

The Midnight Cry!



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THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

THE *Lord is coming!* Most blessed, yet most solemn truth! The midnight cry has gone forth, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." Far and near the cry is sounding. Loud and clear and long it rings through the midnight air, and the virgins are being aroused from their careless and guilty slumbers. Have you *heard* the cry? has your heart answered to it? Are your loins girded? Is your light burning? Do you know Christ as the heavenly Bridegroom? and are you waiting for Him in the joyous expectation of going "in with Him to the marriage"?

The Bridegroom is coming. Most plainly has God spoken in His Word about this great event. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." We are called to hear the very words of God. It is God Himself who speaks, and woe be to those who despise His word. "Incline your ear, and come unto Me," He says; "hear, and your soul shall live." Let us, then, bend our ear to God, and hear His word to us at this solemn moment, when the midnight cry is calling forth the virgins afresh, to meet the coming Bridegroom.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." (Matt. xxv.) This well describes the first condition of the professing church, while the heavenly hope of the saints still shone bright in their hearts. Christian Jews went forth from the camp of Judaism, and converted Gentiles left their dumb idols, to wait for God's Son from heaven, who had said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*" **I WILL COME AGAIN!** This was the blessed hope of the saints. This the blessed Lord set before the Jewish disciples when He was about to

leave them, and it was the comfort of their poor sorrowing hearts. They had been drawn to His person; they had marked the unfoldings of the divine, eternal life in Him as a man among men; they had seen, heard, touched, and handled the Word of life; they had seen the outgoings of eternal love manifested in Him; they had seen Him pressing on to the cross, and meeting the storm of human hatred and Satanic malice; they had seen Him bow His holy head under the tempest of divine judgment, as the Bearer of their sins; they had seen Him risen again from the dead, victorious over death and all the power of Satan, presenting to their wondering eyes His pierced hands and side as the proof that it was *Himself*, their risen and victorious Saviour; they had gathered around Him on the mount of Olives, and heard His parting words, and seen His hands uplifted to bless them as He ascended up to heaven; and now, as the cloud received Him out of their sight, and they still stood gazing up into heaven, the men in white apparel assured them that *this same Jesus* should so come in like manner as they had seen Him go up into heaven. This was their blessed hope, their comfort, their joy. He was but gone to prepare a place for them, and would come again and receive them to Himself. What was the effect of all they had seen and heard? They were drawn to His blessed person, and *their hearts clave to Him in love*. The manifestation of eternal and divine love had bound them to Him, and as He ascended, their hearts followed Him on high. All the links that bound them to the world that had crucified Him were broken. Their links were with Him, and every chord of their hearts vibrated with holy joy at the words, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He was coming again, and *they went forth to meet the Bridegroom!*

But this same Jesus was preached to the Gentiles also, and preached, not only as a Saviour to deliver them from the wrath to come, but as the One who would gather His own around Himself, and usher them into the deep, eternal blessedness of the Father's house. This was their blessed hope. The Thessalonian saints were turned from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. And if the enemy brought in confusion of thought as to those who fell asleep before the coming of the Lord, the apostle would not leave them in ignorance. He would let them know that those who fell asleep would not miss the blessing and glory of the kingdom. God would bring them all with Christ. But there is a preliminary event necessary to take place before this can be accomplished. "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." (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.) Thus, when all the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord, and to be forever with Him, *then* God can bring them all *with* Him, as His co-heirs, to enter upon their inheritance, and fill their predestined place in the kingdom and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such was the hope and such was the state of the Church when it was in the freshness of first love; but

"THE BRIDEGROOM TARRIED."

More than eighteen hundred years have passed since He said to His disciples, "Watch." Why has He tarried so long? Is it because He is *slack* concerning His promise? Oh, how could any one think this of Jesus, who died upon the cross in self-sacrificing love, that He might be "the Amen"—

the verifier of all God's promises? "The Lord is *not* slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is *long-suffering* to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. iii. 9.) Ah! this is the wondrous secret of His having tarried so long. God is gathering a heavenly bride for Christ, and divine love still lingers over the lost in long-suffering patience, and one and another and another are being brought to repentance, and screened under the sheltering blood of the Lamb from the awful storm of coming judgment. And while the activities of divine love have been displayed in reconciling men to God, the time has not grown long to Him, with whom one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

Ought the time to have grown long to *us*? Ah! if the saints had been in communion with their Saviour, and followed the outgoings of His heart as the great Shepherd of the sheep, they would have been but too willing to suffer and toil and wait, without counting the time long. They would not have forgotten their hope; but, having the secret of *His heart*, they would have kept the word of *His patience*. But, alas!—

"WHILE THE BRIDEGROOM TARRIED, THEY ALL
SLUMBERED AND SLEPT."

The hope of the Lord's coming ceased to be an *immediate* hope. The wicked servant said in his heart, "My lord *delayeth* his coming," and then "began to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." Through how many centuries has the Church slumbered and slept, and the evil servant done his own will! Alas! the church—the great professing body—instead of keeping herself as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ, gave up the hope of His coming, and played the harlot with the kings of the earth.

THE MIDNIGHT CRY.

But the Lord *is* coming; as it is said, "He that shall come *will* come and *will not tarry*." But does He want to come and find a *sleeping* bride, a bride *not expecting* her Bridegroom? Ah, no. He will have the saints, in conjunction with the Spirit, saying, "Come." He will have bridal affections in the saints answering to His own imperishable love. And oh! think of the grace that has sent out the heralding cry, "BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM; GO YE OUT TO MEET HIM!"—the cry that has aroused the slumbering virgins, and made them trim their lamps.

Oh, reader, have you heard this cry? Are you awake? Have you trimmed your lamp? is it burning for Christ? Oh, sleeper, awake! awake! awake! The Lord is coming—*surely* coming, and coming *quickly*! Oh, awake from your midnight slumber! trim your lamp, and be ready!

But you have heard the cry, perhaps, and trimmed your lamp, and it is "*going out*." *You have taken no oil in your vessel*. So it is in the parable. "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." There must be the oil of the Holy Ghost—the power of divine light in the soul—in order to have a place in that glorious procession that will light our coming Bridegroom in to the marriage.

Dear reader, will *you* have a place in that wondrous throng? Do you know redemption? Have your sins been washed away in the blood of the Lamb? Have you been sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise? Oh, remember, the mere lamp of profession will not do. You must have the oil; and you must get this now, while it is still the day of grace. When the Master rises up and shuts to the door, it will be too late. *Now* is the accepted time. Oh, will you not seek the oil now? Christ will give it you. You cannot get it from the wise

virgins: they have it only for themselves. You must get it from Christ: He alone can supply your need. And He sells "without money and without price." You cannot buy it otherwise. The Holy Ghost is the gift of Christ (as Christ was the gift of God the Father) to all those who believe the gospel of salvation. Having accomplished redemption by His death upon the cross, Christ was exalted to the right hand of God the Father, and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, which He shed forth in power on the day of Pentecost. This is the oil for the virgins' vessels—the oil that sustains the light of Christ in the soul amid the darkness of this world's night. Oh, have you received this oil? Your lamp will be worthless indeed unless you have the oil to keep it burning. If you have not the oil, you will be left outside, forever and ever to bewail your fatal neglect. Oh, be wise, and take the oil which Christ freely gives to all who come to Him. Believe in Christ, whose precious blood cleanseth from all sin, that you may receive the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and be numbered among the wise who took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT." Reader, on which side of that door will *you* be when that solemn moment arrives? Will you be *inside*, to share the wondrous joys of that blood-washed throng? or will you be *outside*, to join the cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," only to hear the crushing answer, "*I know you not*"?

Oh, what a moment will that be when the Lord comes and takes away His own which are in the world! What a separation will take place then! All the saints will be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet," and caught up to meet the Lord in the

air; while the despisers of the gospel will be left behind, to fall under the awful delusion of Satan, and be carried away in that terrible apostasy in which "the man of sin" will be deified and worshiped in the very temple of God, 'that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'" (2 Thess. ii. 12.)

Too suddenly and swiftly, it may be, for human eyes to see, yet with divine certainty the separation will take place. Every believer will be taken away: every rejecter of Christ will be left behind. Education, rank, wealth, social position, will have nothing to do in deciding who shall be caught up and who shall be left behind. All turns on whether men have believed the witness of God, and received the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, or whether they have despised God's word and rejected His Son. The separation is between *believers* and *unbelievers*, and takes place among all classes and conditions of men—high and low, rich and poor, great and small. Wherever they are, in whatever employ, in city or country, house or field, *believers* are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord.

In one part of the globe it is *morning*. The morning light has dawned, and the sun has arisen, and all seems the same as yesterday. The family circle are in their accustomed seats at the table, and all are partaking of the morning meal. Suddenly one and another are missed. They have vanished in a moment, and no earthly call can bring them back. *They have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.*

In another part of the globe the inhabitants are at their *daily occupations*. There also the great separation takes place. In a moment God's people vanish from earth,—some from the streets of the city, some from behind the counter, some from the workshop, some from the field. Calls are unan-

swered, and all search is vain. *They have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.*

In another part of the globe it is *evening*. The work of the day, and the evening meal are over. Some of God's people, perhaps mingling with the family circle, are, with the others, talking over the affairs of the day; some are at the prayer-meeting, some, perhaps, are preaching the gospel to sinners, and pleading with men to be reconciled to God, or, it may be, themselves listening to the old, old story they loved so well. Suddenly, and quickly as the lightning's flash, the summons comes, and as quickly all the saints are gone. The saint whose voice was just heard in the family circle is seen no more; the voice heard in prayer and supplication is silent; the servant of God proclaiming the word of reconciliation suddenly vanishes from the sight of his hearers; those who just now were listening with delight to the old, old story, or the teaching of God's blessed truth, have gone to behold the face of Him whom having not seen they loved. The great separation has taken place. *The saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.*

In another part of the globe it is *night*. The inhabitants are wrapped in midnight slumber, but the Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and every saint answers to the heavenly call. The unsaved husband, or the unsaved wife, is left behind, and, it may be, slumbers on till morning, or awakes in the night to find the loved companion gone, and the children too, who had been taught the fear of the Lord by the faithful father or mother. Every where the separation goes; all classes are divided; all relationships are broken. Oh! moment of awful desolation to the unsaved! From field and city, counting house and workshop, stately mansion and lowly hamlet, royal palace and poor man's cottage, a cry more terrible

than the cry of Egypt on the night when the first-born were slain, a cry of anguish and despair, ascends to heaven, "LORD, LORD, OPEN UNTO US." But alas! it is too late! too late! "They that were READY went in with Him to the marriage, AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT"!

And now, what is the conclusion of the whole matter? "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." "Times and seasons" there will be for the waiting Jews after the Church is gone, but there are none for us. The Lord may come to-day, or He may come to-morrow. He may come at morn, or noon, or night. The one solemn word He left ringing in the ears of His disciples was, "*Watch.*" "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find *watching.* Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." "*Blessed are those servants!*" Who shall tell the unutterable blessedness and joy of those who have waited and watched for Christ, and who shall be fashioned into His glorious likeness at His coming! "We shall be *like* Him, for we shall *see* Him as He is." (1 Jno. iii. 2.) And what is the *power* of this wondrous hope? "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." We shall be like Him *then*; we want to be like Him *now*, "*purifying* ourselves even as *He* is pure." Shall we not then cultivate bridal affections in our hearts, and keep ourselves (as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ) unspotted from the world? Shall He find us walking with defiled garments? walking with the world that crucified Him, and now coldly rejects His message of grace? Are we members of its societies, guests at its pleasure-parties, attendants at its thea-

tres, companions of those who by these things drown the voice of God in the conscience? He who was the light of this world is gone, crucified, and cast out. And now it is *night*—the long desolate night of His absence. Shall we seek shelter and comfort and carnal ease where He was slain? Oh, may we rather cleave to Him with undivided affections, enduring the cold chill of the night, and keeping our lamps burning brightly *till He comes*. Let us *go forth* to meet the Bridegroom. “*Surely, I come quickly*” are His blessed words of cheer to our lonely and waiting hearts. Let the sound tremble on the chords of our hearts, making melody there to Him, whose heart will never be satisfied until He has us *with Himself*; and let us wait for that moment when *His* heart and *ours* shall be *mutually* satisfied—when “the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife had made herself ready.” “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

A. H. R.