

The Shout, the Voice, the Grump.

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- “ I will come again, and receive you
unto Myself ” JESUS.
- “ Whom having not seen ye love ” PETER.
- “ Be patient therefore, brethren ” JAMES.
- “ We shall see Him as He is ” JOHN.
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“ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”—1 THESS. iv. 13-18.

THE arrival of a Queen's messenger, with a missive from our sovereign Lady the Queen, might well be supposed to quicken our apprehensions concerning something important about to happen to us. What would be our feelings if an angel in shining raiment came and announced a message from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Not less important is the statement now before us: **THIS WE SAY UNTO YOU BY THE WORD OF THE LORD.**

If there is one thing more than another that characterizes the present moment of the grace of God, it is the intense expectation in which the loving

and faithful ones have the eyes of their heart directed to the immediate nearness of the return of their absent Lord. We say the loving and faithful, because to them who love His appearing (2 Tim. iv. 8) are such words addressed. Faithfulness is the handmaid of love to Him. Not the profession of love merely, but that real affection deep down in the soul, too profound to understand, but so real that a child knows it is there, and accounts for it thus: He loved me, and gave Himself for me.

Should my reader say, I feel not this profound love, I say, Do you thirst for it? For Jesus stood up one great festival-day, and cried with energy thus: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John vii. 37, 38.) The Lord was referring to that magnificent endowment of Isaiah lviii. 11: "The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy

thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." The blessed One knew that this would all be made good in the believer by the Spirit's witness of Himself in the one that had come to Him. The truth of His words can be lovingly testified to by myriads of His saints, some of whom are fallen asleep, but others remain to this day.

Now it matters not whether asleep or alive. A shout, a voice, and a trumpet sound are to be heard alike by all at a given moment, known to God, but from intimations He has given in His Word very close at hand. Nor is it an inquiry into subjects not within our province. "I would not have you to be ignorant," says the herald. We believe that Jesus died and rose again; it is equally the province of faith to assert that those who by reason of the extension of the long-suffering have fallen asleep in Jesus, must accompany Jesus when He

makes His appearance in Revelation xix., where heaven opens, and "the faithful and true" One comes forth on the white horse accompanied by the armies in heaven, also upon white horses, "the called, and chosen, and faithful" ones of chapter xvii. 14.

But why a shout, a voice, and a trumpet sound? Each one is necessary to mark an event the importance of which goes far beyond anything that the mind of man has ever conceived. It marks the commencement of an entirely new era, even in the ways of God, wonderful as all His ways are. It is that for which the world was made ready, and man created and set upon it. It is that for which the Lord Jesus Himself became man, endured the cross, despised the shame. It is that for which He has patiently waited nearly 1900 years, because God would make it worthy of Him. And now the supreme moment has arrived, the Lord comes to claim His own. The shout of joy and

victory is His. No word in language but one could be found suitable to express it, that of a commander leading his hosts. The Lord is a man of war. (Ex. xv. 3.) The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory. (Ps. xxiv. 10.) But Michael ("who is like God?") is there too; his voice is heard in tones of welcome. Among that vast host of the dead in Christ are the sleeping ones of Israel, and He is their prince (Dan. xii. 1), and it is from Jude 9 we know he is the archangel. We may perhaps some day learn more of this mighty Prince with such a wonderful name, but at present we rest content with what we are told, and seek no wisdom but that which Scripture gives us. Yet another welcome awaits us, the trump of God. Man at Sinai could not bear the sound of the trumpet. It was terrible to him. Even Moses did exceedingly fear and quake. But now perfect love has cast out fear—the sound of the trumpet is the welcome and approval of God to

man's bodily entry into the heavenly places. The shout, the voice, the trumpet are all man's welcome to his new home. The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout—shall descend with archangel voice—shall descend with trump of God. What a meeting! what a greeting! what a realization of a hope that knew no fluctuation, because Himself was the object of it! Oh, the joy of being forever with the Lord!

We may find all the elements of what we have been considering in Psalm xlvii.; only there it is the earth, and not the air, that is the sphere. The shout, the voice, the trumpet; the Lord, the princes of the people, and God are there. In a little verse of thirteen words, four times are they told to sing praises; and no wonder, God and His King are the subjects of the praise—not the praise of the holy angels, precious as that is, but praise with an intelligent understanding of something

known and realized by contrast, and by experience gained. But this scene is on earth—God reigning over the heathen—God sitting on the throne of His holiness, the people of the God of Abraham there to do Him intelligent homage, for He has made them the shields of the earth, and He is greatly exalted by them.

When shall these things be? Well, as far as the meeting in the air is concerned, there is nothing to hinder their taking place before these words appear in print. The earthly meeting will take a little longer, for unhappily there is a day of reckoning for Judah, who would not have her King when He first presented Himself, but spitefully entreated Him and slew Him. But God, rich in mercy, has sent Him before them to preserve life; and they will look on Him whom they pierced, and mourn, and their iniquity will be pardoned.

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