

***What If Christ Were to
Come at Christmas?***



WHAT IF CHRIST WERE TO COME AT CHRISTMAS?

Most people in Christendom "keep Christmas" in one fashion or another, and the general expression, "A Merry Christmas," is a fair hint of what it means to most—a time for merry making. Then, as Christmas means literally Christ's Mass, it is surely not out of place to raise our question: "What if Christ were to come at Christmas?" Yes, WHAT? Further, it is not only both fitting and reasonable to enquire thus, but it is most unreasonable not to do so. The day is called Christ's Mass, and is kept in memory of His birth-day, or incarnation in this world, over 1900 years ago. It is not, then, vain to suppose that He, who promised so long ago that He would come again, might come on this very Christmas, which He knows men are professing to keep, whether right or wrong as to the time, in memory of His birth. If He did come, and it is right to suppose that He might do so, would not one thing that He would look into be, Are the objects of His coming into the world the first time fulfilled in us?

He came "to seek and to save that which was lost," He once said, Himself. Has He, then, saved us, or has His gracious mission been entirely a failure as far as we are concerned?

He came that His sheep might have eternal life, and have it more abundantly

than ever before. Has He given this blessed life to us, so that we now live unto God, and we who were once dead in our sins, now "walk in newness of life?"

He came also to "give the knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins." Has He given us this "blessed assurance," or are we still hoping and fearing, and not sure how it will go with us until the day of judgment?

To deepen in the reader's mind the true force of our questions, we present some supposed cases that might readily be sad facts, if on Christmas Eve it were true that He was indeed "coming tomorrow." They are presented in a little paper, titled, "He's Coming Tomorrow," by the gifted writer of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and they certainly have more point than poetry in them. How many, alas, there are "keeping Christmas," who do not trust the Christ they thus profess to honor, and who, if He were now coming again, and they were sure of the fact, would be filled with terror! Many also, we fear, will go on in fancied security with "a name to live, while dead," and "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," until He does come, and the door of mercy is closed upon them forever.

His own solemn words to all such are: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up,

and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me all ye workers of iniquity" (Luke 13:24-27).

**"The Night Is Far Spent; The Day
Is At Hand"**

My soul vibrated for a moment like a harp. Was it true? The night, the long night of the world's groping agony and blind desire, is it almost over? is the day at hand?

Again: "They Shall See the Son of Man Coming in a Cloud, with Power and Great Glory."

Coming! The Son of Man really coming—coming into this world again with power and great glory?

Will this really ever happen? Will this solid, common-place earth see it? Will these skies brighten and flash? and will upturned faces in this world be watching to see Him coming?

That evening the thoughts of the waking hours mirrored themselves in a dream.

I seemed to be out walking in the streets, and to be conscious of a strange vague something just declared, of which

all were speaking with a suppressed air of mysterious voices.

There was a whispering stillness around. Groups of men stand at the corner of the street and discuss the impending something with suppressed voices.

I heard one say to another, "Really coming? What, tomorrow?" And the other said, "Yes, tomorrow; on Christmas Day He will be here."

It was night. The stars were glittering down with a keen and frosty light; the shops glistened in their Christmas array; but the same sense of hushed expectancy pervaded everything. There seemed to be nothing doing; and each person looked wistfully at his neighbor as if to say, "Have you heard?"

Suddenly, as I walked, an angel form was with me, gliding softly by my side. The Face was solemn, serene and calm. Above the forehead was a pale, tremulous phosphorous radiance of light, purer than any on earth—a light of a quality so different from that of the street-lamps, that my celestial attendant seemed to move in a sphere alone.

Yet, though I felt awe, I felt a sort of confiding love as I said, "Tell me, is it really true? Is Christ coming?"

"He is," said the angel. "Tomorrow He will be here!"

"What joy!" I cried.

"Is it joy?" said the angel. "Alas! to many in this city it is only terror! Come with me."

In a moment I seemed to be standing with him in a parlor of one of the chief palaces of the city. A stout, florid, bald-headed man was seated at a table covered with papers, which he was sorting over with nervous anxiety, muttering to himself as he did so. On a sofa lay a sad-looking, delicate woman, her emaciated hands clasped over a little book. The room was, in all its appointments, a witness of boundless wealth. Gold and silver, and gems, and foreign furniture, and costly pictures, and articles of virtue—everything that money could buy—were heaped together; and yet the man himself seemed to me to have been neither elevated nor refined by the confluence of all these treasures. He seemed nervous and uneasy. He wiped the sweat from his brow, and spoke:

“I don’t know, wife, how you feel, but I don’t like this news. I don’t understand it. It puts a stop to everything that I know anything about.”

“Oh, John!” said the woman, turning towards him a face pale and fervent, and clasping her hands, “how can you say so?”

And, as she spoke, I could see breaking out above her head a tremulous light, like that above the brow of an angel.

“Well, Mary, it’s the truth. I don’t care if I say it. I don’t want to meet—well, I wish He would put it off. What does He want of me? I’d be willing to make over—well, three millions, to found a hos-

pital, if He'd be satisfied, and let me go on. Yes, I'd give three millions—to buy off from tomorrow.”

“Is He not your best Friend?”

“Best Friend!” said the man, with a look of half fright, half anger. “Mary, you don't know what you are talking about! You know I always hated those things. There's no use in it; I can't see into them. In fact, I hate them.”

She cast on him a look full of pity.

“Cannot I make you see?” she said.

“No, indeed, you can't. Why, look here,” he added, pointing to the papers, “Here is what stands for millions! Tonight it's mine; and tomorrow it will be all so much waste paper; and then what have I left? Do you think I can rejoice? I'd give half; I'd give—yes, the whole, not to have Him come these hundred years.” She stretched out her thin hand towards him, but he pushed it back.

“Do you see?” said the angel to me solemnly: “between him and her is a ‘Great Gulf fixed.’ They have lived in one house with that gulf between them for years! She cannot go to him; he cannot come to her. Tomorrow she will rise to Christ as a dewdrop to the sun; and he will call to the rocks to fall on him—not because Christ hates him, but because he hates Christ.”

Again the scene was changed. We stood together in a low attic, lighted by one small lamp—how poor it was—a broken chair, a rickety table, a bed in the

corner where the little ones were cuddling close to one another for warmth. Poor things! the air was so frosty that their breath congealed upon the bed-clothes. "When mother comes, she will bring us some supper," said they.

"But I'm so cold!" said the little outsider.

"Get in the middle, then," said the other two, "and we'll warm you. Mother promised she'd make a fire when she came in, if that man would pay her." "What a bad man he is!" said the oldest boy, "he never pays mother if he can help it."

Just then the door opened, and a pale, thin woman came in, laden with packages.

She laid all down, and came to her children's bed, clasping her hands in rapture.

"Joy! joy, children! Oh, joy, joy! Christ is coming. He will be here tomorrow."

Every little bird in the nest was up, and the little arms around the mother's neck; the children believed at once. They had heard of the Lord Jesus. He had been their mother's only friend through many a cold and hungry day, and they doubted not He was coming.

"Oh mother! will He take us? He will, won't He?"

"Yes, my little ones," she said softly, smiling to herself. "He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom."

Suddenly again, as by the slide of a magic lantern, another scene was present.

We stood in a lonely room, where a woman was sitting with her head bowed forward upon her hands. Alone, forsaken, slandered, she was in bitterness of spirit. Hard, cruel tongues, had spoken her name with vile assertions, and a thoughtless world had believed. There had been a babble of accusations, a crowd to rejoice in iniquity, and few to pity. She thought herself alone, and she spoke: "Judge me, O Lord! for I have walked in my integrity. I am as a wonder unto many; but Thou art my strong Refuge."

In a moment the angel touched her. "My sister," he said, "Be of good cheer. Christ will be here tomorrow."

She started up, with her hands clasped, her eyes bright, her whole form dilated, and she seemed to look into the heavens, and said with rapture:

"Come, Lord, and receive me; for Thou knowest me altogether. Come, Lord Jesus, in Thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded. Oh, for the glorious coming of Christ!"

Again I stood in a brilliant room, full of luxuries. Three or four fair women were standing pensively talking with each other. Their apartment was bestrewn with jewelry, laces, silks, velvets, and every fanciful elegance of fashion, but they looked troubled.

"This seems to me really awful," said one, with a suppressed sigh. "What troubles me is, I know so little about it."

"Yes," said another, "and it puts a stop to everything. Of what use will all these be tomorrow?"

There was a poor seamstress in the corner of the room, who now spoke. "We shall be ever with the Lord," she said.

"I'm sure I don't know what that can mean," said the first speaker, with a kind of shudder; "it seems rather fearful."

"Well," said the other, "it seems so sudden—when one never dreamed of any such thing—to change all at once from this to that other life."

"It is enough to be with Him," said the poor woman. "Oh, I have so longed for it!"

"The great gulf, again," said the angel.

So I am watching quietly

Every day.

Whenever the sun shines brightly,

I rise and say,

"Surely it is the shining of His face!"

And look unto the gates of His high
place

Beyond the sea;

For I know He is coming shortly

To summon me.

And when a shadow falls across the window

Of my room,

Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door, and
ask

If He is come;

And the angel answers sweetly
In my home;

"Only a few more shadows,

And He will come."

Which case best represents you,
Reader; and "What if Christ were to
come at Christmas?" —B. C. G.

"THAT BLESSED HOPE"

"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."—I Thess. 4:16, 17

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."—Acts 16:31

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