

The Hope of the Lord's Return.

by Andrew Bonar

The doctrine of the Second Advent is a powerful motivator for holiness and obedience, and it will be a time of full salvation and the greatest joy of all.

Scripture: Titus 2:12

Topics: "Hope in Christ's Return", "Holiness and Righteous Living"

Description

Andrew Bonar emphasizes the significance of the doctrine of the Second Advent as a powerful motivator for holiness among believers. He shares personal testimonies illustrating how the anticipation of Christ's return can transform lives, instilling joy and assurance in faith. Bonar argues that this hope not only encourages believers to live righteously but also fosters a deep personal relationship with Jesus, leading to a life marked by holiness and service. He highlights that the longing for Christ's return should inspire believers to remain diligent in their faith and to comfort one another with the promise of His coming. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a life lived in expectation of the Lord's return, which serves as a catalyst for spiritual growth and perseverance.

Transcript

The Importance of the Doctrine of the Second Advent as a Motive and Help to Holiness.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE EDINBURGH CONFERENCE, 1888.

It would be very pleasant and instructive to hear brethren relate incidents connected with this blessed hope, and its effect upon the souls of God's people. There are some very remarkable incidents. I may give a sample before going into Scriptural testimony to-day. There was among us, one who knew the whole truth in theory, and who had grace in his heart, but no joy, no assurance. He used to wonder why. Hearing a rumour that there was a good deal of talk in our congregation about the Second Coming of Christ, he said to one of our elders, "That's a subject I never thought about." "Well," the elder said, "set about looking into it at any rate." He said he would. A few weeks after he came with his face beaming, and said, "I have not arrived yet at a conclusion as to whether you are right or wrong about the Premillennial Coming, but I will tell you what has happened. I have not any hesitation now, in saying, Jesus is mine, and I am His." "But," said the friend, "what connection has that with your study of this truth?" He said, "The connection is this; I got so interested about Christ personally that I forgot myself. When I was taken up with the Personal Saviour, I found all my doubts gone." I don't remember whether he came to agree with us about the Premillennial Coming, for he left the place soon after. But was there not here a blessed lesson? The study

of this subject brings us into direct contact at every point with the living Saviour.

I remember going to see a suffering believer - a great sufferer. I sat down and began to talk with her. "Are you wearying for the end of your sufferings?" The answer I got was this: "I am not wearying for death; I don't care to think on death - it is an enemy; but, oh, if Christ would come! if Christ would come!" Was not that true spiritual instinct? We are not bidden wish to die, but we are a hundred times bidden to long for the Coming of the Lord.

Again, there was known to a great many of us, William Hewitson, a minister of Christ among us; and God, by him, did a great work in Madeira, where he laboured with Dr. Kalley. His biographer says that when the light of this truth broke in upon him it was like a second conversion, it so lifted him up. He used to say after that, that he had never before been able, as he now was, to rejoice in his work always.

May I add something more? I was very glad to get a glimpse from Dr. Cumming, and another from Mr. Riddell, of how they came to enter into this view, and I believe at some of the prayer meetings there were other like hints dropped. May I tell you the history of some of us in Edinburgh? It is about sixty years since I myself felt the first thrill of interest in this subject - when Edward Irving was preaching in this city. He had lectures at seven in the morning during the time of the General Assembly, and for two or three years in succession, on prophetic subjects. We used to go at six in the morning to get a good seat. But I remember what led me to decision was the calm reading of Matthew 24. That chapter decided me on this subject. I could not see a foot-breadth of room for the Millennium before Christ comes in the clouds. It is wave upon wave of tribulation till the Son of Man appears. Our Professor in the Divinity Hall was Dr. Chalmers, and we sometimes told him our thoughts on these subjects, and the opposition shown to us. He would most kindly say: "Oh, gentlemen, there is no harm in studying that subject; go on, and make up your mind. I have not arrived at a conclusion yet; I am looking into it"; and I am glad to say that before he died he ranged himself with the Premillennialists. From that date onward a little band of us began to set forth that truth. As for myself, I do not know that I have ever finished a Communion Service, from the day I was an ordained minister till now, without pointing the congregation to the Coming of the Lord, closing with that song of the Old Testament Church, looking through distant centuries, like Enoch, onward to the day of glory. Psalm 98. 4-9. The cherishing of this blessed hope, instead of hindering our work, has all along kept us at work, caring comparatively little for the politics of earth. It has been like oil on the wheels, making us seek to abound in the work of the Lord.

But it is time now, to come to the testimony of Scripture on this subject, "The importance of the doctrine of the blessed advent as a motive and help to holiness." We ought never to think that the mere holding of this truth will of itself raise any believer higher in holiness. There are many who do not hold this truth, and yet have outstripped those that have held it. But, at the same time, notice carefully that the germ of this blessed hope is in every believer. What is that germ? It is personal love to the Saviour; and you cannot have personal love to the Saviour without longing to see Him as He is. Oh, to see the head that was crowned with thorns, crowned with the crown wherewith He shall be crowned on the day of His espousals! It is written in Titus 2. 12 - the grace that brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Is it not plain that there must be an element of holiness wanting in that man who is not looking for this blessed hope? Some of our friends, indeed, very unfairly cast up to those who do not hold the Premillennial doctrine, that the last verse of Hebrews 9. 28 bears a frowning aspect on their prospects because it reads that Christ was offered to bear the sins of many, "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto

salvation." I have heard it said, "Ah, you see it is to them that look for Him: what will you do who are not expecting Him soon, in that case?" But the truth is, that all believers are looking for Him in their hearts, and the words really should be read thus, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (the multitude that no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people), and to them looking for Him the second time - " It is taken for granted that all who rest on His sacrifice are looking for Him, though differing as to the probable time of His arrival.

But let us now show you, very rapidly, eighteen features of Christian life affected by this truth. We might multiply the number, but these eighteen we can rapidly glance at; and I will give them, as far as possible, in alphabetical order, so that you may more readily recall them.

(1) When the Holy Spirit by Paul, wished to awaken the Church at Rome to fresh energy, how does he write? (Rom. 13. 11, 12), "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." He does not say, "You have just a short time to live"; he does not say, "Death is coming"; he does not say, "The night is coming," but, "the Night is far spent," "Day is coming." Let the prospect of the day coming stimulate you. (2) Again, when the Lord Jesus would strengthen us in confessing Him before men, He says that if you will confess Him before this adulterous and sinful generation, He will confess you before His Father and the holy angels" (Mark 8. 38).

Why refer to the holy angels? He will say to the angels, "These are My people, who came through trials you never were exposed to. They had to conflict with enemies and cold-hearted friends, and they did confess Me before them all." He will appeal to His holy angels to be witnesses that they were faithful unto death, and are now ready to receive the crown of life. (3) At another time, speaking of comfort under bereavement, notice the motive that is adduced. If we have been bereaved of Christian friends, many of us are content with saying to the bereaved, "Think of the happiness of your friends, to have entered into glory.

" But it is remarkable that it is not this comfort we are recommended to offer to bereaved Christians. That cup has blessing and comfort in it, but it is not running over; and we are presented with another cup full to the very brim. Sorrow not as those that have no hope; for the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and them that sleep in Jesus shall come back with Him. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4. 18).

In the thought of the Coming of the Lord there is a power to heal the wounds of bereavement that there is not in any other consolation. (4) And how are we taught contentment with our daily lot? "Be patient, brethren, to the Coming of the Lord" (James 5. 7). Be patient in the midst of all that might irritate and fret; be patient unto the Coming of the Lord. The husbandman has a long time of waiting till the seed sown appears above ground, and then he reaps the harvest; and we have given us the assurance that the very things that irritate and are apt to make us murmur and be discontented are seeds - if they are rightly used - of future joy.

All these circumstances of trial are sowing the field with blessed seed, and in the day of the Lord we shall reap fruit from those very annoyances and vexations that are so apt to interfere with holiness. (5) And how are we provoked to diligence in the Lord's service? In 1 Cor. 15. 54-58, after giving us a wonderful glimpse of Resurrection glory, when death itself shall be swallowed up (death swallows us up now, but we shall see death swallowed up at the grave's mouth on the Resurrection morning), the inference of unceasing, untiring diligence is drawn: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always

abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

It falls in with the parable in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, and Luke 19. 13, where the Master gives His servants talents to trade with, and comes back and takes an account of them, and gives them their reward, "Occupy till I come:" trade with these till I return. You will hear more about the results when I come; but meanwhile, go on in diligent labour. But oh, take care of hiding your talent in a napkin. One day, travelling on the railway, as we passed along, a gentleman sitting beside me, said, "Do you know that place ?-" I said, "Yes," "I wonder if you knew a minister who was there many years ago?"

I was present at his deathbed. He was a good man, and a man that preached the truth; but he had one fault that marred his usefulness, and he knew it, but had never overcome it. The thought of it brought over him a cloud in his sickness, which was dispelled only a few days before he died. And when, just before he died, his friend bent over him and said, 'In a few minutes you will hear Christ say - Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord,' he gave a solemn, mournful look, and replied, 'He will not say to me, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' though I do expect to hear Him say, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace.'" Oh, brethren, why should we lose the higher reward?

"Thou hast been faithful in a few things, enter into the joy of thy Lord." (6) But further still. In 2 Peter 3. 11-14, holiness in all its details is enforced very powerfully by this motive. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the Day of God." And look again to 1 John 3. 3: "Every man" - every believer - "that hath this hope in Christ purifieth himself." "When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

See what a stimulus to inward purification this hope is! It speaks of every one - man or woman - that hath this hope in a Coming Christ, and of being made like Him - and if you are not purifying yourself you need not speak about holding this blessed hope - "every man" that has this hope, that has a real grasp of this hope, purifies himself. It necessarily leads to a holy life. (7) We might enlarge on liberality and kindness, enforced by a reference to this same great truth. Instead of spreading grand feasts for your friends, laying out hundreds of pounds on grand entertainments, call in the poor and lame, the blind and the halt.

They cannot recompense you, but ye shall be recompensed at the Resurrection of the just (Luke 14. 14). (8) But what is this? "Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4. 5). The word translated "moderation" properly means "yieldingness." Instead of always insisting on our rights, it is Christ-like (see Matt. 17. 25) to give up, for the sake of peace and brotherly love, what is not a matter of principle, though it may be a matter of convenience. If this yieldingness were known to all men, would it not prevent many an unhappy misunderstanding?

There was a godly man, a man who used to speak lovingly to the careless around him, about their unsaved state, which they did not always take in good part. One day, being in poor health, he turned into a path which would have saved him, perhaps, a mile and a half of a walk in going home, but it was not a thoroughfare, though freely used by neighbours, and one whom he had reproved all at once angrily stopped him, bidding him go by the highway. For a moment he felt indignant, "But" (said he, in telling the incident afterwards), "I remembered what the Master's rule was, and that soon all would be open to me, for 'the meek shall inherit the earth,' and so I went another way."

Was not this making his moderation known in prospect of the day of the Lord? (9) We come to the grace of prayerfulness. Christ speaks of this in Luke 21. 34, 35, 36, "As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell

on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always." Our Lord's parable of the widow and the unjust judge bears on this point specially; and probably, the lack of faith referred to there is very much a lack of prayerfulness; for Christ says, "Shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him."

Look to yourselves, believers; are you crying out day and night to God to avenge His cause, and to come and claim the inheritance for His own possession ? It is those who are crying day and night to Him that the Lord speaks of there; and that is a hint to us to see that we are among them - that we be like the widow. (10) We pass on to patience and perseverance. What did our Lord say to His disciples? (Luke 22. 28). "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations (trials), and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, " - a reward for continuing steadfast under difficulties.

You all know how Paul was able to apply this, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed" (Rom. 8. 18). (11) But, hastening on, notice how even in the matter of coming to our rest, we are reminded of something else than rest at death. True, it is said, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours." But how remarkably does Paul write in 2 Thess. 1. 7, Unto you who are troubled the Lord will give rest with us.

When? "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." The rest is there and then. We get a temporary rest when we leave the body; but the true rest, the essence of all Sabbaths, "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," is when the Lord Jesus comes again. (12) It is then also, that "the reproach of His people shall be wiped away" (Isa. 25. 8; 1 Peter 4. 13, 14). When He comes to swallow up death in victory, "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth." (13) And all the real Reward and Recompense is not at death, but at the time so often spoken of, "I come quickly, and My reward is with Me" (Rev. 22. 12).

When looking forward to the finishing of his course, Paul thinks of his reward, but thinks of it in the future. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4. 8). It is to be kept for him till that day. And Peter (1 Peter 5. 4) bids us look forward to the same, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (14) And full salvation is at that day, and not before that day. This fulness is a very interesting subject.

That is the meaning of the passages read a little ago. He shall appear without sin to complete our salvation. Did you ever feel a little startled at hearing Paul tell that he, with all saints, groaned for the adoption ? - Waiting for the adoption? Are you not an adopted son, Paul? You said that you were a joint-heir "with Christ. " "Yes, " he says, "but I wait for my complete adoption; my adoption-dress - the resurrection of the body." Peter, too, bids those to whom he writes, "Gird up your loins, and hope for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1. 13).

There is a grace to be brought us then such as we shall not get till then. And hear this same apostle (1 Peter 4. 14), speaking of being persecuted for righteousness sake. You need not make a great work about it; the Spirit of God rests on you now, And thereafter comes the grand issue, When His glory shall appear ye shall be glad with exceeding joy. The greatest joy of all is reserved for that time when His glory shall appear (1 Peter 4. 13). (15) On that day He will not forget your acts of self-denial.

Every man who has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for His name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold"; and Matt. 19. 28 points to what this may mean,

"In the Regeneration (Restitution of all things), when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (16) If time permitted, it might be good to show how separation from the world is enforced by this consideration, very strongly and powerfully.

In Philippians 3. 18, Paul says, there are not a few professed disciples who are enemies of the Cross of Christ; for they indulge the flesh, minding earthly things instead of walking in the footsteps of the Lord. But our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, who shall change this vile body, and fashion it like unto His own glorious body. He uses this consideration as a motive for having nothing to do with the luxury and pleasures of the world. (17) We hasten on, simply noticing how worldliness or love of the praise of men and earth's greatness, is counteracted by the blessed hope.

In 2 Tim. 4. 8, Paul reminds Timothy that the Lord Jesus will give a crown of righteousness to those who love His appearing; in contrast to Demas (v. 10) who turned aside, "having loved this present world." (18) But we come to the last of the eighteen things (we might have added many more), Watching and Watchfulness. Notice Revelation 16. 15, for it brings this down to the present day. When the kings are gathering to Armageddon, Christ cries to us, "Behold I come as a thief.

Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." Here we stand still, and ask the unsaved: What will you do in that hour? "Should now the Lord, the King, appear, Like lightning's flash across the sky; His voice upon your startled ear, Would rouse a wild and bitter cry -

'The Bridegroom's come! We have no light,

Oh rise, and give us of your oil;

We did but slumber in the night,

And now He's come! O give us oil!

Give of your oil!" In vain, in vain,

Your day is past - in vain you cry;

Those who are ready join the train,

And meet the Bridegroom in the sky."

As to you who are the wise virgins.

Perhaps the following historic incident may help you a little to conceive what may be your feeling when that voice is heard. When those who upheld the banner of the truth had almost lost heart, and Protestantism seemed failing, John Knox accepted the invitation from the true-hearted ones, and left Geneva for Scotland. When he did land, quick as lightning the news spread. The cry arose everywhere, "John Knox has come!" Edinburgh came rushing into the streets; the old and the young, the lordly and the low, were seen mingling together in delighted expectation. All business, all common pursuits, were forsaken. The priests and friars abandoned their altars and their masses, and looked out alarmed, or were seen standing by themselves, shunned like lepers. Studious men were roused from their books, mothers set down their infants and ran to enquire what had come to pass. Travellers suddenly mounted and sped into the country with the tidings, "John Knox has come!" At every cottage door the inmates stood and

clustered, wondering, as horseman after horseman cried, "Knox has come." Barques departing from the harbour, bore up to each other at sea to tell the news. Shepherds heard the news as they watched their flocks on the hills. The warders in the Castle challenged the sound of quick feet approaching, and the challenge was answered, "John Knox has come!" The whole land was moved; the whole land was stirred with a new inspiration, and the hearts of enemies withered. If that was the effect of the sudden presence of a man like ourselves (a man whom we will rejoice to meet in the kingdom, but only a man), what will the land feel, what will Earth feel, when the news comes, "The Son of Man! the Son of Man! His sign has been seen in the heavens!" O, wise virgins, with what joy you will go out to meet Him! Meanwhile, what should our attitude be? Every day let us go again and look upon the blood of the atoning sacrifice, look till we find our hearts burn within us with longing to know the love that passes knowledge; the love that has height, and depth, and length, and breadth! Every day let us go to the shore, and standing on the shore of that ocean, look across to yonder throne - and the King!

He is coming, Himself wearing many crowns, but with crowns also for all that love His appearing.

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