

a cloud received Him out of their sight.

The men began to realize what had happened. Somehow they sensed that this was not like the former times when He had left them suddenly. Now He had ascended. Could they hope that He would return to them again.

Even as they looked, their question was answered. Two men stood by them, in white apparel, and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

The apostles returned to Jerusalem. They waited for the promised empowering with the Holy Spirit. Then they went forth in the power of that glorious baptism to preach the gospel throughout the whole world. And wherever they went they carried with them that mighty hope, that their Lord and Master whom they loved so much, who was with them in the Spirit, helping in their work, would some day return physically, personally, bodily, even as they had seen Him go.

The Blessed hope of the personal return of Christ has ever been one of the central truths of the Christian religion. The New Testament is replete with references to it. Christ Himself taught much concerning it, and the Apostles loved to look forward to that glorious day. Every time that a group of Christians observe the Lord's Supper, they look back to the foundation of the Christian Gospel, and they look forward to its consummation. This is brought out clearly in the words of the Communion service, "ye do shew forth the Lord's death, till He come".

Let us observe the part the return of Christ played in the life of the apostle Paul. Briefly, let us examine a few references that He makes to it, at different periods in His life.

We turn to Paul's earliest epistle-- First Thessalonians. In the first chapter of that epistle he praises the Thessalonian Christians for their faith. Summarizing the change wrought in their lives, he says, in verses nine and ten, "how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." How primary was the return of Christ in the exemplary faith of these early believers! They had turned from idols to serve the true God, and they had turned to wait for His Son from heaven.