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

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IS THE COMING OF THE LORD IMMINENT?

A Sermon by Rev. E. E. Shields, of Chicago

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, November 17th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

"Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."—Luke 21:34.

Before beginning the discussion of the general subject I want to make some observations with respect to the doctrine of the Lord's return. The doctrine is a part of the revelation of God—not all of it. If one preaches about the second coming of the Lord every Sunday one cannot possibly cover all the doctrines of grace; something will necessarily be omitted; and a wrong view of truth will be imbibed by those who hear, if Sunday after Sunday that truth is preached to the neglect of Christ's first coming. We need to teach about sin and judgment, about the cross where the guilt of the world was expiated; we need to teach about justification by faith, about the goodness of God to the sons of men, about His Saviourhood, about His shepherding of His people, about the resurrection and the final judgment. The doctrine of the coming of the Lord has its place, but it does not constitute all of the gospel. It is the hope of the church, and the Lord's Supper which we observe regularly points to it: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come.*"

Beware of seeking to become prophets in this matter. As far back as eighteen hundred and seventy-seven Sir Robert Anderson in his book, "The Coming Prince", issued a warning against that very thing. And it is prevalent in our day. On this continent—and perhaps the world over—people are assuming the function of prophets, undertaking to identify the antichrist, where he is to appear, and in some cases the time of the Lord's return. Notwithstanding all the disappointments of the past, there are people at this day who are undertaking to set the time for the Lord's return for His people.

It is possible for men to be puffed up through their knowledge of the Word of God. Paul said, "I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power."

"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Some people have an intellectual delight in the doctrine of the Lord's coming, who never lay its solemn truths to their hearts. Let us beware of seeking to be prophets, especially of seeking to be wise above that "which is written". "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Let us stick to the word of the living God, and not dare to add to His revelation. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this-law."

God has a purpose in His revelation. There is not one word too many: there are quite sufficient. The divine revelation is absolutely sufficient for the fulfilment of the purpose of God in that revelation. Do not add to it, nor take from it, nor wrest the Word of God. I believe the Word of God: I believe all of it. There is very much that I do not understand, but hope to understand more clearly in the days that are to come.

There are not wanting some who speak of the Old Testament as though it were closed and obsolete, and know not that we cannot understand the full-orbed revelation of the New without a knowledge of the things revealed in the Old.

The Book of Revelation is a puzzle to many—it is a puzzle to me, and to everyone else. I do not understand it; but there are things there that are positively wonderful. A minister of the gospel said to me, "It is a closed book." Is it? Listen: It is "The Revelation"—not a riddle, but a revelation—"of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ,

and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy"—even if they do not understand it—"and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Read this book. Take some of the time you are accustomed to give to reading that which is not edifying, and read chapter after chapter. Get into the spirit of it. Do not be discouraged if you fail to understand it all; for, in any event, it will speak to you of Christ. It is a revelation of Him. It is intended to reveal Him, His glory, His power, and the place the Father has given Him.

One may say, "It is entirely a book of symbols." No, it is not. And if it were, the Old Testament is largely a book of symbols; and do you discard the truth because given in picture? Is it any less real because brought to us in symbol and shadow? The parables of Christ are given to us in picture. The unseen and the eternal are presented to us under the similitude of earthly things. We are to understand unseen things by those that are seen, and come to an understanding of truth better because thus conveyed to us. Symbols there are undoubtedly in the Book of Revelation, but what do those symbols mean? What do the bread and wine mean to us in the ordinance of the Supper? His life given for us. And the symbols written into this book stand for realities.

John said, "In the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." I suppose John actually saw the representation of a lamb, and he was able thereby to think of Christ's sacrifice. Perhaps he remembered what John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

But there are things here as clear as daylight which have not yet taken place. From the standpoint of John's vision, they were "shortly" to come to pass. If they have not yet taken place we must remember that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day". That was only the day before yesterday with God, and that is a short time to the Ancient of Days. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness."

In the Book of Revelation there is presented the figure of some great personality who will open his mouth in blasphemy against God and them that dwell in heaven, and it is said that all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. Has that taken place? No; it is yet to come.

Then I read of the false prophet who will arise and work miracles in the presence of the people. He will cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men. Has that taken place? No! Then it is yet to come. I read of a time when the beast shall be "taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." I read of a later time when the devil that deceived them—and it is at least a thousand years afterward—was cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night. I read of a time when there shall be set a great white throne. Someone says, "White is a symbol. Do you suppose there will be set a real white throne?" I do not know. It is not important that we should know. But that whiteness speaks of the righteousness of Christ, of the blazing holiness of His judg-

ment, of the absolute impossibility of any man's standing before that throne to open his mouth before God.

I read that "the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

I read also in Revelation that John saw thrones, and "they sat upon them". Who? Who but the King? "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Where? On the earth. It is not until then that the resurrection of the wicked dead takes place. Read it for yourselves.

Let me read you one proof-text in this connection: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Let us not reckon out any book of Holy Scripture: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." Let me say again: it may be that God has not made a full revelation of His plan concerning last things. The scheme which some Bible students have is based upon the assumption that God has revealed a full plan, and that we ought—and may—know it. Certainly they know it! If they cannot find something to rest their statements upon, they will jump a hundred yards, turn all kinds of somersaults to bridge the space where their scheme falls down. I speak of no one in particular, but I want to impress upon you the necessity, in discussing this or any other doctrine of Scripture, of having the Word of God for a basis.

Beware of tradition. For example, thousands of people believe in infant sprinkling—good, godly people, whose very presence is a benediction. They love the Lord, they know Him; yet they persist in that error because they have thus been taught. Know the Book. "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Stick to the Word of God, and be not led away by any assumption of man. Do not take what I say: read the Book for yourselves. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you out of the Word of these glorious truths—because Christ is coming. He is surely coming by and by.

I.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "THE COMING OF CHRIST"? It may even be possible that there are some here this evening who have but a hazy idea of what is meant when we speak of the coming of Christ, someone who has not been taught of these things, who believes things are to go on always as they are now. Even many professing Christians have not been taught to look for the coming of the Lord. The Scripture nowhere teaches us to look

for death: it teaches us to be prepared for it, but it teaches us to look for the coming of the Lord. Jesus Christ Himself so taught. He said to those who surrounded Him in the days of His flesh—He did not give them full assurance that His coming would be long delayed: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

On one occasion when I referred to this question, and called attention to the fact that the number of heathen to-day, relatively, is greater than it was a hundred years ago, at the beginning of the present foreign mission movement, a pastor approached me afterward and said, "What do you mean, in the face of all that has been done to evangelize the dark nations of the earth?" "Just this, that the population of the earth is increasing at a faster ratio than are the Christian people." You people who believe in "bringing in the kingdom of God", a new social order: let me say this. God never gave to His church, or to any individual, the job of "bringing in the kingdom of God". He did say, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is our business to preach Christ, not to bring in any social order, not to reform governments. Christ taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." The appeal was to God, that He would bring in the kingdom. It is not the church's business. It is our business to witness for Him, and we are given the hope of His coming. We are not taught to look for death, but for Him. We are to be a separate, peculiar people. God, in this age, has visited the Gentiles, taking out of them a people for His name. We are to be separated unto Christ, living for Him, dying for Him if necessary, following hard after Him all the way. "Ye are my witnesses", said God to Israel; and He says it also to us.

What, then, is this coming of Christ? If we are not to look for death, if we do not expect the coming of the kingdom before the King comes, what is that coming? Spurgeon said, "I think when the kingdom comes, the King will be here." Christ says He is coming "in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." He is coming again!

Why is He coming? He said, "If I depart, I shall come again." Just so surely as He went, will He come again. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." This is the only hope of the world. As you look abroad on the world to-day, what other hope is there? Is there any peace? Is there any assurance even of life in the years that are before us? Everything is shaken. The only hope the world has is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ "in power and great glory".

But someone says, "Will he come all the way to earth? Will his feet stand on this earth?" Yes. The Book says so. Ultimately, He will come all the way. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and

remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." We shall not precede them: they will not precede us. The resurrection of the righteous dead will take place while the feet of the saints are firmly on the earth. The greatest miracle of all the ages will be when Christ comes again, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible, when God Almighty will say exultingly, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" When He looks down upon His glorified saints, those who have repented and believed in Him, as He sees them come forth from the grave at His call, how He will rejoice. Surely if, when "we make His soul an offering for sin", He sees of the travail of His soul, and "is satisfied", He will exult exceedingly in that great day, when He "shall change our vile body (the body of our humiliation), that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." We shall be beautiful some day! We shall be good-looking some day! When all the curse of Adam's sin—and ours—is done away, and we rise glorified in the likeness of the Son of God.

Those of us who are still alive at His coming shall be "changed": "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be *changed*." There are some saints who will never taste death, who will never die. Moses died at Nebo: Elijah went home by a whirlwind out of heaven—types perhaps of the two branches of the redeemed at the resurrection. There are those who will not die; but, by the power of God, in their homes, in railway trains, in church, on the street, at their business, perhaps in an aeroplane, on some leviathan at sea—wherever they may be, by the power by which the worlds were framed, they will be brought together, men and women, boys and girls, and will be changed into the likeness of the Son of God. Then together, those who have died in past ages, and those who will be alive at His coming, will be "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

What else will He do when He comes? "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is coming to judge men! The oath will die upon the unclean lips. The drunkard will be found in his cups. The thief will be apprehended. The man with the name of God blasphemously upon his lips will be judged. The false prophet will be revealed as he is, and judged by an angry God. He "shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

What else will He do upon earth? Many things will occur. Peter said to Jesus, "Lo, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the

Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The twelve tribes of Israel are just as real as Canadians, and they are in existence to-day. Jesus wept over His Jerusalem and said, addressing the earthly city, not the heavenly city, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Jerusalem has not said it yet; therefore it is to say it by and by. When He was crucified Pilate put up the accusation, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." The chief priests objected, saying, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written."

Mystery? Yes. Of course, it is a mystery—but it is written. Read the eleventh chapter of Romans. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel." Judicial blindness is visited upon them because of their rejection of Christ—"until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in . . . concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sake." What a mystery! Read it, and wonder. It is in that connection Paul exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Come to that scripture reverently, humbly; remember that it was indited by the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to give you light as to what it means.

The Word of God says that the time shall come when "it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers." Read Ezekiel, chapters thirty-seven to thirty-nine. Israel was divided under Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Jeroboam took ten tribes, while two remained with Rehoboam. From that day on there were two lines of kings, Israel or Ephraim; and Judah, the southern kingdom. Both these separate nations sinned greatly against God, and judgment fell. Israel went into captivity, and have never come back. They are spoken of as "the lost ten tribes". But they are not lost; God knows where they are. They are coming back from China, and from India. They are coming back—not in great numbers as yet. James writes his epistle to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad".

Judah went into captivity, and a section of it came back. But from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in eighteen hundred and seventy to this day Jerusalem has not been possessed by Israel. But the Lord has promised: "I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." When? It will be fulfilled in His time. "The word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God." It will take place in His glorious day.

But read through Isaiah—all through the book. Read through Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos—all the prophets—and find out what God has to say about these things. Our Lord will come to earth by and by: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very

great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." And in the same prophecy, "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Somehow the marks of Calvary are to identify the Lamb to Israel. They shall know Him by the print of the nails in His hands. I do not understand it, but it is written.

II.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HIS COMING? IS HIS COMING IMMINENT? Is it likely to happen to-morrow, or Wednesday, or before next Sunday? Will it happen next month—before Christmas? Would it not be good news if we knew He were coming then? Toronto would not sleep if it knew that Christ were coming next week. All the bridge parties would be called off. All the dances would be cancelled. There would be no dances in the parish houses in this city; there would be no exercise in any gymnasium in any church during that week. The workers of iniquity, too, would begin to halt, and say to the preachers, "Now, you preachers, you who tell us at this date that Christ is coming, says it thus in the Book? Then how is it you have allowed us to go on in our wicked works, and have led us into so-called social service, and all manner of external affairs, and have neglected to tell us that there is a God, that we are sinners, that the only way of salvation is by cleansing in His blood—that He is coming again?" There would be wailing and gnashing of teeth if it were certainly known that Christ would come this week.

Christians, we should walk more circumspectly, I doubt not. Then some of our criticisms would die upon our lips. We too should order our walk and conversation more carefully. We should pray more. We should have more frequent recourse to the Book. We should be more anxious to know what it says here if we knew that Christ were coming this week. But we do not know. He says, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." He said, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

But what are the signs of His coming? And *can we learn by the signs of His coming whether it is imminent or not?* Someone says, "He may come any minute." What about some of the signs mentioned in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew? "But they do not refer to the coming of Christ for His church: they have reference to his coming in judgment afterward. The *elect* spoken of there are not the Christian people but the Jews." Where did you get that piece of information? What right have you arbitrarily to say that the "elect" refers to the Jews, and not to the church? and that the signs that are there said to precede His coming are not to be taken as indicating His coming for His church, but in judgment? What do you know about it except from the Book itself? In that chapter it speaks of His gathering the elect by the angels. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." "That is the gathering of the Jews", a very large school says! Is it? I read in my Book that Israel will not be gathered in that way; they will be gathered as intimated in Zechariah. They will go back to their land in unbelief, and gathered afterward, not by the angels. "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."

God is going to make the land of Palestine prosperous. He will send some more Hitlers; He will raise up godly people who will help send the oppressed Jews back to Israel. I know Israel is spoken of as God's elect—but so is the church. I read that when Christ comes there will be the trump of God, and here again we have it: "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Paul speaks of it as our "gathering together unto him." We must be gathered from everywhere.

Then again: Who dares to say that the signs which are there said to precede His coming have reference only to His coming again in glory? In the first place, it is in answer to the questions which the apostles put that Christ said to them, speaking of the temple, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." "And," Said they, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Those who tell us that the gathering together of the elect is the taking of the Jews, overlook the fact that Christ was answering a question—or, if they do not overlook it, they suppose the possibility that actually Christ told them something other than that which they were desirous of knowing, that He altogether failed even to mention His coming for His church, the translation of the saints, and the resurrection of the dead, which were of paramount importance to them.

Those who put forward this theory tell us that by the words used we are to know; that the coming of Christ for His church is the *parousia*; and that His coming afterward is to be known by other words. In this very chapter Christ says, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." They tell us that *parousia* is coming for the church, and, on the other

hand, that this chapter where the same word is used refers to something entirely different. Then He says, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Read on: He is referring to the same thing. Nothing has intervened in his address: "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming"—the *parousia*—"of the Son of man be."

That is enough for me. And most certainly the signs that are there said to precede the coming of Christ are the signs that will precede His coming, not in judgment except as judgment is associated with His coming; but primarily for His church. I could go to the other Gospels, and speak in the same terms.

There are some signs which are to precede the coming of the Lord, and one of them is the *great apostasy*. Here is the strange thing, that Christ, Who knows all things, declared that through the apostasy there should come a falling away. "That day," Paul said—and he spoke of the same event—"shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Are we not in that day? If so, how long shall that day last?

There was a day when the infidels were outside the church, when the social reformers largely were outside the church. Now most of the infidels belong to the professed church of the living God. In a town where I was pastor I found that I simply had to stay away from the general ministerial association because I had either to stultify myself and deny the Lord, or engage in controversy all the time. The essential truths of the gospel were being challenged by those men constantly. That is typical of the day in which we live.

I am not sure but that the Roman Catholic Church went this way before us, and then added all the heathenish symbols. They know how to appeal to the eye, to the senses. The Protestant Church is going in the same direction. Go where you will, the gospel of Jesus Christ is becoming increasingly a rarity in the church of the living God. They tell us you cannot hold young people without entertainment and gymnasia. But God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is giving the lie to that claim the world over. He has done it in this church. I have travelled a good deal, and I find that the churches where they profess they must turn to these things to hold the young people are the places where young people do not go; and the churches where the old gospel is preached, with no other attraction, are thronged with youth rejoicing in Jesus Christ. I find it in Chicago: I find it in this church.

I was amazed when I went to England a couple of years ago. It is hard there, as here, to find the preaching of the old gospel. Let me finish this point by saying

that this apostasy, foretold by the Holy Spirit, has spread widely over the world, and it seems preparatory to the coming to power of the great antichrist. When the World War broke upon the world in nineteen hundred and fourteen, conditions had been ripening for it for generations. When Mussolini rose in Italy, the condition there was such that he was but the embodiment of all the country stood for. In Germany the man who keeps the people in subjection and fear is but the outcome of generations of training and education.

If you read the chapter from which I quoted you will find the coming to power of the man of sin is distinctly connected with a falling away from the truth. The preparation for the time of his power is one of the signs. When you hear someone under the guise of religion sneer at the gospel of the grace of God, when you hear them speak of the doctrine of expiation as the "doctrine of the butcher-shop", when you hear them blasphemously refer to "the gospel of the shambles", mocking at the real, unseen, spiritual, eternal things of God, when you hear them scoffing at the idea that Christ will come again in power and great glory, do not forget that your own ears are hearing the signs of the coming of the Son of God; for in the last days they shall say, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And just then Christ will come.

What of the worldwide distress? I spoke to a taximan about these things in the Book, and he said, "Those are the conditions we face to-day." "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." In the days of Christ when those words were uttered men could not look upon the earth. They did not know what was taking place in other countries for years afterward. Obviously he spoke of the day of telegrams, telephones, transcontinental railways, aeroplanes, radio,—when the world would be at everybody's door. For a generation or more back the Hindu has had his morning paper for breakfast, and has known the world as you do. The educated man in China is as well informed as we are. All the news of the world goes throughout the world, and the whole world knows what the world is doing—and men are afraid, their "hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

And well they may! Russia has the biggest army she ever had, nine hundred and sixty thousand of a standing army, tanks, aeroplanes, all the equipment of war. Germany is armed; France has a mighty army; Italy has another. The whole earth is in convulsion. All the statesmen of the world are in fear. Thank God for old Britain who keeps us steady in the turmoil. Some men there are who keep their heads in spite of all the distress. We are glad we belong to this Empire. But even so, we are going on to a terrible climax. This is one of the signs of His coming: "Distress of nations, with perplexity"; "Men's hearts failing them for fear." The very fear in your heart, unbelieving one, about the condition of the world is one of the signs that presently you will have to stand before the Son of man and give account of the deeds done in the body. If you have not repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ there is no hope for you, absolutely none: He only is your hope.

Are there other signs? "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." Someone asks,

"The literal sun, moon, and stars?" I think so. I read of a darkening of the sun in Revelation. "When will it come to pass?" I do not know. Perhaps within twelve hours, ten hours, five hours, so far as those signs are concerned. At the crucifixion of Christ prophecies were fulfilled in twenty-four hours that had taken fifteen hundred years to utter. These things that have been foretold all down through the ages by the prophets may be fulfilled shortly. He may come at any time.

Is the coming of the Lord imminent? I do not believe He will come until the antichrist has begun to come to his place of power. I may be wrong. Those of you who declare with such assurance that that is not so, that Christ will certainly come and catch away His church first, and later come to destroy the antichrist, remember that, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, speaking of that time, Paul says, "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming"—His *parousia*. Granted that you are right, my Bible-loving friend, that *parousia* refers to the next coming of Christ, and it says that at the next coming of Christ He will destroy the antichrist.

It is possible that His coming is imminent. There may be such a rapid development of the spirit of antichrist in the world that the antichrist may speedily be revealed; and when he is in the height of his power, the Lord Himself shall overcome him, and "destroy with the brightness of his coming."

I am thankful there is a Stronger than the "strong man armed"; that God has laid help upon One that is mighty; that He, the mighty Conqueror, took upon Himself the world's woe and guilt, and expiated man's iniquity upon the cross. He came into grip with the last great enemy, Death; He extracted the sting; He rose triumphant over the grave; and is able to say, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Unsaved man or woman, your feet shall slide in due time. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." But if you will turn to Him, you will find redemption through the blood of Christ this very night. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

JARVIS STREET ANNOUNCEMENT

The Pastor, though never seriously ill, has been incapacitated for work for a few weeks, his condition being occasioned by a simple fall on the stairs in his house. His physician would prefer a still longer abstention from any public activity, but the Pastor has decided to preach next Sunday evening. Other provision will be made for the morning service. He hopes by this means to be ready to take his Thursday lecture, November 28th, and all services the Sunday following.

The Pastor is grateful for the splendid way in which the work has been carried forward in the weeks of his absence, by all concerned. The pulpit ministrations may be judged by the sermons which have been published. The Sundays of the Pastor's absence the attendance at the Sunday school was as follows: October 13th, 1,142; October 20th, 1,227; October 27th, 1,245; November 3rd, 1,193; November 10th, 1,107; November 7th, 1,115.

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

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REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 49 Fourth Quarter December 8th, 1935

THE CONFESSIONS OF AGUR AND LEMUEL

Lesson Text: Proverbs, chapters 30 and 31.

Golden Text: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."—Proverbs 30: 5.

Bible School Reading: Proverbs 30:1-33.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—Neh. 9:31-38; Tuesday—Psalm 18:30-40; Wednesday—Eccles. 10:14-20; Thursday—Is. 1:25-31; Friday—Luke 12:41-48; Saturday—Rom. 16:1-6.

THE WORDS OF AGUR (30:1-33)

This chapter records the words of Agur the son of Jakeh. Some speculation is rife respecting the identity of this person, but certainty of his identity is not known. Following the designation of the writer, a contrast is indicated between that individual and God (vs. 2-4); the one lowly, the other omnipotent. The word of the Lord is then mentioned; a statement being given concerning its pure nature, and the sin and danger of adding to it. God's word may be confidently trusted; and, being all-sufficient, it requires no additions. The danger of adding to the word of God is clearly evident in the teaching of Revelation (Rev. 22:18). The warning respecting taking from the word of God is also worthy of consideration (Rev. 22:19). In general, false religion, as Roman Catholicism and Christian Science, add to God's word; while Modernism takes away therefrom. See also the command given to Israel respecting this matter (Deut. 4:2).

Several brief sections follow these opening words. First, there is a prayer to be delivered from wickedness, and from the extremes of poverty and riches. The very poor person is faced with the temptation to steal; while abundant prosperity inclines men to forsake God. The medium is the ideal, and with such there ought to be contentment (I. Tim. 6:8). Riches, though much sought after, are often a curse to those who procure them. The Israelites were warned against their danger (Deut. 8:11-20); and all are enjoined to lay up treasures in heaven, and thus avoid the temptation of earthly riches (Matt. 6:19-21). Warning is given respecting slandering a servant; after which, four classes of hateful people are mentioned: wicked children, hypocrites, the proud, and the oppressors of the poor (vs. 10-14). No explanation is necessary concerning the condemnation of these classes; this being indicated in various parts of Scripture.

Several groups of things follow the one given. The first of these relates to things which are never satisfied. These are the grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and fire. Note the insatiable nature and unquenchable desire implied, with the special application to each. After a statement respecting the mocking eye and its fate, another group is given—this time relating to things too wonderful for the writer to understand. These are: an eagle in the air, a serpent upon a rock, a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid (vs. 17-19). Note the unknown hidden quality, and the definite result, in each case. Possibly the next verse relating to the wicked woman (v. 20) has some connection with the thought of these verses. The action of this woman is covered up; and so, in a measure, was the action of each of these things. The next group relates to four things which society cannot bear: a servant when he reigneth, a fool when he is filled with meat, an odious woman when she is married, and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress. In the attitude of such persons, pride and arrogancy, with kindred evils, are manifest; and these so affect other people that disapproval and resentment are shown toward the persons exhibiting them. Some individuals cannot stand promotion or prosperity. They get swelled heads, and become unbearable toward others. The more prosperous a person becomes, or the higher up he may advance on the professional, business, or social ladder, the

more good sense he needs to keep him humble, and to give him a realization of his own faults and his neighbour's excellencies.

The next group relates to four things which, though little upon the earth, are exceeding wise. These are: ants, conies (mountain rabbits), locusts, and spiders (vs. 24-28). The first insects are characterized by sagacity in preparing their meat for the winter. They are also diligent in their business, and co-operate faithfully with each other in the accomplishment of their purpose. The conies, though feeble, have sense enough to lodge in a strong place. The locusts, though without a leader, yet go forth together in an orderly manner in search of their food; while the spider occupies an exalted position by virtue of its boldness and tenacity. We may learn lessons from each or all of these. They are all earnest and sincere in that which they are doing, while manifesting the characteristics indicated. The last group relates to that which is comely in going, exhibiting the majestic in bearing. In the group there is the lion, the greyhound, the he-goat, and the king (vs. 29-31). In these we find majesty, strength, beauty, bravery, and power. The closing verses indicate the foolishness of rebellion against a king firmly seated on his throne; and the certainty of effect following a cause; or of one reaping what he has sown (vs. 32, 33). We may note from a study of this chapter the possibility and advisability of learning spiritual truths from observation in the natural realm. There are truly sermons in stones, if we have the spiritual discernment to observe them. How may we gain clearer spiritual insight?

THE WORDS OF KING LEMUEL (31:1-31)

This chapter records "the words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him." But who this king was we know not. After this introduction, warning is given concerning certain vices of kings. These relate to sensual pleasures affecting women and strong drink, and to judgment. A ruler requires a clear mind, and a healthy body, in order to judge his people justly. He cannot be in the best condition if his moral nature is affected, or his mind dulled by liquor. It is wise for those who are not rulers to heed the injunctions contained herein. Note may be made of the exhortation to plead for those who cannot plead for themselves. The true Christian adopts this attitude. Our Lord preached to the poor (Matt. 11:5); and the servants of God act similarly at home and abroad.

The book closes with a beautiful tribute to the faithful wife and mother, described from the eastern point of view (vs. 10-31). Her price is above rubies. Her importance to home and nation is likewise great. Her characteristics are: trustworthiness, diligence, energy, industry, business acumen, prudence, charitableness, wisdom, love, and general helpfulness. Self-sacrifice is also clearly manifest. She lives for others all the time. Her plans are carried out for the benefit of others, and her thoughts are constantly centred on those things which will benefit others. She is unselfish to the last degree—aiding her husband, and blessing her children. With such a wife and mother there is bound to be happiness in the home. Loving consideration for others predominates, with, of course, a like response from husband and children. And God is glorified, and life is worth living. May the Lord give us more homes of this kind. The secret of such a home is found in the fear of the Lord (v. 30). When God is given first place in a home He blesses it with His presence and His graces. How may we have such homes as herein described? How may we increase the happiness in the home?

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

Calvary, Windsor

On Tuesday, November 12th, a reception was held in the Calvary Baptist Church, Windsor, for Rev. Wilfred J. Wellington who has accepted a call to the pastorate there. There were representatives present from Chatham, Wheatley, Essex, and the Ambassador Church, Windsor. The Pastors of each church spoke words of welcome and encouragement. Violin selections were given by Rev. J. Fullard, and a duet and a solo were enjoyed. Refreshments were served at the close of the meeting, and a very happy time of fellowship was enjoyed.
E. C. GALLOWAY, Church Clerk.

Wheatley

The Wheatley Young People were hosts to their sister organizations of Western Ontario Churches on Monday evening, November 4th, when approximately one hundred gathered for a joint meeting in Immanuel Church. In spite of inclement weather, cars loaded with young people from Chatham, Essex, and Windsor wended their way to Wheatley to enjoy a splendid programme in which the young people themselves had the major part. A very pleasing feature of the meeting was the spiritual atmosphere which prevailed. Vocal and string instrument selections, congregational singing, prayers, and message, all savoured of Christ and His redemption. Surely this is as it should be, and we are happy to relate this was evident among us. We are looking forward to more of these gatherings in the future where God's blessing is enjoyed and our Lord's name is magnified.

W. LEMPRIERE.

Missionaries' Activities

Our three Missionaries on furlough, Rev. and Mrs. E. Hancox, and Miss Florence Stacey, are kept busy visiting the various churches of the Union, and their ministry is greatly enjoyed by all.

Friday, November 15th, meetings were held afternoon and evening at Scotch Line Baptist Church. Saturday evening they were at Bobcaygeon where Mr. Hancox showed slides of the Liberian work. Sunday, Mr. Hancox preached for Mr. Gillion, and four more confessed Christ as Saviour. It is expected that Mr. Hancox will return to Bobcaygeon to assist Brother Gillion for a week.

Monday evening, Rev. W. E. Atkinson accompanied the Missionaries to Orangeville, where a splendid meeting was held.

Sunday, November 24th, Rev. E. Hancox is preaching at Runnymede Road morning and evening, and Sunday, December 8th, at Mount Pleasant Road.

Miss Stacey will be speaking at Waverley Road Baptist Church Sunday school on Sunday, November 24th, at Runnymede Road on Wednesday, the 27th, and at Maple Hill on Sunday, December 1st.

Hamilton-Brantford Association

The Pastors' and People's Conference of the Hamilton and Brantford District was held in the Bethel Baptist Church, St. Catharines, on Tuesday, November 12th. A good number gathered from the various churches for the afternoon meeting, at which Rev. R. D. Guthrie delivered a stirring message from Matthew 14:12, "And his disciples . . . went and told Jesus."

The business session followed Mr. Guthrie's message, at which election of officers took place. The former executive

was returned to office by a unanimous vote. President: Rev. C. J. Loney; Vice-President: Rev. H. H. Chipchase; Treasurer: Rev. J. F. Dempster; and Secretary: Rev. E. E. Hooper.

Following the business session the ladies of the Bethel Church served a delicious supper, and a time of fellowship was enjoyed by the delegates.

The evening service was conducted by Rev. C. J. Loney. Rev. H. H. Chipchase led the song service, and Rev. Jas. Fraser the devotional exercises. Mr. H. Giddings of St. Catharines sang very acceptably. The message of the evening was brought by Rev. W. E. Atkinson, Secretary of the Union. He spoke on "Paul's Great Defence of the Resurrection", based on the 15th Chapter of I. Corinthians. It was truly a marvellous message which stirred the hearts of all who listened. The Conference executive is greatly indebted to the Secretary for the splendid services he has rendered.

The next meeting of the Conference will be held at Shenton Memorial Baptist Church, Brantford, on Tuesday, January 14th. It was decided to invite the churches of the Toronto district to come into this fellowship, as they have no similar meetings.

E. E. HOOPER.

Here and There

Rev. Robt. D. Guthrie, pastor of Briscoe St. Baptist Church, London, will preach Anniversary services at Nissouri on Sunday, November 24th.

Rev. E. E. Hooper, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, St. Catharines, will preach at Briscoe Street Baptist Church during the absence of the pastor.

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