

JOYFUL ANTICIPATION OF THE SECOND ADVENT

NO. 2496

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 20, 1896
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
 ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1885

*“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads;
 for your redemption draweth nigh.
 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;
 when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.
 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass,
 know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”
 Luke 21:28-31*

I HAVE already said that I conceive our Lord Jesus Christ to have regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as “the beginning of the end.” Although some eighteen hundred years have rolled away since that terrible event, we with Him may make but small account of the interval, and regard it all as one dispensation of passing away. That beautiful city was the very crown of the entire earth, because God had dwelt there.

It may be compared to the diamond in a ring, the jewel whose setting was the whole world, and when that jewel was destroyed, and God did as it were grind it to powder, it was a warning that the ring itself would, by and by, be crushed and consumed, for “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” The destruction of Jerusalem was, so to speak, the unrolling of the curtain on the great drama of the world’s doom, it will not fall again until all the things that we now see shall have passed away, and only the things that cannot be shaken—the things of God and of eternity, which we cannot see—shall remain.

Moreover, I think that from this chapter, if we are to understand it all—and it is confessedly very difficult to comprehend—we must regard the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple as being a kind of rehearsal of what is yet to be. God’s long-suffering was displayed with Israel for centuries. The rebellious tribes had ample space for repentance. They had even been carried away into captivity, and by the Lord’s gracious lovingkindness, they had struggled back again, yet, only changing the form of their apostasy, they continued to wander away from God. They were bent on backsliding from JEHOVAH even when their idols were all destroyed, and the seed of Abraham had come to hate every sort of symbol and image.

Yet, then, they began to set up other kinds of idols in the traditions of the fathers, and the inventions of the scribes. Thus they lost the spirit of divine teaching in the mere letter of it, and became only formalists when they ceased to be idolaters, for, mind you, the truth, if it be dead, has no more virtue in it than falsehood has. When the Spirit of God is gone out of that which in itself is right, it becomes often a cover wherein a thousand evils conceal themselves.

So, at last, God’s long-suffering had come to an end, and according to current tradition, there was a sound as of the moving of wings in the holy place at Jerusalem, and it is reported that one priest, who stood to officiate at the altar, heard the solemn sentence, “Let us go hence,” for God was about to leave His temple. That temple had already rent its veil from top to bottom for very shame at what had been done to the Lord’s Christ, and now the fabric itself must be consumed with fire, even in spite of the order of the Roman emperor. With all his power, he could not save it from ruin, and so completely was

the city destroyed that Zion was plowed as a field, and the very site of the temple was for many a day a question in dispute.

Ah, my friends, this was a picture—a faint picture—of what shall be the case when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again! Then, all external religion—if it is but external—shall perish in the fire, and only the spiritual and the true shall live. “For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up,” as it was with the temple fabric. In the day that is coming, that only shall endure upon which fire can have no power. Only that shall stand which is God’s own eternal truth. So, then, I regard that destruction of Jerusalem and its temple as the beginning of the end, and also as the rehearsal of what is yet to be.

The times before the destruction of Jerusalem were terrible to the last degree. If you have read Josephus, you cannot but feel your heart bleed for the poor Jews. They were utterly infatuated, they were so carried away with heroic madness that they fought against the Romans with a desperate valor, after the city had been surrounded. Never upon this earth were there braver or more fanatical spirits than were those who were cooped up within those city walls. When they were weary with fighting the Romans, they turned their swords and their daggers against one another, being divided into sects and parties who hated each other with the utmost fury.

Jerusalem was a cauldron, a boiling pot, seething full of all manner of evil, and mischief, and misery. The land was devoured before the Roman armies. Everybody seemed to be either driven from the country, or else to be left dead around the city walls. They crucified the Jews in such numbers that they left off doing it because they could find no more wood upon which to nail them. Those who were taken captive were sold for slaves till a penny was refused as their price, they literally sold them for a pair of shoes. The precious sons of God, as the prophet said, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, cracked and broken, and only worthy to be thrown on the dunghill.

But all the time—the most awful time, perhaps, that any nation ever endured—the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were altogether unharmed. It is recorded that they fled to the little city of Pella, were quiet according to their Master’s command, and not a hair of their head perished. Indeed, it was to them a time of redemption, for the persecution which the Jews had carried on against them had been exceedingly cruel, but now there was a pause. Their own miseries were so great that they had no care nor thought for the poor Christians, they at least were secure, they looked up, and lifted up their heads, for their Master’s prophecy was verified, and the full force of the curse fell upon those who had cried to Pilate, “His blood be on us and on our children.”

Now, dear friends, it will be just so at the last. I am not about to enter into any prophecies of what is yet to be, but here are the Master’s own words, “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.”

That is my subject, dear friends, and we will consider, first, *the terrible time in which this precept is to be carried out*, “Look up, and lift up your heads,” secondly, *the remarkable precept itself*, “Look up, and lift up your heads,” and thirdly, *the encouraging parable* which is given in order to induce us to look up, and lift up our heads, “Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE TIME, in which we are told to look up, and lift up our heads.

It is evidently to be a time of *fearful national trouble*, and if such times should ever come in our days—if there should ever arrive times that are worthy to be compared with the destruction of Jerusalem—here is the Master’s word to us, “When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.”

Should great wars occur, as they certainly will, there is nothing, in them to terrify the Christian. Should they even come to your own doors, it is not for believers in Christ ever to be the victims of a scare. Whatever may happen, what is there for them to fear? The Savior gives them this precept for a time when it will be impossible for them to carry it out unless it is by faith in Him, “Look up, and lift up your heads.” Whatever chastisements shall befall the nations, you shall be secure in following to the full the principles of peace that your Master has enjoined upon you.

Further, this precept is given, not only in times of fearful national trouble, but also in times of *awful physical signs and wonders in the world*, “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.” It may be a season of preternatural darkness, or the solar system may be disturbed, so that the stars of heaven, which have been fixed for centuries, shall fall like unripe fruit from the trees, or as the withered leaves of autumn are scattered by the stormy blast.

You know that when there is some phenomenon such as they have never seen, and such as their fathers have never seen, how frightened people are! But suppose there should be visible in the heavens manifestations such as have never been seen before, yet even at such times the children of God are to look up, and lift up their heads, and if they should not merely be in the heavens, but if the earth also should shake and tremble—if that which is supposed to be most stable should become most fickle—yet even then we are to look up, and lift up our heads.

And if the sea and the waves thereof should roar in a manner altogether unusual, so that landmen should hear the noise afar off, or if, being out at sea ourselves, the waves should run mountains high, and the vessel should threaten to sink to the bottom, yet still this is still the precept for the worst of times that are supposable, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads.” Even in such a trying time as that, take up the language of the forty-sixth Psalm, and say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”

“Nature cannot rise to that height,” says one. No, I know it cannot, but grace can. “I cannot rise to it,” says one. Perhaps you cannot, but there is One who can raise you up to it, and it is He Himself who bids you to rise. “Then,” says Jesus, “when these things begin to come to pass, *then* look up, and lift up your heads.”

This terrible time which our Lord describes is, in addition, a time of *universal alarm*, “Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” You know that fear is contagious, when one person trembles, many begin to feel the same sort of tremor, and when all the people, wherever we shall go, at home or abroad, shall be in distress—when everywhere the hearts of men shall seem to die within them, or turn as it were to stone, so that they cannot act or move, like those who guarded the tomb of Christ, who, when they saw Him rise, were as dead men—if it should ever come to that, and there should be a general panic, then you who have Christ for your Master, God for your Father, eternity for your heritage, and heaven for your home, even then you may “look up, and lift up your heads.”

You ask, perhaps, “How shall we do that?” You cannot do it without your Lord. With God, all things are possible. In Christ, you can do all things, without Him, you can do nothing. If you live away from your Lord and Master, in those days of terror that are yet to come, your hearts will quail for fear, and you will be like other men. If you run with them, you shall fear with them. If your strength is where their strength is, you shall be as weak as they, but if you have learned to look up, why, even in those stormy times you shall keep to the habit of looking up, and if you have learned to lift your heads above the world, you shall keep to the habit of lifting up your heads. If your portion is in heaven, it shall not be shaken when the earth rocks and reels to its very foundations, if your treasure is in heaven, then your treasure shall not be lost.

If God is with you, you can stand between the very jaws of death, or in the center of hell itself, and feel no fear. With Christ by your side, you may be as calm amid the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, as your Lord Himself is in His glory. He can work even this in you if you but cast yourself on Him, and live wholly to Him.

Once more, the time when we are to be thus calm and quiet, and to look up, and lift up our heads, is to be at *the coming judgment*. My dear brothers and sisters, whatever I might say to you about the calamities that are yet to come upon the earth, whatever description I might give of wars, and earthquakes, and storms—if I were to make each word as black as night, and each sentence as sharp as a killing sword—yet could I not fully describe the final scene when the Lord Himself shall come in all the pomp and splendor of the last dread assize.

No human tongue can tell, as no human heart can imagine, the terrors of that tremendous day, especially the sight of the once-crucified King when He appears seated upon His great white throne, and when the summons shall ring out—

***“Come to judgment!
Come to judgment, come away!”***

when the grave shall not conceal the unnumbered dead, nor even the depths of the ocean suffice for a hiding place from Him that sits upon the throne, for all shall be gathered before Him, every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. You will be there, my friend, you will be there as certainly as you are here.

O you who are without Christ, all the fear and dread you have ever had in this life will be as nothing compared with the alarm and terror of that day! Your fears, when you have been laid low with fever, and have been near to death’s door, will be but as child’s play compared with what you will feel at that tremendous day which is soon to come. Yet Christ says to His people, concerning even that time of terror, “Look up, and lift up your heads.”

There is nothing for you who have put your trust in Him, ever to fear. It is your Judge who is coming, but He comes to acquit you, and to exhibit you to the assembled universe clad in His own righteousness which you already wear. He who is coming is your Lord, your Friend, your Bridegroom, He who has sworn to deliver you is coming to call your body from the grave, and to raise you up to dwell together with Him forever. That day of Christ’s appearing shall be to you a morning of the ringing out of harps, and a time of joyous shouts and blissful songs.

***“There shall be weeping, there shall be weeping,
At the judgment seat of Christ;”***

but not for you who are in Him, it shall be your joy day, your wedding day, the brightest day in all your history. “When these things begin to come to pass, *then* look up, and lift up your heads.”

I must leave this first point concerning the terrible time when this precept is to be carried out, by just reminding you that when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come, the heavens shall tell us, “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.” The earth shall tell us, for upon the earth there shall be “distress of nations, with perplexity.” The sea shall tell us, for the sea and the waves thereof shall roar. Men shall tell us, for men’s hearts shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.

And then, as all these voices shall proclaim His coming, our own eyes shall tell us, for they shall see “the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” and in anticipation of that glorious day, each believer can say with the Patriarch Job, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

II. Now I come to THE REMARKABLE PRECEPT itself, “Then look up, and lift up your heads.”

My dear brethren, there are some Christian people who seem to think that it is almost wicked to look up and lift up their heads. When they come before God, their cry is, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.” Well, but surely a true child of God gets above that condition. He is a sinner, it is true, and as far as he is a sinner, he is unhappy, but still, he has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost, he has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, he has been adopted into the family of God, surely there is some nobler note for him to reach than that doleful dirge. If, amid plague and pestilence, or amid earthquakes and storms and wars, we are to look up, and lift up our heads, that ought to be our daily attitude.

*“Why does your face, ye humble souls,
Those mournful colors wear?
What doubts are these that waste your faith,
And nourish your despair?”*

Listen to your Lord’s gracious command, “Look up, and lift up your heads.” What does this precept mean? First, it implies *an absence of fear*. “Perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.” He that fears is not made perfect in love. What cause has a Christian for fear? What is there that can harm the man whom God loves? Will He trample on His child, or allow anyone else to hurt him? Nay, for “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” The sun and moon and stars, the earth and the seas, wars and pestilences, all work together for good to God’s dear children. Let us therefore cast out all fear.

This precept, surely, also means *the removal of all grief*. While the Christian is here, there will always be more than enough to make him grieve as a man, but there will also always be grace in Christ to wipe every tear away. We are born to grief, but then we are also born again, so we must not give way to weeping more than is right, we must not be overburdened with sorrow, lest we become like a man drunken.

It is as evil to be drunken out of the bitter cup of affliction as out of the sweet cup of sinful pleasure. Let us put away our sorrow, and grief, and misery, and say, with the prophet Habakkuk, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

“Look up, and lift up your heads.” This precept of our Lord seems to me to be very wonderful, because it does not merely mean that there is to be in believers no fear and no grief, but that, *even in the worst times, we are to show the signs of joy*. This expression implies to me signs and tokens of an outward kind, “Look up, and lift up your heads.” Our Lord seems to say to us, “Now fly your flags, and ring your bells, let your hearts be exceeding glad, so joyous that those who look at you cannot help seeing your happiness. ‘Look up, and lift up your heads.’”

Let there be no looking down because the earth is quaking and shaking, but let there be a looking up because you are going to rise from it, no looking down because the graves are opening, why should you look down? You will quit the grave, never more to die. “Lift up your heads.” The time for you to hang your heads, like bulrushes, is over already, and will certainly be over when the Lord is coming, and your redemption draws nigh. Wherefore, “look up, and lift up your heads.”

It will be a wonderful sight when Jesus comes again. It must have been a sight full of wonder when Jerusalem was destroyed, but the true Christian knew all that was going to happen, and all that did happen, terrible as it was, was only a confirmation of his faith, and a fulfillment of his Lord’s prophecies. So shall it be when, at the last great day, we walk among the sons of men calmly and serenely.

They will marvel at us, they will say to us, “How is it that you are so joyous? We are all alarmed, our hearts are failing us for fear,” and we shall take up our wedding hymn, our marriage song, “The

Lord is come! The Lord is come! Hallelujah!” The burning earth shall be the flaming torch to light up the wedding procession, the quivering of the heavens shall be, as it were, but as the dancing of the feet of angels in those glorious festivities, and the booming and crashing of the elements shall, somehow, only help to swell the outburst of praise unto God the just and terrible, who is to us our exceeding joy.

I cannot speak as I would upon this glorious theme, but I think I catch some of our Master’s meaning when He said, “Then look up, and lift up your heads.” Did He not mean that then, and always, Christians are to be filled with *an inward peace* and with a *holy expectancy* mixed with it? Whatever happens, all is well with the righteous. I know not what is to be, nor do I wish to know, but I do know that all is well, and that all shall be well forever and ever. “Look up, and lift up your heads,” beloved, for it is better than before.

There is something brighter and more joyful coming than we have ever yet known. All our earthly bliss is but as the vestibule of our eternal delights. The Lord’s kingdom is yet small and feeble, apparently, but it is to be world-wide, and He Himself is to be manifested in His glory. Therefore, let us look up, and lift up our heads. Look up for Him who is coming, look up for Him who has already come. Lift up your eyes to the hills, whence cometh your help. “Look up, and lift up your heads.”

It seems to me as if the text itself is quite enough to make you march to the strains of martial music straight away to victory. Come, let us be a band of men who fully trust our Lord, and who henceforth say farewell to doubt and trembling, “Look up, and lift up your heads.”

III. Our text finishes with A PARABLE TO ENCOURAGE US TO OBEY THE PRECEPT, “Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, you see and know for your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.”

First, notice the *signs* mentioned in this parable. Summer is the time of the bursting of buds, the unfolding of flowers, the forming and ripening of the fruit. There may come many a shower in the springtime, but that will not hinder the arrival of summer, rather will it help summer to come. It may be cold and chill beneath the black cloud that hovers over us for a while, but that will not hinder summer. “April showers bring forth May flowers.” All these things are the tokens of the summer’s coming. So, brethren, when you are in trouble, expect that you are going to have a blessing. When you are passing through a great trial, look out, for there is another sign that summer is coming. Do not fear to look up, and lift up your heads, for—

*“The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”*

“Look up, and lift up your heads.” I wish we could get into the habit of believing that every time of want, every time of pain, every time of depression, is but the commencement of a season of blessing. “Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” remember that the Lord’s objective in this experience is “that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

Therefore, as you look at the black buds on the tree of your life, say to yourself, “I wonder what bright flower is coming out there!” Look at the dark bulbs, without any beauty at all in them, which we put into the ground, yet the flowers which come out of them are charming and fragrant. So, when God plants some black bulbs in the garden of your soul, do not cry out because of their ugliness, but look for the flowers that shall in due time appear, and expect something beautiful from God’s sowing.

Ay, and if again the heavens should be darkened, the earth should shake, the sea should roar, and kingdoms should be dissolved, and pestilence should slay its myriads, yet still “look up, and lift up your heads.” Your Master bids you do so. He, the Crucified, who made a coronet of beauty out of the crown of thorns, He who is bedecked today with jewels which are the scars of His own suffering. He whose

very glory it is that He once died, He it is who would have you see, in all the trials of the present hour, tokens of the benediction that is yet to come. Wherefore, “look up, and lift up your heads.”

Further, the signs mentioned in this parable tell of *certainty*. When the trees are in bloom, hastening to display their leaves, there may come a frost, there may come many cold days, there will certainly come rough winds and clouds, but the summer will come all right in due time. Every day will bring it nearer. All the devils in hell cannot keep the spring from going on to summer, it is not possible, the forces of nature are by God so ordained that the trees must come to their perfection at the crowning of the year, and in like manner, the signs that God gives to His people, though they may not always seem promising, are very sure.

Have you trusted in Christ? Then, to you He has given peace and joy. Are you still trusting Him, and will you continue to hang alone upon Him, and to trust wholly in Him? Then, your righteousness shall break forth as brightness, and your salvation as a lamp that burns. The Lord will light your candle. The night may be very long, but the morning must come when the Sun of righteousness shall rise upon you with healing in His wings, and you shall “go forth, and grow up as the calves of the stall.”

As for the coming of our Divine Master, and the triumph of everything that is right and true, as to the fulfillment of His covenant, and the perfecting of all His everlasting purposes, as for the salvation of His elect and redeemed ones, heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word shall not pass away till every jot and tittle of it shall be fulfilled. God is with you, God is in you, and who can stand against Him? Trust in the Lord, even in the mighty God of Jacob, and you shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. Go your way, and say, “All is well, for it is in my Father’s hands; therefore will I look up, and lift up my head.”

And as for you who are *not* His people, begin to look out for a place to hide yourselves, for Christ is coming. O you earthworms, begin to look for the holes into which you will wish to creep to hide yourselves! I wish that you would so look out for a hiding place that you would find one in that Man who presents Himself as the best hiding place for every sinner who will trust Him. God bring you all to find refuge in Christ! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 21

Luke 1-6. *And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in her two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

This was literally true of the temple at Jerusalem, and today there remains nothing of it. It is also true of all earthly buildings and of all earthly things. However firm they appear to be, as though they might outlast the centuries themselves, yet the things which are seen are temporal, and like the baseless fabric of a vision, they shall all melt into thin air, and pass away. “The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

7. *And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?*

Those questions are always being asked, they are being asked at this very day about Christ’s second coming. They shall have no answer, for Christ Himself assures us that as the Son of man, He knew not the day nor the hour of His own coming. As the Son of God, He knew all things, but as a man like ourselves, He was willing to be a know-nothing upon that point.

8. *And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.*

This passage refers, in the first place, to the siege of Jerusalem, and in its second and yet fuller meaning, to the coming of the Lord. It looks to me that our Lord regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as “the beginning of the end,” the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when He Himself shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And as before the destruction of Jerusalem there were many false Christs, so will there be more of them the nearer the end of the world shall be. This shall be to us one of the tokens of our Lord’s speedy appearing, but we shall not be deceived thereby. “Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.”

9. *But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.*

Everywhere throughout the Scriptures there is this double message of our Lord—“Watch, for I may come at any moment. Expect Me to come, and to come soon; yet never be terrified as though the time were immediately at hand, for there are certain events which must occur before My Advent.” How to reconcile these two thoughts, I do not know, and I do not care to know. I would like to be found in that condition which consists in part of watching and in the other part of patiently waiting and working till Christ appears.

10-11. *Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great sights shall there be from heaven.*

Someone says, perhaps, “All this we have had, times without number, yet Christ has not come.” Just so, for these signs are not sent to minister to our curiosity, but to keep us always on the watch, and whenever we mark these earthquakes, and wars, and famines, and pestilences, then are we to think, “Behold, he cometh,” and watch the more earnestly. You know how it is often with the man who is very sick. It is reported that he cannot last long, you call many times, yet he is still living, do you therefore conclude that he will not die? No, but you more certainly expect that he will soon be gone.

So is it with Christ’s second advent. He bids us note the signs of His coming, and yet, when some of those signs appear, He does not come, all this is to keep us still on the alert watching for Him. Even in His own day, when He so spoke that His servants expected Him to come at once, yet He also added words from which they might fairly judge that He would not come directly.

12-15. *But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*

Nowadays, the fashion is always to meditate, and think, and excogitate a Gospel for yourself. To be a thinker—that is the very crown of perfection to some minds, but it is not so according to our Master’s mind. His servants are to speak, not their own thoughts, but His thoughts. If they will keep to His Gospel, He will give them a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. We are to be the repeaters of a message which is given to us, not the manufacturers of tidings. There is to be an exhibition of inventions very soon, and it is quite right and proper that there should be, but I pray that none of us may ever be the inventors of a new Gospel, or of new doctrines, or of new systems of theology, but on the contrary, let us settle it in our hearts that we will speak Christ’s Word all our days, and if thereby we are brought into trouble, we will depend upon Him to give us a mouth and wisdom, which all our adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16. *And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.*

How true that has been many a time! For how long a period the saints were martyred! And the days of martyrdom are not yet over.

17-18. *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.*

During all the terrible siege of Jerusalem, it is believed that not one Christian perished, for God took special care of the followers of His Son. They were the most hated of all men, yet nobody could touch them. None of them took up arms, for it was contrary to their religion, as indeed, if we are Christians, it is contrary to our religion to resist evil, but we are to bear and endure. The early Christians did so, and because of their very defenselessness, they were safe under the guardian care of the Lord their God.

19-24. *In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

And it is so even to this day. Here is another instance in which the Lord bade His people expect His coming, and yet at the same time told them that He would not come so long as Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles. "Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" means the time when the Messiah shall gather in those Gentiles unto Himself, for, when He shall appear, they shall look on Him whom they have despised, and turn to Him whom they have so long rejected.

25. *And there shall be signs in the sun,—*

As there were at the destruction of Jerusalem, and as there will be at the second coming of Christ. We have had a rehearsal of that coming in the destruction of the favored city, but the grand event itself, who shall rightly speak of it?

25-27. *And in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see—*

Whether they wish to see Him or not, "then shall they see"—

27-32. *The Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.*

As I understand it, for the first time, and afterwards it shall be fulfilled again. It is a prophecy that bears two meanings, an outer and an inner, it has been fulfilled once, and it shall soon be fulfilled again.

33-34. *Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life,—

Please notice that "cares of this life" are put down with over-eating and over-drinking, for men can be intoxicated and surfeited with care, either the care of getting, or the care of keeping, or the care of spending, or the care of losing. Any of these cares may cause a surfeit and a drunkenness, wherefore, "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life,"—

34. *And so that day come upon you unawares.*

All that you can see in this world, you are to regard as being doomed to destruction, that destruction commenced, so to speak, when Jerusalem fell beneath the Roman sword. Everything earthly is doomed.

You are living, not in your eternal mansions, but you are living a makeshift life, you are passing through a wilderness, you are pilgrims, you are sojourners, this is not your rest. Do not get to love this world, or to be taken up with it. Do not strike your roots into it, you are not to dwell here, and to live here always. You are walking among shadows, regard them as such. Hug them not to your bosom, feed not your souls upon them, lest, when that day comes, before whose coming all of them shall melt away, you shall be filled with amazement and shame.

35-37. *For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.*

You know what He did there, for—

*“Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”*

Jesus ever practiced what He preached. He said to His disciples, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always,” so He Himself both watched and prayed.

38. *And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.*

May we all be willing, not only to hear Him, but also to heed what He says! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—343, 347, 364

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.