

# IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

by

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(Author of *Mark of the Beast*)

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE ADDRESS

"NOW to begin. Even in the Church of GOD there are whole multitudes to whom the very title of this afternoon's address is but jargon. They will not search the Word for it, they will barely tolerate its mention. Why? 'Oh,' say some, 'hidden things are not to be searched into.' Others there are who spiritualize every reference to the Lord's second coming, and say, 'Yes, of course, He has come again, He has come into my heart, or how else could I have become a child of GOD.'

"To these last, these dreamers, we would respectfully say, 'A coming into the air for His people, to take them up, is a totally different thing to coming into the heart to indwell as Saviour and Keeper while we are travelling life's pathway.'

"There is another section of the Christian Church who say, 'We do not want to hear anything about it. Our minister don't hold with it; it is not a doctrine of our church.' Now, such an argument as this is blasphemous, since, if GOD has put it into His Word, it is blasphemy to ignore it, to refuse to believe it.

"Two distinct advents are plainly taught in Scripture. The first, of JESUS' birth as a Babe in Bethlehem, the second as 'Son of Man' - glorified, who shall come in the clouds. Now, every Christian will admit, nay, more, the very worldling admits the fact that every Scripture relating to the first advent, as to time, place, circumstances, was literally fulfilled, even to the minutest detail. Then, in the name of common-sense, with the same covenant Scriptures in our hands, why should we not expect to see the predictions relating to the second advent also fulfilled to the very letter?

“We have our Lord's own definite promise in John fourteen: **‘If I go, I will come again and receive you unto Myself.’** We are all agreed that He went. Well, in the same breath He said, **‘I will come again.’** Can any English be plainer – **‘And receive you unto Myself?’** That promise cannot allude to conversion, and it certainly cannot allude to death, for death is a going to Him - if we are saved.

“This expectancy of CHRIST's return for His people was the only hope of the early Church; and over and over again, in a variety of ways in the epistles it is shown to be the only hope of the Church, until that Church is taken out of the world, as a bride is taken by the bridegroom from her old home, to dwell henceforth in his. There never has been any comfort to bereaved ones in the thought of death, nor to anyone of us who are living is there any comfort in the contemplation of death,- save and except, of course, the thought of relief from weariness and suffering, and in being translated to a painless sphere, to be with CHRIST. But in the contemplation of the coming of CHRIST, when the dead in CHRIST shall rise, and those who are in CHRIST, who are still living when He comes, there is the certainty of the gladdest meeting when all are **‘caught up together in the air, to be for ever with the Lord.’** No waiting until the end of the world but, if He came this afternoon - and this may happen - you who have loved ones with CHRIST would that very instant meet them in the air, with your Lord.”

Tom Hammond listened intently to every word of the major's, and, as Scripture after Scripture was referred to, he saw how the speaker's statements were all verified by the Word of GOD.

“There are two points I would emphasize here,” the major went on. “First, that we must not confuse the second coming of the Lord - the coming in the air - for His saints, with that later coming, probably seven years after, when He shall come with His saints to reign.

“And, secondly, to those to whom this whole subject may be new, I would say, you must not confuse the second coming of our Lord with the end of the world. The uninstructed, inexperienced child of GOD feels a quaking of heart at all talk of such a coming.

“Such people shrink from the suddenness of it. They say that there is no preparatory sign to warn us of that coming. But that is not true.

“The Word of GOD gives many instructions as to the signs of CHRIST's near return, and the hour we live in shows us these signs on every hand, so that it is only those who are ignorant of the Word of GOD, or those who are carelessly or wilfully blind to the signs around (and this applies, we grieve to say, as much to ministers as to people), who fail to see how near must be the moment of our Lord's return.

“The first sign of this return is an awakening of national life among the Jews, that shall immediately precede their return - in unbelief - to their own land. Please turn with me to Matthew twenty-four.”

There was again that soft rustle of turning leaves that had struck Tom Hammond as so remarkable. Someone behind him, at the same instant, passed a Bible, open at the reference, to him over his shoulder.

With a grateful glance and a murmured word of thanks, he accepted the loan of the book.

“I will read a verse or two here and there,” the major announced. “You who know your Bibles, friends, will readily recall the subject-matter of the previous chapter, and how our Lord after His terrible prediction upon Jerusalem, added, **‘Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.’**”

“This is Jewish, of course, but the whole matter of the future of the Jews and of the return of the Lord for His Church, and, later on, with His Church, are bound up together. Presently, after uttering His last prediction, the disciples came to Him privately, saying,

“ **‘Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?’**”

“Keep your Bibles open where you now have them, friends, and note this - that the two-fold answer of our Lord's is in the reverse order to the disciples' question. In verses four and five He points out what should not be the sign of His coming. While, in verse six, He shows what should not be the sign of the end of the world. With these distinctions I shall have more to say another day.

“This afternoon I want to keep close to the signs of the coming of the Lord. Read then the thirty-second and third verses: **‘Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: when its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that’** - look in the margins of your Bible, please, and note that the 'it' of the text becomes 'He,' - **‘when ye shall see all these things, know that He is near, even at your doors.’**

“Now, I hardly need remind the bulk of you, friends, gathered here this afternoon, that the fig tree, in the Gospels, represents Israel. The Bible uses three trees to represent Israel at different periods of her history, and in different aspects of her responsibility.

“The Old Testament uses the vine as the symbol of Israel, the Gospels the fig, and the Epistles the olive. At your leisure, friends, if you have never studied this, do so. You will not be puzzled much over the blasting of the barren fig-tree when you have made a study of the whole of this subject, because you will see that it was parabolic of GOD's judgment on the unfruitful Jewish race.

“Now, with this key of interpretation before us, how pointed becomes this first sign of the return of our Lord. **‘When,’** He says, **‘the fig-tree putteth forth her leaves’** - when the Jewish nation shows signs of a revival of national life and vitality,- **‘then know that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.’**

“The careful reader of the daily press, even though not a Christian, ought to have long ago been awakened to the startling fact that, after thousands of years, the national life of Israel is awakening. The Jew is returning to his own land - Palestine.

“Only a year or two ago the world was electrified by hearing of the formation of that wonderful Zionist movement. How it has spread and grown! And how, ever since, the increasing thousands have been flocking back to Palestine! There are now nearly three times the number of Jews in and around Jerusalem, that there were after the return from the Babylonish captivity. Agricultural settlements are extending all over the land. Vineyards and olive-grounds are springing up everywhere.

“Now note a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy. Turn to Isaiah 17:10, 11: **‘Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips. In the day thou shalt make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.’**

“In the early months of eighteen-ninety-four the Jews ordered two million vine-slips from America, which they planted in Palestine. There is the fulfillment of the first part of that prophecy, and if we are justified in believing, as we think we are, that the return of the Lord is imminent, then, as the tribulation will doubtless immediately follow that return, and of the taking out of the Church from the world, then the great gathering in of the harvest of those vines will be in **‘the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.’**

“Now, let me read to you, friends, an extract from the testimony of an expert, long resident in Palestine:

“ ‘There is not the shadow of a doubt,’ he writes, ‘as to the entire changing of the climate of the land here (Palestine). The former and latter rains are becoming the regular order of the seasons, and this is doubtless due (physically, I mean) to the fact that the new colonists are planting trees everywhere where they settle. The land, for thousands of years, has been denuded of trees, so that there was nothing to attract the clouds, etc.

“ ‘Comparing the rainfall for the last five years, I find that there has been about as much rain in April as in March; whereas, comparing five earlier years, from 1880-85, I find that the rainfall in April was considerably less than in March, and if we go back farther still, we find that rain in April was almost unknown.

“ ‘Thus GOD is preparing the land for the people. The people, too, are being prepared for the land. The day is fast approaching when **‘the Lord will arise and have mercy upon Zion.’**

“I need hardly, I think, tell you what even the secular press has been giving some most striking articles about quite recently,- namely, the quiet preparation on the part of the Jews of everything for the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem.

“I see, by the lighting up of your faces, that you are familiar with the fact that gates, pillars, marbles, ornaments, and all else requisite for the immediate building of the new temple are practically complete, and only await the evacuation of the hideous Mohamedan, with all his abominations, from Jerusalem, to be hurried to the site of the old temple, and to be reared, a new temple to The Lord, by the Jew. Any day, Turkey – ‘the sick man of the East’ - in desperate straits for money, may sell Palestine to the Jews.

“The Jews are to return to their land in unbelief of CHRIST being the Messiah. They will build their temple, reorganize the old elaborate services, the lamb will be slain again ‘**between the two evenings,**’ and - but all else of this time belongs to another address. What we have to see this afternoon is that the fig-tree - the Jewish nation - is budding, and to hear JESUS CHRIST saying to us, ‘**When ye see all these things, know that He is near, even at the doors.**’

“Another sign of the return of our Lord is to be the world-wide preaching of the Gospel. Now, in this connection, let me give a word of correction of a common error on this point.

“The Bible nowhere gives a hint that the world is to be converted before the return of the Lord for His Church. As a matter of fact, the world - the times - are to grow worse and worse; more polished, more cultured, cleverer, better educated, yet grosser in soul, falser in worship. The bulk of the Church shall have the form of godliness, but deny the power.

“Men shall be ‘**lovers of their own selves**’ - who can deny that selfishness is not a crowning sin of this age? - ‘**covetous**’ - look at the heaping up of riches, at the cost of the peace, the honor, the very blood of others, - ‘**incontinent**’ - the increase in our divorce court cases is alarming, disgusting, - ‘**lovers of pleasure**’ - the whole nation has run mad on pleasures.

“I need not enlarge further on this side of the subject, save to repeat that the Word of GOD is most plain and emphatic on this point, that the return of our Lord is to be marked by a fearful declension from vital godliness. But, with all this, there is to be a world-wide proclamation of the truth of salvation in JESUS. Not necessarily that every individual soul shall hear it, but that all nations, etc., shall have it preached to them.

“Now, in this connection, let me mention a fact that has deeply impressed me. It is this, that the greatest reawakening in the hearts of individual Christians in all the churches - England, America, the Colonies - as testified to by all concerned, agrees, in time, with the awakening of the Church of CHRIST to the special need of intercession for foreign missions - namely, from 1873-75.

“I must close for this afternoon, lest I weary you. We will, GOD willing, come together again here on Tuesday at the same hour, and I pray you all to be much in prayer for blessing on the attempt to open up these wondrous truths, and pray also that the right kind of people may be gathered in. Will you all work for this, as well as pray for it? Invite people to the meetings.

"Do either of you know any editors of a daily paper? If so, write to such, draw attention to these expositions, urge your editors to come. Oh, if only we could capture the daily press! What an extended pulpit, what a far-reaching voice would our subject immediately possess!

“I don't quite know how far I ought to go on this line, but even as I speak, it comes to me to ask you if anyone here present is acquainted with the evidently-gifted, open-minded editor of '*The Courier*.' We have all, of course, been struck by his own utterances from the 'Prophet's Chamber' column. Oh that he could be captured for CHRIST; then his paper would doubtless be a clarion for his Lord!"

Tom Hammond turned hot and cold. He trusted that no one had recognized him. He would be glad to get away unrecognized. Yet he was not offended by the speaker's personal allusion to him. He felt that the major's soul rang true.

“Before I close,” the major went on, “suffer me to read an extract from the ‘Gentleman's Magazine,’ of the year seventeen hundred and fifty-nine:

“ ‘Mr. Urban,- Reading over chapter eleven, verse two, of Revelation, a thought came to me that I had hit upon the meaning of it which I desire you'll publish in one of your future magazines. The verse runs thus:

**“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not, for it is given to the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.”**

“ ‘Now, according to the Scriptural way of putting a day for a year, if we multiply forty-two months by thirty (the number of days contained in a Jewish month), we have the time the Turks will reign over the Jews' country, and the city of Jerusalem - viz., 1,260; which, if we add to the year of our Lord 636, when Jerusalem was taken by the Turks, we have the year of our Lord 1896, near or about which time the Jews will be reinstated in their own country and city, Jerusalem, again, which will be about 137 years hence; and that the Turks are the Gentiles mentioned in the above-quoted chapter and verse appears from their having that country and city in possession about 1,123 years, and will continue to possess it till the Omnipotent GOD, in His own time, bringeth this prophecy to its full period.’

"This letter is signed ‘M. Forster,’ and is dated from ‘Bessborough, October 24th, 1759.’ I have very little sympathy with those of our brethren who are ever venting in speech and in print the exact dates ( as they declare) of the coming events surrounding the return of our Lord, but I do believe (in spite of the somewhat hazy chronology at our command) that the regarding of approximate times is perfectly permissible, and the letter I have read you has some value when, taking dates, etc., approximately, we remember that this letter was written nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, and that 1896 was memorable for a distinct movement towards the Holy Land.

“So, I say, 'the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

To myself and to every Christian here, I would say, ‘May GOD help us to quicken all our hearts, and purify all our lives, that we may not be ashamed at His coming.’

“And to any who are here (if such there be) who are not converted, may GOD help you to seek His face, that you may not be ‘left,’ when He shall suddenly, silently snatch away His Church out of this godless generation. ‘Left!’

"Think of what that will mean, unsaved friend, if you are here to-day. Left! Left behind! When the Spirit of GOD will have been taken out of the earth. When Satan will dwell on the earth - for, with the coming of CHRIST into the air, Satan, ‘**the prince of the power of the air,**’ will have to descend.

"CHRIST and Satan can never live in the same realm. Oh, GOD, save anyone here from being left - left behind, to come upon the unspeakable judgments which will follow the taking out of the world of the Church!

"Some husband, whose head was laid on his bed,  
Throbbing with mad excess,  
Awakes from that dream by the lightning gleam,  
Alone in his last distress.

"For the patient wife, who through each day's life,  
Watched and wept for his soul,  
Is taken away, and no more shall pray.  
For the judgment thunders roll.

"And that thoughtless fair who breathed no prayer,  
Oft as her husband knelt.  
Shall find he is fled, and start from her bed  
To feel as never she felt.

"The children of day are summoned away;  
Left are the children of night.

"It is high time for us all to awake. GOD keep us awake and watching for our Lord, for His precious name's sake. Amen."

The murmured Amens rolled through the congregation like the deep surge of a sea billow on a shingle shore.

"Our time has gone, friends," cried the major. "We will sing two verses only of the closing hymn 410, the first and last verse. Sing straight away."

Tom Hammond, wondered at it all much as ever, listened while the song rang out:

"When JESUS comes to reward His servants,  
Whether it be noon or night,  
Faithful to Him will He find us watching?  
With our lamps all trimmed and bright?

#### CHORUS

Oh, can we say we are ready, brother?  
Ready for the soul's bright home?  
Say, will He find you and me still watching,  
Waiting, waiting, when the Lord shall come?

"Blessed are those whom the Lord finds watching  
In His glory they shall share:  
If He shall come at the dawn or midnight.  
Will He find us watching there?"

Again the chorus rang out, and as Tom Hammond left the hall, the question of it clung to him. It forced itself upon his brain; it groped about for his heart; it clamored to be hearkened to.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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