

THE COMING OF THE LORD – HOW IT AFFECTS US NOW

Luke 2:25-39

Matt 25:1-13

1 Cor 11:23-26

2 Pet 3:11-18

PJW In our first hymn, we sang at the end, 'Jesus, we wait for Thee' (hymn 235). I want to speak this afternoon in relation to the coming again of the Lord Jesus. But I do not want to get too involved with the detail as to the events. We know the precious truth of the various aspects of the coming of the Lord – no doubt we can refer to those. But my especial concern was how it affects us *now*.

I have read four Scriptures which, I think, bear on the effect that the precious truth of the near return of Jesus should have in our lives and in our pathways *today*. The first Scripture is really an example of how to live. The second Scripture is a warning. The third Scripture is a declaration. The fourth Scripture is an admonition.

The first Scripture, where we read, is very interesting. We have two people, Simeon and Anna. I know this refers actually to the *first* coming in of the Lord Jesus. But what I am more interested in is their way of life, their devotion, their attitude; and the way that they receive the Lord. We know that it was a dark time in Israel, and it is often linked with the end of Malachi where there were those few that feared the Lord, they spoke together, Mal 3:16. And then there are four hundred years of silence. But these two shine out as being typical of those in whom the Lord has worked, and they are ready for the Lord to come. We can speak about Simeon and Anna, two different characters.

The second Scripture, in Matthew 25, is well known. This is a warning: ten virgins – five foolish, five wise. They all looked the same outwardly, but five missed the Lord. A very solemn warning that is. The injunction at the end is to be ready: "Watch therefore." And we will see, throughout what we have read, that that is the key feature – watching for the Lord's return.

The passage in Corinthians is a well known Scripture about the Lord's supper – but the apostle here says, "As often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord, *until He come*," v26. Now, we remember the Lord because we love

Him; because it is His commandment; because we remember what He did for us. But here it is presented in a different way: we show forth His death until He come. And I think that means that we are identifying with the fact that the Lord Jesus does not belong here – and neither do we. In my mind it links with Revelation, where it speaks about “Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified,” Rev 11:8. And that is really what it is here, we are showing forth the death of the Lord publicly until He come, when that death will be vindicated for what it is, and the world will stand in judgement. The believer looks on to that day, even while he remembers the Lord in the scene of His absence.

The fourth Scripture looks right on to the end of the age. What a broad scope this is! But here we have some injunctions. Peter writes, “All these things then being to be dissolved, what ought ye to be?” (v11). It is a question of what type of persons we should be. We should have “the world to come” in our hearts. One Scripture speaks of the “world which is to come, of which we speak,” Heb 2:5. Well, I am challenged as to how much I am rooted to earth, or to today, but this is looking forward right to the end of God’s ways. But, even though, you might say, that is so far in the distance, it is to have a practical effect on our lives now, and that is really the gist of my burden for today.

I came across a verse in Lamentations 3:25-26, “Jehovah is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that one should both wait, and that in silence, for the salvation of Jehovah.” That is the attitude, I think, that Simeon and Anna had, and patience seems to come into this a lot. James says, “Have patience, therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord,” Jas 5:7. What are we to do? How are we to act while He is away? I think these are just a few challenges that are raised, and we can get help together.

AJD Yes, I am sure it is a good exercise. We sometimes think of our small numbers, what will happen in so many years’ time. This again suggests we are not thinking as positively as we should be. These things are all in the Lord’s hands (the final hour, of course, is in the Father’s hand, Mark 13:32), but the Lord’s coming should be what we are working towards, as you say.

PJW In Malachi, it says there were a few, and they feared Jehovah, and thought upon His name. But God remembered it, He took account, and maybe man does not take account, or makes a

bad account, of the situation; but there were only a few. You know, there are always more than you think. How many in Scripture thought they were the only one! And God was there, He was with them. "The Lord knows those that are His," 2 Tim 2:19. And there were four hundred years; you might say, 'What happened in those four hundred years?' God was still there, and His purposes were still going to come to pass.

And, just as the Lord Jesus comes onto the scene, you have these two dear people. 'Simeon' means 'hearkening' – listening to what the Spirit was saying. As we read through this, we will see that the Spirit is mentioned a lot, and I think that has a lot to do with this current exercise, that we should be in communion with the Spirit. He is our link with the Lord in the glory. And Simeon here was one who, it says, was "awaiting the consolation of Israel," v25. Well, that had been promised; if you read Isaiah you can see that it had been promised for a long time. But the way that Simeon acted, in faith, and in the power of the Spirit – he received the Lord Jesus into his arms. I wonder if, as I am waiting for the Lord to come *again*, I have got that same spirit?

AWGS You mentioned the word 'character,' and the way we are today. It says of Simeon that he was "just and pious." Are those two features important today in relation to our awaiting the Lord's coming?

PJW I think they have got to be, have they not? You cannot be someone who is filled with the Spirit and *unjust*. We are made righteous in God's sight, but we are to have *practical* righteousness, are we not?

AWGS I was thinking more of the latter, the word "pious." That is a feature that is sadly lacking in many Christian circles. But we need to see it in ourselves – effectively – today, because a pious man would truly be waiting to receive the Lord into His arms.

PJW Piety, as we understand it, is taking God into your circumstances, being utterly dependent upon Him, is it not? I am tested myself as to how pious I am in this materialistic age in which we live, and yet I think, before the Lord comes, we may be tested more as to our piety. What are we really trusting in? Here, Simeon was marked out by such characteristics. We can think of others in the Old Testament – Enoch was someone who "walked with God," Gen 5:24. I think a pious man would be someone who walks with

God. And what happened to Enoch? "He was not, for God took him." He was pleased with the pathway of Enoch, Heb 11:5.

AWGS He was the seventh from Adam (Jude 14), speaking to us of the truth of the assembly. So, at the end of the dispensation, in which we have our part, piety should be very much the concern of all of us, should it not? And ourselves individually, first of all.

PJW Well, like all these things, it has a bearing on us individually and collectively. We might speak later about what is testimonial, what bears His name, and what the world can take account of while we await the return of the Lord. But it is very affecting here, with Simeon, the way that he was divinely instructed; he had a communication from the Spirit, v26. CAC says something to the effect that 'There may be those before the Lord's coming that are so in tune with the Spirit that they may sense that the Lord will come in their lifetime.' Well, I would covet to have something of that close communion, to be so in touch with the Lord that I know His movements. It may not be open to many, but it is to that type of person, that is pious and just and walking in the Spirit, that the Lord can reveal such communications.

MJC These dear people were living in the future.

PJW Well, many in the world do not think of the future at all, or do so wrongly. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," Isa 22:13. But, sadly, that can rub off on believers. It is absolutely vital to have that hope – we have been "begotten ... again to a living hope," 1 Peter 1:3. I suppose the incoming of the Messiah had been promised for hundreds of years. But whether it was yesterday, or tomorrow, or in ten years' time, you get the impression that Simeon would have been the same. He was *ready* for the moment when the Lord appears.

KHW When the Lord does come in – actually – into Simeon's circumstances, he recognises Him immediately, does he not? Does that say something as to his acquaintance with the Lord?

PJW Well, I think it does. I am challenged as to that – how much I know. It was divinely communicated to him: that is one thing – are we in touch with heaven? Are we in touch with the Lord? And he knew who He was. Just a babe, you might say, like any other babe – but He was not, He was the Lord's Anointed, He was the promised Lord. And he received Him into his arms. You just feel that it is all coming to a head here – he takes Him into his arms and blesses

God. What a privilege Simeon had, and yet, you know, as believers, we are looking for the Lord to come – what is our attitude?

GAB So there is nothing in the future from the divine side that needs to be done. We are to be ready. I was thinking of the Lord's words in relation to the wedding feast – "Behold ... all things [are] ready," Matt 22:4 – *ready!* From the divine side everything is ready, and it is a question for us to be waiting and watching. There are two things – as well as waiting, we are to be watching.

PJW Well, that is part of my exercise, as to how we are carrying on now. The theme running through this is patience. I did not read James, where it says "Have patience, therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord," Jas 5:7. There is a lengthy note of JND's there about patience – it is linked with the words 'endurance' and 'longsuffering,' which we also get in one of the other Scriptures we have read. And it refers, we shall see later, to Paul's writings. Endurance – well, Paul says, "Tribulation works endurance; and endurance, experience; and experience, hope," Rom 5:3-4. We need to know what it is to endure, and to wait. "It is good that one should ... wait" for the Lord. We are not very good at waiting, are we? We get distracted.

GAB "He that has endured to the end, *he* shall be saved," Matt 24:13.

PJW I think this is is practical salvation.

GAB I think so.

ADB There is no suggestion, is there, that Simeon had wearied with his waiting? You mentioned that, whether it was today, or tomorrow, or in ten years' time, it would have been the same. Help us as to not wearying.

PJW Well, I think we are easily distracted by so many things. JND speaks in his hymns about

'The *constant* mind'
(Hymn 178);

'No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my *wandering* mind'
(Hymn 51).

But I believe that if we know the Lord, and love Him, we shall be wanting Him to come. Do we want the Lord to come? Do we want

to see Him have His rights? And I think that is a constancy which overrides everything that comes into our circumstances. What would you say?

ADB I think that is good, what you say, because I suppose the weariness comes, as you say, from being distracted by other things. That is where we need the second Scripture!

PJW Maybe we can learn something from the foolish virgins. But we need to build up this character of endurance. That list that Paul refers to in Romans 5 is a process, and as we go through the vicissitudes of life we are either hardened by them or we are moulded. And part of the character is waiting in patience. I would like to know more about that.

AWGS The Lord, in Mark's gospel, mentions the word 'watch' – He says, "What I say to you, I say to all, Watch," Mark 13:37. But He adds something prior to that – He says, "Watch and pray," Mark 13:33. Do you think the element of prayer needs to be very prevalent with us as to watching?

PJW Well, it is absolutely vital for the Christian's life, but especially in relation to what God is going to do. God moves in His own way and in His own time. Sometimes, even in personal things or family things, you can get frustrated – why doesn't the Lord act? But I remember hearing a song once, about the Lord: 'in His own way,' it said, 'in His own time.' You know, it is something we have to learn as believers, to trust Him, and He will act in His own way and in His own time. When the Lord came in here, God's timing was perfect. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son," Gal 4:4 – not a moment too soon, not a moment too late. And there were those there who were ready for Him.

AWGS So, Simeon's words are beautiful, are they not? "Lord, now Thou lettest Thy bondman go ... in peace," v29.

PJW Well, he had seen the Lord, and that was enough – he was prepared to go out of sight. I did not want to say too much about that aspect, but just as an aside, the death of a believer is a wonderful thing, is it not? They are in contact with the Lord, and they can go in peace. The triumph of the believer's burial is like nothing else – that we can commit them to the Lord, and it is a scene of peace, awaiting the final resurrection of the body.

AJB It is remarkable that he did not actually ask to be left long to see the Lord grow up and work out His ministry. He was satisfied with what he saw in the Babe, the potential that was there.

PJW I thought about that when I read it. Again, God's timing is perfect: He allowed His promise to be fulfilled, as far as that went and then He closed that up. But there was another chapter to be unfolded.

AJB Well, there was; but I was thinking, perhaps, very often our impression might be small and compressed, and there is very much more to be expanded, but do we value what has been revealed to us thus far?

PJW He was restful in knowing that all God's purposes would be fulfilled in that One. Now was the time that he was able to depart in peace.

AJB So, we may not know quite how the Lord's coming will work out, how every believer will be raptured and so on; we can leave that with Him, but we have His promise, and we know it will happen, and that can leave us with the same assurance.

PJW And there are many questions, even today, in our walk and testimony and gatherings – many questions; but, in a sense, if we've received the Lord within our hearts, and His presence is with us, we know Him, we can leave it restfully, in patience. I would like to know about this patience. What can you say about patience?

MJC I'm not a very patient sort of person naturally! But I do think it is important, because we are all being tested in these days, particularly with the outward circumstances of the testimony. And I was encouraged here by what you have read – it happened *in the temple*. Both of these persons were committed collectively. I am wondering if you have a thought on that?

PJW Well, I was looking the other day at Samuel and Eli. If you read it carefully, Eli was actually 'out on the edge' really, and we know the state there was pretty poor. But Samuel was right there, where God was, and he heard the voice of the Lord. We need to be, in that way, close, in the current of things, to hear the voice of the Lord. These two, as you say, were there, and it says of Simeon that "he came in the Spirit into the temple." I had thought too, going on further, of John, when he had got to the isle of Patmos: he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," Rev 1:10, and what was revealed to him! Amazing! But it was "in the Spirit." But here the temple is

where God chose to act. And here was someone who was in the real gain of it.

MJC Anna did not depart from it. I just wonder if we are going to get much more blessing as we learn to value the benefit of what is collective.

PJW Well, these two here, you might have said, had a rather solitary vigil. And yet the two of them are together there – and Anna, interestingly, “spoke of Him to all those who waited for redemption.” So there were others – God has much people in the city, Acts 18:10, and I think if we are inclined to be in that place where God is speaking, where the Lord is acting, if we are close to Him in those circumstances, if we see the Lord and are waiting for all that He is going to do, then I think we will find others.

Perhaps we can just move on to Anna, because she is an interesting person too. She departed not from the temple – what a service she had! She had been married for a short space of time, and then all that was put away, and she devoted herself fully to the Lord’s service. Well, I think there is a lesson in that for you and me. There is what is legitimate and, in a sense, we have to deal with that. In Paul’s terms, in Romans 7, we have to be to another, Rom 7:4. Death came in here, and she was free to serve the Lord in fastings and prayers; and it says she served night and day. Well, that is a challenge to me. I feel very paltry in my committal to the Lord when I read of someone like this.

AWGS Had she dipped her foot in oil?

PJW You will have to explain that one!

AWGS I am looking at Deuteronomy, the blessing of Moses as to Asher, “And let him dip his foot in oil,” Deut 33:24. Had she done that, in her own spirit – dipping her foot into the current speaking of the Spirit of God?

PJW And blessing came out of it. Her name, I think, means ‘grace,’ or ‘blessing.’ You can see that she had something, and she was able to share it too – that is something that is a challenge to me. We are very good at keeping things to ourselves. This dear sister had devotion and committal to the Lord, and she was able to tell others about it as well.

MJC "Whenever ye come together, each of you *has* ...," 1 Cor 14:26. We should make what we have, however little we may feel it to be, available.

PJW Well, this is an example for us. This Scripture, to me, is just an example of what we are speaking about.

AH And the other thing was that she gave praise to the Lord. That is the goal.

PJW Well, we started off with that in our hymn this afternoon – 'We wait for Thee.' We started with praise. One day, soon, the whole earth will be full with the Lord's praise, but there are those that can praise Him now. She was able to speak to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem – there must have been others she could share things with. We do need to share what we have. There are those that have a lonely vigil – there were those in Malachi; Simeon and Anna were, I suppose, like fish out of water, in one sense, in the religious sphere. And yet there were those who were awaiting the consolation of Israel. There was a hope that was promised – you know, God never fails on His promises, and they were prepared to wait in patience.

MJC It is interesting that there was the temple, with all the sacrifices going on, and all the services in relation to God, but they were looking beyond that. They were looking on to another day.

PJW They were really looking to the reality, were they not? Everything heads up in Christ, the promised One. They had the Scriptures, they had Isaiah – what is this consolation? "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," Isa 40:1. "Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face," Mark 1:2. Of whom was that speaking? That was speaking of the Lord, and here He was, and they were able to take it on board and to share it. But it is solemn that there is all that going on, which was really profession. The system of the temple – you think of what it could have been.

The sacrifices that you spoke about all pointed to the Lord. And there, one day, you might say unannounced (but it was not unannounced), the Lord was there. Of course, in Malachi it says the Lord "will suddenly come to His temple," Mal 3:1. Now, of course, that is looking forward to the end. It is interesting in the Scripture to see the short and the long view – and it all blends together wonderfully. The first time, in a sense, the Lord came to the temple

in grace. He suddenly came to His temple, but it was in grace. When He comes again it will be in judgement.

But, talking about what is real, and what is not real, perhaps we could look at Matthew 25. We know this parable well. Ten, I believe, was the required number for the bride's attendance, so ten were chosen. And they all looked the same. That is a challenge to us – they all looked the same, but they were not the same. You see, it is very easy to put on appearances.

I know this Scripture was used in the 19th century to redress the situation in terms of the Lord's coming – "Behold, the Bridegroom." That was a call. But the bride is not actually mentioned in this parable. In one sense, it is individual responsibility – each virgin had to have oil in her lamp. Five were foolish. I am just wondering whether we have oil in our lamps. It is all very well to put on the pretence – if someone had seen them walking down the road, they would have said they were fine – they had their lamps. But they could not have seen what was inside. Now, there comes a point when we are tested – what have we got? It is either the Spirit, or nothing.

AWGS Does this take us to the Laodicean epistle?

PJW Go on, what do you mean?

AWGS "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold" – it does not mention oil, but He goes on – "that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed," Rev 3:18. If we have not got this vital contract with the Lord individually – I know it is collective there – He will be knocking on the door, will He not? And He said, "If anyone hear my voice and open the door, I will come in," Rev 3:20. Do you not think we need to be ready to go to the Lord, because He is knocking on the door, and we have been in that category, have we not? Thinking of ourselves as being rich, whereby we have been poor.

PJW Well, it is a challenge as to what I have got. You see, here, they were told to go and buy, and while they went the Lord came – so it was too late. You cannot have someone else's resources, you need them for yourself. This is a collective thing in a sense, that the cry went up, "Behold, the Bridegroom." They all knew that the Bridegroom was coming – even the five foolish knew that the Bridegroom was coming. But five were not ready, and they went off to buy. Now, in a sense you cannot buy, can you? There was one in

Acts who saw these wonderful acts of the Holy Spirit; he offered money, and said, "Give to me also this power," Acts 8:19. You cannot buy it – it is a gift from the Father. Do we have oil in our lamps? It is at midnight – you see, they probably thought, 'Well, how long is He going to be? Is He going to show up?'

DW Is the oil for shining out?

PJW That is helpful – they would have needed the light, I mean in a practical way. I believe the bridegroom came to the bride's house, and they would have needed light for the way. We need light, do we not? Believers are to have light. The world is a world of darkness, and the only light is in believers. It is not reflected light, but it is what I have in my own heart, my link with the Lord and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

MJC Yes, it is the supply of the Spirit that is needed, because we cannot give it to others – I cannot give you what I have, neither can you give me what you have. So if we have not got it, we have not got it!

PJW It cannot be bought by any means. So we need to have that oil in our lamps. And then we need to be ready for the Bridegroom to come – it is midnight. You probably think, 'It is the last possible moment, He will not come until tomorrow' – but He came at midnight. Are we ready for Him to come?

The Lord looks upon His people; men take account of us; who has the Spirit, and who has not? From the outside, you cannot tell – it looks the same externally.

GAB Externally, they all grew heavy and slept!

PJW Well, that is another thing. The five wise were involved in that, and I suppose the Lord is gracious in that sense. We do slumber, we do grow heavy. We were reading in the Gospels, back in Worthing, about the garden of Gethsemane – *all* the disciples failed, did they not? And we all fail, but the Lord was very gracious – after that He says, "Sleep on now, and take your rest," Mark 14:41. But the point was that when the Lord did come there were those that had the light, and they were able to escort the Lord to meet the bride. They were ready, and they had what was needed, they had the supply of the Spirit to lighten up the way. And, you know, if we are waiting for the Lord Jesus to come, in one sense we are lightening up the way for Him to come for His bride.

JMW Is that why the Lord speaks of the torch as well as the oil? You want both, do you not?

PJW You can have the torch but no oil, but you cannot have it the other way round! So we have the framework, if you like. And that is the problem – a lot of people have the framework of Christianity, but there is no living, vital Spirit to light up the life of the believer, and to light up the life of the company. They all had those torches – necessary, but the oil is absolutely vital as well. And five of them did not have what was needed to escort the Lord, to escort the Bridegroom, in.

KHW Do we need to know something of the source of the oil, do you think? I was thinking, in John, you have the reference to “the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father,” John 15:26. Do we need to have something of the knowledge of those relationships that the true believer would have in his affections?

PJW As I have got a bit older I have thought I need to give more place to the Spirit. That is something that, maybe, when you are younger, you just do not quite appreciate. You come to the Lord in salvation, and then you get on, a bit older, and you realise that He is more than a Saviour – He is your Head; you understand assembly truth; and then you understand about the Father, and all that He does, and the wonderful realm that is opened up in the Father. But sometimes we forget the power of the Spirit. It is absolutely vital to the Christian. If you read Romans 8 you will see it is indispensable, and I think we need to know more about having this wonderful supply. The lamp would not work without it, and it could not be got by any other means – it had to be got individually, I believe, in type, from God himself, from His Father – “He will give you another Comforter,” John 14:16.

PKL I was just noticing that it was not that they did not have any oil, but the oil ran out. I wondered if it was something similar to Hebrews 6:4-6, where it says, “It is impossible to renew again to repentance those once enlightened, and who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God ... and have fallen away, crucifying for themselves as they do the Son of God.” Those persons really, as you have been saying, do not know the real truth of Christianity, do they? They come into the blessing of it, but they have not got anything to sustain them when the moment comes. At the end of the parable it says, “Verily I say unto you, I do not know

you.” It cannot be persons that have just failed, shall we say, for a time – it is a final thing.

PJW Absolutely. As we said, they all grew heavy and slept. But with the foolish virgins, there was a lack, there was something intrinsically missing, and that is the Spirit. We know that once the believer truly comes to the Lord they are given the Spirit – that can never be taken away. You cannot lose the Spirit.

SGP We know God gives not the Spirit by measure, John 3:34 – can you help us as to that?

PJW Well, He does not give it by measure. We can have as much of the Spirit as we want. “Be not drunk with wine,” Paul says, “but be filled with the Spirit,” Eph 5:18, and in that very passage it talks about the light of Christ shining upon them (v14). I would like to know more of being filled with the Spirit, because I think that would govern our walk and our ways and help us in relation to the coming of the Lord, in testimony here, and to be ready for when He comes.

ADB Do you think the secret is found within verse 3? It says the foolish ones “did not take oil with them.” So it is our lack of preparation, really, and casualness perhaps, which overrode this situation.

PJW Well, I think that is very interesting. They might have thought, well, they could just get it at the last minute – they could run down the road and get some, to be practical – but it does not work like that. We need to be marked by reality. Really, a true believer who has the Spirit *is* a prepared vessel.

MJC If we apply this to the beginning of the 19th century and that movement of the Spirit of God, we see that there were those who had the supply of the Spirit and who got the view of the coming of the Lord, which had been lost sight of in Christendom. And that really drew them out of what was around and laid the way open for the development of dispensational teaching, which was not really known from the early Church until that point. Then the door is shut – it marks the end of the dispensation.

PJW Absolutely, I did not want to get too involved with the different aspects of the Lord’s coming, but it is vital to know that. This is in relation, really, to the rapture, and the fact that we have a heavenly Bridegroom that is coming for *us* – He is not coming for those that are not believers, He is coming for His own, and therefore it becomes a fixed thing. We need to understand that: the

Lord is coming for His Church, His Bride; but that will only comprise true believers who are indwelt by His Holy Spirit. That is the link with the Man in the glory.

I just read this passage in 1 Corinthians because it appealed to me that we show forth – that is the A.V. – announce the death of the Lord until He come. As I said at the beginning, I suppose there are various reasons why we come together to break bread. One of them is simply because it is His request, love's command – "This do in remembrance of me," Luke 22:19. So we come together to break bread to remember Him. And that would include what He did, although, as we often say, at the supper it is *Him* that we are remembering. But then Paul goes on to say something else: he says as often as ye do it, "ye announce the death of the Lord, until He come."

Now we know that we will not need the Lord's supper in glory. So it must be something that we demonstrate while He is absent. And what are we doing? We are announcing His death. We are proclaiming that, in this very scene where we live, where our feet tread, He died.

AJD It is not exactly that there is much outward testimony, but it is something that we remind ourselves of, is it not?

PJW Well, there is the side in the Lord's supper which is private – the doors being shut. There is an exclusivity about it in the sense that it can only be appreciated by His own. In one sense it is not a closed shop, but only those that know the Lord can appreciate the Lord's supper. But there is this other side where we are making a public statement, we are saying that we as believers have an absent Lord. And this earth, this world, has rejected the Lord Jesus. The last the world saw of Jesus was on the cross. And publicly, as I put my hands to that loaf, as I put my lips to that cup, I am telling the world that I am identifying myself with the death of Jesus.

GAB We are owning His rights in the scene where His rights were denied.

PJW Well, that is just it. It is looking forward, in a sense, to a coming day – "until He come." I used to think that that was when He comes for us; I am sure that is included in it, and you do not want to get too technical, but I have been helped to see that it looks on further to when He comes to take up His rights. Because

what we are effectively doing when we break bread is reversing the judgement of the world.

MJC It is very important for every one of us to see that the Lord's supper goes on to that moment. It goes on, and will go on – there will be those on earth remembering the Lord until He comes.

PJW And it is even simply "as often as" ye do it. We have very good grounds for doing it once a week, because we could not bear to be away from the supper more than one week. But there is no prescription – it is love that determines it.

AWGS Is it important to see that we announce, not His life, but His death?

PJW We are not here going over our past history as to what the Lord has done for us, we are announcing His death.

AWGS And all that that involves.

PJW Well, it is a big subject, but can you help us as to what you think it means by announcing His death?

AWGS Well, it involves accepting what His death means in relation to my having no part with this world. That is the first thing that I think we need to understand, is it not?

PJW Yes. I was looking, as I mentioned earlier, at the passage in Revelation where it speaks about "the great city" – which of course is Jerusalem, where God's rights should have been maintained – "which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified," Rev 11:8. We have to understand the character of the world. It may be very nice in some ways, we may think, but spiritually it is Sodom and Egypt – it is that character which is under judgement.

AWGS It is the system.

PJW It is the system. And, really, the Lord Jesus Christ was put to death by that system. So we are really saying, 'Well, we know why the Lord has died, we identify ourselves with Him, but we are looking forward to that time when He is coming again.' I think that is why at the supper we move on, and we end up with eternity. So we can break bread to remember Him, and then the service of God flows out of that, and we look forward to the very end – "until He come."

MJC I find it easier to see the Sodom character of the world – the carnality and the corruption – than the Egypt character – which really is more the culture and the nice and the good and the wonderful and the interesting things. It all belongs to the world that has come under judgement.

PJW Well, Moses had to learn, did he not? Interestingly, we were reading that in Worthing, and it says there in Hebrews that he esteemed “the reproach of the *Christ* ...” – that was hundreds of years before Jesus was born! It says that he esteemed “the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense,” Heb 11:26. So he really was looking on to the future.

MJC He was living in the light of another day.

PJW Well, that is a commonly used expression, but how vital it is! What are we in the light of – is it today, or is it the day to come?

SGP What is referred to here, the coming of the Lord – can you say what that is actually? Is it the rapture of the saints, or is it when He comes with the saints?

PJW Well, I think it looks forward to the time when the Lord will come into His rights, when he will come back to this earth. We know, practically speaking, that from the moment of the rapture we will not need to remember the Lord, because we will be with Him, and we will not need to demonstrate to the world our allegiance to Him because we will have left the scene. What a terrible place it will be for the unbeliever when the rapture has occurred! Even thinking about that should sober us about the present time. But I think this looks forward to when the Lord Jesus comes into His own rights – the rejected King.

SGP When we think of His final coming He will come in judgement, will He not? He has kept His own out of the hour of trial (Rev 3:10).

PJW Well, in Malachi again it says, “The Lord ... will suddenly come to His temple,” Mal 3:1. That really links on, I think, with this, that it is when He comes. He is coming back to dispense justice, to receive the acclaim that is due to Him. He will come into His temple – He will really come back to where He should have had His rights. Those like Simeon and Anna that, really, were there before the time – they were anticipating all this, and their hearts were in tune with it.

MJC The main purpose of the millennium, as I understand it, is that the Lord Jesus should be vindicated and glorified in the very scene where He was cast out. If we keep that before us we can see the “until He come” in its perspective.

PJW As we break bread, we are remembering Him, and obeying His command, but also really we are getting everything into perspective. We are just watching and waiting for our Lord to return – not only to see Him, but even better, to enjoy His rights being exercised. If we love Him then we will want Him to be vindicated. It is as simple as that.

JMW So the effect should be in our own beings and hearts. I fear that we drift into the Lord’s supper as being an ‘ordinary’ occasion, and not retaining its vitality, and the effect it ought to have on our lives practically.

PJW Well, I think that is it, and really that is my burden this afternoon, how all these things should practically affect us.

AWGS Someone once said that the Lord’s supper should be one of the greatest preservatives we have, in keeping us from the world and keeping us in relation to Him.

PJW I’m sure that is right, if we enter into it. Again, we can do it in a sort of outward way – be like the five foolish virgins, really. We can look the part, can we not?

AWGS I am thinking of it in reality.

PJW In reality – then it is a preservative, and it helps to keep us in tune with the mind of God.

JMW And keep us constantly with fresh and real impressions of the Lord personally, not merely an ordinance, but the Person about whom that supper is. ‘As often as *I* eat the bread and drink the cup, *I* announce His death’ – for myself, I mean.

DEM This is what Simeon and Anna did every day, was it not, collectively? They came with an expectation of the Lord being made known to them personally.

PJW And there was a witness – she spoke to all. In a sense, what a witness it is! Brethren, the world even notices – Sunday morning, Christians going out again, every time. What are they doing? Even that is a witness to the fact that we have an allegiance to another Man in another world.

In 2 Peter 3 the apostle has already spoken about what is going to happen in the paragraph previous to the verses we read. Then there is the challenge – “What ought ye to be?” That really sums up my burden this afternoon, “What ought ye to be?” And then it says, “In holy conversation” – that means manner of life, how I act every day, what people see. That is a great challenge. “Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” Well, at the moment, this is man’s day, and really we are breaking bread, announcing His death, while it is man’s day. But we should really be thinking in the light that God’s day is soon coming.

MJC It is remarkable, because that day includes “new heavens and a new earth.”

PJW God will bring that in, it is all of God’s doing. We touch this sometimes, in measure, on the Lord’s day morning. And I think it is marvellous that we do – having broken bread, we have really *been* through this – it is like a journey. But we are to have this perspective. The point, as I see it, from this passage, is what wonderful happenings will be coming – “new heavens and a new earth” – marvellous! But it is to have an effect on us *now*. That is the point.

AWGS Is that the way we hasten the coming of the day of God?

PJW Well, I used to wonder about that. God cannot be thwarted in any thought of His (Job 42:2) – we cannot, in that sense, change God’s plans. But I think we can make them a reality in our hearts. By that we are in the light of the coming of the Lord Jesus – for us personally, then Him coming back to the earth, and, even further, we are living in the light of all that God is going to do. The Christian has a secret which the world just does not have. It is wonderful what privileges we have. We are let into the secret.

AWGS The day “to come, of which we speak,” (Heb 2:5): is that hastening the day of God?

PJW Well, I am challenged as to how real it is to me. Is this just something we like to talk about? It is a good thing if we do talk about it.

KHW “Wherein dwells righteousness” really involves a day when Christ will fill all things. Does that not come home as a challenge to our hearts, how much does He fill our hearts now?

PJW Well, we live in an increasingly unjust and unrighteous scene. The whole political scene, and even the professing scene, is riddled with unrighteousness, unfaithfulness. But, as we say, it is wonderful to have that fact in our hearts, of the King of righteousness. It says, "A King shall reign in righteousness," Isa 32:1.

MJC So we can all be diligent, v14 – the opposite of what we were speaking about, of going to sleep. It is easy to sleep spiritually, and to wake up one day, and wonder wherever you have been. But if we are diligent we will make progress – I am speaking for myself!

PJW I think we would all identify with you. But this is wonderful, there is this double edged sword, if you like – we are being stirred up to live in the light of another day. But, at the same time, we marvel at God's longsuffering. Peter brings in here – in the passage before – He "does not delay his promise ... but is longsuffering towards you, not willing that any should perish," v9. And here he says that you should be "without spot and blameless; and account the longsuffering of our Lord to be salvation." There are two aspects to that, I think, as well: it is salvation practically for us, as we are in the gain of it, but also God is waiting still, in grace, on men. I marvel at the longsuffering of God.

MJC It is interesting that you get what is active and what is passive in these verses. Waiting is passive – diligence is active.

PJW It is really something we need to reflect upon. We are without excuse here, brethren, really – there is no excuse for us to be unfaithful, not watching. Peter says here, in verse 17, "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things before, take care lest, being led away ... ye should fall from your own steadfastness." So there is no excuse, and I take that to myself. We need to take that individually, but as believers together too, that we stand in this watching and waiting attitude, waiting for the Lord to come.

MJC We are without excuse. We've had wonderful light and teaching that few other companies of Christians have had – and what have we done with it?

PJW Well, it is for all.

AWGS Do not forget what it says in the prophet Joel – "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty," Joel 2:25-26.

PJW Well, there is always the rest of our time. And that is a comfort to me – I have failed many times, but there is always now. And whenever we say 'now,' there is the rest of our time until the Lord comes, and therefore we have the opportunity now of getting right, and of sowing to the Spirit, and of watching and waiting in patience, with diligence.

AWGS And it does refer to oil in that chapter (v24) as well.

KHW Do you think growing in grace (v18), as well, would be a characteristic of our taking these things on?

PJW If I am filled with the Spirit, and know anything of His supply, I would grow in grace, would I not? It says "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." There are two things there. There is one thing that you are not to do, and one thing you should do. We are without excuse, but the Lord is gracious, and if we say now we are watching and waiting, He will give us His Spirit.

DEM It says, "The Sun of righteousness [shall] arise with healing in His wings," Mal 4:2. Those that are faithful in these days will find that healing. There will be that which is brought to perfection under the Lord's hand.

PJW The Lord is faithful, and if we fail He can make it good, and we can then be ready.

Chippenham
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