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The "Plea for the Middle Classes" was the document which led to the foundation of the large groups of "Woodard Schools" which now (1884) include 3 in Sussex (Lancing, Hove & Pierpoint & vicinity) 1 in Staffs. (Dunstons) 1 in Shropsh. (Ellesmere, dependent on Dunstons) 1 in Somerset. (Taunton) & 1 I think in Yorkshire. J.G.T.

> + a Plea for the Middle Classes by Rev. W. Woodard.

*John G. Talbot from the Author
Staunton on Wye. Michaelmas Day. 1852.*

The Days of the Flood.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

STAUNTON ON WYE,

HEREFORDSHIRE,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE LATE INUNDATION,

Feb. 5. 1852.

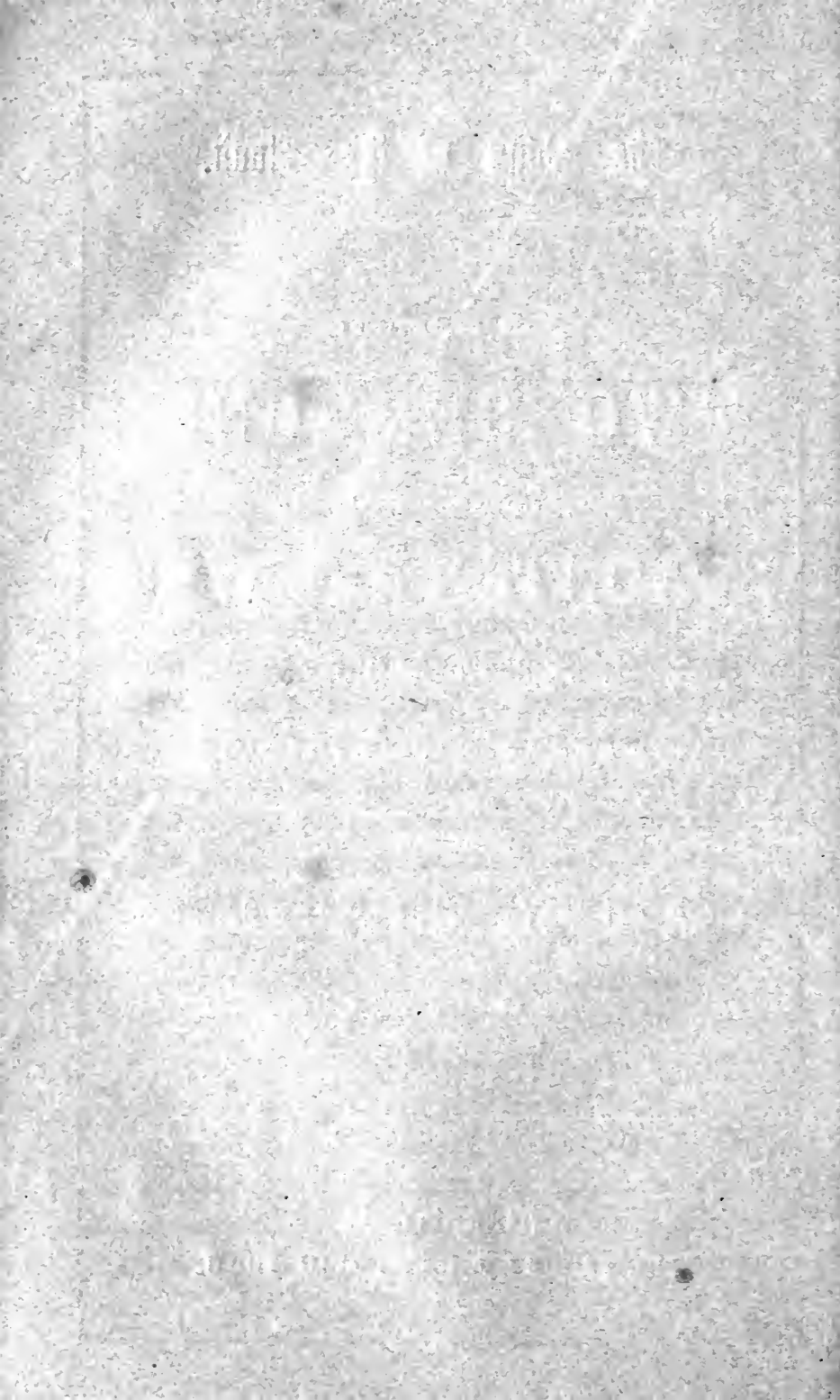
BY THE

REV. H. W. PHILLOTT, M.A.

RECTOR OF STAUNTON ON WYE.

HEREFORD:

PRINTED BY J. HEAD, HIGH TOWN.



SERMON.

MATTHEW, 24TH CHAP. 37TH VERSE.

As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

YOU can hardly wonder that I should take this opportunity of speaking to you of the calamity which has fallen during the last few days on some of us and our neighbours. I wish to do so, in order if possible, to help you in making that calamity a means of awakening your consciences and helping you in the way of Salvation. At once let me tell you that things like this, sudden visitations, dangers to life, and destructions of property, are specially intended by God to have that effect. He intends that they should awaken our consciences, and make us think of the state of our souls and of another world.

The text tells us that the "coming" of the Son of Man is to be like the times of Noah's flood. Under the word "coming" or "presence" our Lord means to speak of more than one event. The destruction of Jerusalem—this was to be one of Christ's "comings"

and it was to be the likeness of another “coming” even more frightful still—His coming to judge the world. Now observe that this great coming of Christ to Judgment is to be marked with much sorrow and distress among the nations. It is to be a terrible thing. Not the quiet easy sort of thing which many of us seem to fancy it will be: but a terrible thing full of all manner of horrors; men’s hearts will fail for fear, heaven and earth will be shaken, and all society torn asunder. The Jewish writer who saw Jerusalem destroyed, says that more than a million of persons perished in the siege, besides thousands who were made captives; and so frightful were the distresses which took place that the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled—* “Thou shalt eat the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, in the siege and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee.” Such was the destruction of Jerusalem, one of the “comings” of the Son of man, and such will be, as He tells us, His second coming to judge the world.

But to hear some people talk, one would think the coming of Christ to judgment would be the easiest thing possible, with no more terror about it than a common pay-day which comes once or twice a year, and is then forgotten till the next comes. And so our Lord speaks of it. He says people will go on just as usual, buying, selling, marrying, building and so on, till all on a sudden the day will come upon

*Deut. xxviii. v. 53, 57.

them, as it was in the days of Noah. Now it is very true that the world will never again be destroyed by a flood ; but we have daily instances of persons losing their lives by water. The same storms which have laid so much land under water in this County, have in other parts been the means of destroying many lives ; more than eighty persons have been drowned by the breaking out of waters, in one place, in Yorkshire. You have seen enough of the power of water, to know that human life is as nothing before it. You who heard the waters drawing near, who saw them rising in your houses inch by inch, and foot by foot, can tell what it is to be in the midst of destruction. You who heard the screams of fellow creatures whom you could not help ; who passed that dreadful night in the most painful anxiety for yourselves, your wives, your husbands, your children, your property ; you, who know by experince, what it is to have, as it is said, only a plank between you and eternity, you can tell what it is to be on the brink of ruin.

I trust, brethren, you may not soon forget that terrible night : if you do, the effect which God intends will be lost ; His lesson will be thrown away. You will shew that like the Jews you know not “the time of your visitation.” But when the flood was rising, did you think much about the danger you were in ? Did you not act as the people acted in Noah’s time ? Because you had not *seen* the water rise so high before , you made little or no provision

against its coming: so too the world goes on, sleeps over its dangers, till the ruin comes and wakens it only to death! But brethren, I say, forget not this visitation: though you are now safe, forget not that it was God's hand that saved you. A few feet more, and your lives, the lives of the aged and helpless, of the women and children, if not your own lives, must have been sacrificed: God only prevented more complete ruin. We have heard of eighty persons drowned in Yorkshire—not long since we heard of more than that number destroyed whether by fire or water no man knows—in the midst of a burning ship in a raging sea: the number of persons assembled under the roof of our Village School-room on the evening after the flood was not much under sixty: but for God's Providence all these might have been destroyed. I say then, remember this occasion: men, women, and children, remember it; think of it as one of the great escapes of your lives, one of the times when God puts you in great peril but delivers you. And why did He deliver you? Not assuredly for your righteousness; but because He loves your souls, and desires to save you from a still worse destruction: because he desires to give you another space for repentance. How many of you would have been ready to meet Him if He had called you that night? Are there not some who would have been found in the midst of unrepented sin; with hearts unprepared,

careless about God, without thought of Heaven or Hell: some I fear fresh from committing wilful sin, with hands not free from transgression, tongues not pure from evil or unclean words; some who had not kept themselves from fleshly lusts, from untruth and dishonesty, but had not repented of their sin, nor tried to make amends for their misconduct. I think some of you will freely allow that you were not fit to meet God. Do you think so still? Will you not from this time try to lead better lives, to make amends for misconduct, to appease if possible, that wrath of God which your sins have so justly provoked.

But how to set about this work—Begin by looking back on your past lives, calling to mind, naming to yourselves one by one, the sins which you know you have committed. Do this honestly and fully: kneel down on the ground and say to yourself—at such a time I went against my conscience and fell into sin; at such a time I broke this or that one of God's Commandments; I took what was not my own; I broke the law of chastity; I dishonoured God's Name by evil words, and His Day by neglect of public worship; I spoke falsely and slanderously of my neighbour; or, I have left off my prayers, and given way to drink and excess. These are the things of which God would have taken notice, if He had called you away that night, and for these and the like things, He will assuredly some day judge you. Do not then blink the questions which I have

advised you to put to yourselves—Do not hush them up, and say the flood will not come again: but ask them fairly and fully, ask God the Holy Ghost to call your sins to your remembrance, one by one; and then lay them before Him. Then say in David's words—"I have mercy on me O Lord after Thy great goodness, wash me throughly from my wickedness; I acknowledge my faults—Against Thee only have I sinned; Cast me not away from Thy Presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

Beseech God that for His dear Son's sake these sins may not be reckoned against you: lay them all at the feet of His Cross: He stands ready to save you to the uttermost if you will only go to Him, you cannot use His Holy Name too often. Cry to Him as the disciples in the storm cried—"Lord save us, we perish"—or as the blind man—"Jesus have mercy on me." Remember it is only for His sake God will pardon you.

But let not your repentance end here: do not think it will be enough to go through this once. But I have good hope that one who will do this once, will not be content with once only. Above all do not confess your sin, and then go forth and do the same again. Pray against temptation, Pray God to keep your hands, your tongue, your body, from wilful sin, He will be sure to help if you will pray. Pray in your own rooms and your own houses, when you are at work in the fields or elsewhere. He will hear

you whether you are kneeling by your bedside, or standing over your labour, or following the plough, or driving the cattle. No place comes amiss to Him: but be sure to make some place, if possible, a place of regular and daily prayer, and some time or times, fixed and regular times. And when you pray, pray heartily like drowning men calling for help, lay open the innermost corners of your heart before God, conceal nothing, deal with Him as with a loving Father, yet a righteous Judge: one who desires you to repent, but will not spare the guilty; one who gave His only Son for you on purpose to redeem you from death, if you will only, before it be too late, turn to Him and amend your lives in true earnest faith, and and sincere persevering repentance.

Thou, O Lord, that stillest the raging of the sea, hear, hear us, and save us, that we perish not.

O blessed Saviour, that didst save thy disciples ready to perish in a storm, hear us, and save us, we beseech Thee.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

O Lord, hear us.

O Christ, hear us.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, have mercy upon us, save us, now and evermore, *Amen.*

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. *Amen.*





