

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY.

IN THE INTEREST OF JARVIS STREET BAPTIST
CHURCH, TORONTO, AND OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH

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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1: 16.

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, June 24th, 1923.
(Stenographically Reported)

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

—Ephesians 5: 25-27.

HAVE spoken to you of the coming of Christ as the "blessed hope." In the first sermon, we found it to be the hope of the individual believer, the great which will result in the completion of His redemption. Last Sunday evening we thought of the relation of this great fact to the bereaved, where we noted that we sorrow not without hope respecting those who sleep in Jesus; there is a promise of reunion with them at the coming of the Lord.

This evening we shall consider the coming of Christ as the hope of the church, of believers collectively. A year or so ago, a certain great denomination issued a series of pamphlets on what they called "The Christian Hope." They were issued avowedly for the purpose of neutralizing the effect of premilliarism; and they went to the length of denying that Christ will ever come again in bodily form. I have said it before, and I say it again, that I don't know whether ever in history a body of professed believers, did ever officially issue quite so much poison in so small a compass. Those pamphlets constituted an implicit denial of practically every fundamental of the faith. They were written to tell us that Christ will not come again, and the doctrine of the Second Coming of our Lord in those pamphlets was represented as a menace to the church's well-being, and to its progress. I venture to share with you this evening the proposition that the coming of our Lord, the

essed Churches of Christ to-day as anything could possibly be. It seems though the thought, the energy, the means, of the Christian Church are aged by everything but the one thing which God has commissioned it to do. Our business is to preach the everlasting Gospel: "Christ loved the church that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." It is His purpose to "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," to bring people into such relationship to Himself that He may bless Himself to the world through us. The Church is described as "the pillar and ground of the truth". We are here to bear witness to the truth. As the oracles were anciently committed to His peculiar people the Jews, the New Testament Church has been put in trust with the Gospel; and we are here to bear witness to that truth, not to sacrifice the principles of this Gospel in order to effect a union with those who absolutely deny it. I wonder sometimes what the Apostle Paul would have said, or what he would say were he in the world to-day. I read in the papers this last week of the various religious assemblies in which the representatives of educational institutions have been pleading the cause of the institutions they represent, and insisting that there is no cause for alarm, that these educational institutions are doing their work in the world. And I have had right within this church case after case of people who have passed through those educational institutions whose character has been utterly shattered, who have been taught to deny the supernatural, to disregard the teachings of this Word, and to substitute for the Word of divine revelation mere human reasoning. Thus we are to find some common ground, some meeting place, whereby we can get the whole company of people together—albeit, at the sacrifice of God's truth. Jesus came to purchase the Church that it might be sanctified and cleansed by the washing of water by the word. And only as we hold fast to the testimony of this revealed Word, only as we yield ourselves to its precepts, and allow ourselves to be governed by its principles, and rest our hope for the future upon its promises, can God's purpose respecting His Church be fulfilled. I think if we could come clearly to understand that God wants to make better men and women, men and women unto Himself, "purifying their hearts by faith," making them to "grow up in Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ," we should be saved from the tendencies of the time. I want you Baptists who are here, and others who care to come, to understand our point of view in respect to these things. It is freely admitted that the Church has fallen upon evil times, that religion is at a low ebb, that public respect for the ordinances of God's Word, for the institutions of religion, is very much less to-day than it formerly was. I myself remember, within my comparatively short ministry, when it was a rare thing to find a minister who denied the inspiration of Scripture. I have been at Ministerial Associations where the man was a marked man who denied the virgin birth of Christ, who denied His essential Deity, who mocked the blood—it was quite an unusual thing. But I tell you frankly—and, I do not exaggerate in the least—that to-day it is an unusual thing to find a man who doesn't do it. Again and again, everywhere, you hear it. And in order to effect a restoration of the Church to its forfeited prestige and power, all sorts of expedients are resorted to. I attended, I think it was the first meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, when the question of Union was discussed. I listened to the debate for two days. There were many in those days. The case for both sides, I thought, was very ably presented. But I observed this one thing, that all the way through the conversation of those who argued for Union was entirely foreign to the teaching of

God's Word. They argued for a great institution. It was the Roman Catholic conception of the Church; it was not the New Testament conception of Church at all, they argued for a great institution. You might have your vicinations of truth; you might be old-fashioned enough to believe certain trines of the Bible were important; but you were exhorted to put aside personal view, to subordinate your personal opinions in the interests of a great movement toward Union. It was the argument of the market-place from beginning to end. I did hear several people, of course, quote John 17:21—"that they all may be one"—but it seemed to me that it was entirely out of place. It was to be a great organization, with some great central power, some mighty arm that was to take the club or wield the sword and compel the members to do its will. There is nothing of that in the New Testament; it is not God's programme for the New Testament Church. He came to redeem it; He shed His blood to save men individually, and "to sanctify and cleanse them with the washing of water by the word." And anybody who reads church history will know that movements of that sort do not tend to a deepened spiritual life, to an increase of spiritual power; but it does have the effect of leading men to measure things by the standards of the world, and to estimate spiritual values by mere bigness. You may have a great organization with great political prestige, with vast wealth, and it may with it all be utterly destitute of that power that can change human hearts, transform human lives, and regenerate men and women over again into the image and likeness of God. The day is coming, it is rapidly coming, when these differences will be more clearly accentuated. I have a growing conviction that the tendency towards ecclesiasticism in all denominations is part of the rapidly developing apostasy. I have heard a man say not very long ago: "There is one thing that is just as bad as Modernism and that is the ecclesiasticism that protects it." It is going on in the Baptist Denomination, there is an educational hierarchy that almost completely throttle the expression of the church's deepest conviction. You see it in the movement of these three bodies together in Canada, the centralization of power; and unless a new thing should be done under the sun, that centralization of power will result in still greater departures from the truth, and a substitution of mere human effort for the power of the Spirit of God. No friend, the hope of the blood-bought Church is in the coming of our Lord Jesus. He came "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." What for? "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." That is the programme of the Lord Jesus, to prepare a body of regenerated people, sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost, taught and developed by the principle of His Word, until in the fullness of time He shall come to find that body complete, and to present it to Himself as His own Bride—"A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

III.

Well now, that is a bit old-fashioned, isn't it? That is entirely out of place. A man who preaches like that ought, at least, to be in the backwoods somewhere. He ought not to expect a group of intelligent people to listen to him in an educational centre like the City of Toronto. He ought surely to be outgrown such an anachronism as that. But we need no other Gospel than this, because the Lord Jesus said, when He gave us the bread and wine at the Last Supper—"this till I come"—keep on showing this central truth; keep on proclaiming

ord's death until He shall come in power and great glory. This sinful world will need no other gospel than the Gospel of the blood of the Lord Jesus, until Jesus Christ comes. Do you believe that? Don't you see that the promise of the second advent of our Lord certifies to the finality of the Christian revelation? According to some of the moderns, the church is a kind of society for the investigation of religious truth. Dr. Woelfkin, Pastor of the Park Avenue Church, New York City, used to be an evangelical preacher until he became associated with Rochester Theological Seminary, until he got into the company of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Now he keeps step with Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, who denies every essential truth of the Gospel of God's grace. But Dr. Woelfkin says in effect: "This is what I believe to-day. But I do not say I shall believe this next year." There is no finality according to these gentlemen; there is no place upon which a man may set the feet of his faith, and say, "This is the rock, and here I stand." They cannot say: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

But let us get a clear view of the second coming of Christ. I am not going to quarrel with you, my friend, as to whether you believe He is coming before or after the Millennium. I have no hesitation at all in declaring myself a pre-Millennialist. I believe we could have the Millennium before Christ comes—I will talk to you about that next Sunday—if God so ordered. But I do not believe we shall have the Millennium before He comes, because it is not in His plan and purpose. But what I want to get into your mind is this: that the doctrine of the Second Coming, the personal visible coming of Christ, is absolutely essential; it is a fundamental of the faith. And the man who denies that will deny everything else. We need not spend any time disputing about the things that are of secondary importance. But if we have that clear view that Jesus is coming again, then we can hold fast to our Gospel till He come. The Lord would not have given us the Gospel, and said, "Do not change it. Keep on preaching it—preach, preach—until I come back," if He had not put within that message the potentiality adequate to the world's need, to effect His purpose in this dispensation. The Gospel may not be equal to the carrying out of some of the programmes which men have arranged for themselves—may indeed utterly fail in this; but it is perfectly adequate to give effect to God's programme; because He put us in trust with the Gospel, and bade us keep on preaching it until Christ shall come again. Therefore, notwithstanding the spiritual declension of the time, the wholesale departures from the faith, those of us who believe that Jesus is coming again are not in the least discouraged. Just as those who crucified the Lord Jesus fulfilled the Scripture denying Him, so to-day those who deny the doctrine of our Lord's return are, by their denial, only fulfilling the Scripture; for it is so predicted here again in the pages of this holy Book.

Now, I say, dear friends, we may have hope for the present and for the future, because our Lord Jesus has announced that at His coming He will present to himself a glorious church. "O yes; there will still be sin upon the earth then. 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' When He comes, it will be as it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot; 'Iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.' If you get the conception that the Gospel is designed to be a means of universal moral sanitation, and you see the Gospel is not effecting that, well, possibly you will have to go to Chicago University and take a course in social service

to learn how to improve this or some other place. But if you see that that is not what the Lord says He will do in this dispensation, but that He will get His Bride ready so that she will put on her beautiful garments against that day when it shall be said, "For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"—then we shall look forward to that day with joy and hope, and eager anticipation; and we shall not be discouraged by all the shadows through which we pass, and all the opposition with which we meet. We shall say, "It is the Lord's programme, and we will abide by that."

IV.

Just this word to any who are here this evening who are not in Christ. Are you a member of the church? "Yes, sir. I am a member of the Baptist church." Well, if you are, you have at least professed to be a Christian. But you may have made a mistake. I have known people who were members of Baptist churches who had never been born again. They had been baptized but had never been born again. I want to say, my friend, that membership in a church will not save you. You may be a member of a Presbyterian church, a Methodist church, an Anglican church, a Congregational church, or some other section of the Christian church, but it is not of such affiliations the text speaks. This is speaking of membership in the body of Christ. Are you united with Him? Have your sins been washed away by His precious blood? Have you been quickened by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost? Have you been called out from the world? Have you been by His grace separated from the old life? Have you had an actual experience of that which was symbolized in the ordinance you witnessed to-night? Remember, I urge you, not to trust to the ordinance. The ordinance has its place, and it is of great importance as a symbol of a Christian experience. But have you passed through the grave of Christ? Have you been crucified with Him? Are you one with Him in His death? Have you experienced in any measure the power of His resurrection? Do you know Him and the power of His resurrection? Are you a member of His body? Are you conscious that He is your Head, and do you receive your life from Him? Then, if you do, you may well look forward to the marriage day to the day of His appointment, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

I confess that the truth of the second advent has been for many years the greatest inspiration of my life. I motored to Niagara this week, and remembered coming over that road two years ago with my friend, Dr. Stratton, when we had to turn off the road and make our way through something that looked like a ploughed field. And he said, "Well, I suppose you know this sometimes have to get worse before they can get better. And it may be that the old world is on a detour just now, and that when the Lord comes we shall find that the road for His triumphal progress has been prepared." I went over the same road again this last week, and I began to think that the engineers who kicked up such a fuss a couple of years ago were not so bad at all. It was really quite passable. I remember a brother saying here in one of our after-meetings, "We have to disturb the present in order to improve the future." And that is true. Only let us get our eyes on that great truth that in the end—I do not know when it will be; I do not know how long the road is—but that in the end Jesus is coming again. He is certainly coming again, and when He comes His programme will have been carried out to the letter, nothing will have failed of all His plan and purpose. As His Word was fulfilled to the minutest detail in His first coming, so will every single proph-

fulfilled that relates to His second coming. He will complete the work of redemption even as He finished the work of atonement. And when He comes the bride will be ready, and we shall go in to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Do not listen to those who tell you that the Gospel is a failure. Have ears for those who would teach you that the purposes of our sovereign God and King can by any power in earth or hell be frustrated. God will go His way, and Jesus will come. Oh, may it be ours to know Him as our Father, to trust Him wholly, that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming. Let us pray.

CHURCH NEWS.

Our 10.30 Communion Service.—During the last six months the number of people who gather around the Lord's table each Sunday morning has practically doubled. It is an excellent beginning for the day to meet with those who find joy in remembering the Lord in this way "till He come." Can you not join us next Sunday morning?

The Sunday School Picnic.—We thought last year that nothing could surpass the joyful fellowship and happy time experienced by old and young, but last Wednesday showed us in a fuller measure what a happy, wholesome time we may have when the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst. As always, the true secret of happiness is found in making others happy, and everyone seemed to have discovered this secret and to have determined to lose sight of self in an effort to secure the children's pleasure. Uncle Hutch and Cousin Fred fathered the whole party, which numbered about eight hundred, and, needless to say, everyone was "daddied" to the full.

Mrs. Brown seems to know how to estimate picnic appetites, and we had a happy hour around the Father's table.

But best of all was the hour of praise when the whole company came together in a huge circle, as happy a family as could be found anywhere, and joined to the praise of Him who was in the midst. The Pastor led us in thanking God for the glorious day with Him and with each other, and thus ended one of the happiest and holiest picnic days we have ever known.

August Bible Conference and Evangelistic Campaign.—Plans are not yet complete for our great evangelistic effort during the month of August, but we mention it here that you may have it on your hearts when you approach the Throne of Grace. We believe there is no time when the enemy's fire is quite so strong as in the summer months, when the individual and the church are invited to take a holiday. We have learned from the past two years that God works in a special way the fort that is manned, and taking the offensive in the hot days of August. Plan to join us in this effort to win souls for the Kingdoms.

Our Open-air Testimony.—There was a great gathering at the open-air meeting Sunday evening following the regular service, and some accepted Christ as their personal Saviour. Next Sunday the Pastor will speak on "What

if the critics were right?" and you who pray, ask that the steps of many are troubled in heart, may be directed by the Holy Spirit to this meeting.

A Gift from the Southland.—As we go to press we are in receipt of a letter from a friend in Los Angeles, expressing gratitude for the messages of Gospel Witness, and enclosing \$30.00 that its ministry may be extended. With this gift comes through one of His servants, we receive it as direct from Him in answer to special prayer at this time of endeavour to underwrite the cost of publication. May this be but the earnest of still larger gifts God is waiting to bestow as we wait upon Him for our need.

Have You Replied to the Pastor's Letter?

The Pastor has personally opened each letter that has been received in reply to his of the 6th inst. respecting The Gospel Witness, and has been greatly gratified by the splendid generosity of the subscribers. The desired amount, however, can only be realized by each member doing his or her best, but if those yet to be heard from respond as have the subscribers to date, we shall go over the top. Those who have not replied, kindly do so at once, or put envelopes on the plate not later than Sunday.

JARVIS STREET CHURCH DIRECTORY.

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The Church Calendar

Sunday. For the week beginning Sunday, July 15th, 1923.

10.00—Prayer Service in the Church Parlor. Mr. George Greenway.

10.30—Communion Service.

11.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.

3.00—The Bible School will meet.

6.00—Prayer Meeting in Church Parlor.

7.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.

8.45—Open-air Service about the platform on the church grounds.

Pastor will preach. Subject: "What if the critics were right?"

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 8 o'clock—Meeting for Prayer.

Tuesday and Thursday, 9 o'clock—Open-air Services.

The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday: Bible School.

Evangelistic Service, 7.00. Mr. W. J. Hutchinson.

Wednesday, 8 o'clock—Prayer Meeting.