night should be to look out for His star, and say, “Is He coming?” It ought to be a daily disappointment when our Lord does not come; instead of being as I fear it is, a kind of foregone conclusion that He will not come just yet. How pleased we are if some daring fellow will tell us when He will come, for then we can get ready near the time, and need not perpetually watch! We would not go to a gypsy in a red cloak, and let her tell our fortune, but we will let a man in a black coat tell us the fortune of our Lord. What folly! Of that day and of that hour knows no man, nor even the angels of God. This time of the advent is a secret, and purposely so, that we may always be on tiptoe of expectation, always looking out, because our Lord is surely coming, but we are not sure when He comes. “And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Many professing Christians forget Christ’s second coming altogether; others drop a smile when we speak about it, as though it belonged only to fanatics and dreamers. But you, Beloved, I trust are not of that kind. As you really believe in the first coming and the one great sacrifice, so believe really in the second coming without a sin-offering unto the climax of your salvation. Standing between the cross and the crown, between the cloud that received Him out of our sight, and the clouds with which He will come with ten thousands of His saints to judge the quick and the dead, let us live as men who are not of this world, strangers in this age which darkly lies between two bright appearings, happy beings saved by a mystery accomplished, and soon to be glorified by another mystery which is hastening on. Let us, like her in the Revelation, have the moon under our feet, keeping all sublunary things in their proper place. May we even now be made to sit together with Christ in the heavenlies!

Now all this must be strange talk to some of you. I wish it would alarm those of you who once made a profession of true religion, and have gone back to the world’s falsehood. How will you face Him, you backsliders, in that day when He shall appear, and all else shall vanish in the blaze of His light, as stars when the sun shines out? What will you do when your treachery shall be made clear to your consciences by His appearing? What will you do, who have sold your Master, and given up your Lord, who was and is your only hope for the putting away of your sins? Oh, I pray you, as you love yourselves, go to Him as He appears in His first coming, and then, washed in His blood, go forward to meet Him in His second coming for salvation. God bless you, and by His Son and Spirit make you ready for that great day which comes on apace!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
HEBREWS 9:24-28; 10:1-18; MATTHEW 25:1-13.**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK—361, 289, 356.

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