

# Looking unto Jesus (Matt. 27)

## Part 1

Speaker	Jack Atkins
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[00:00:00] This is a recording of the afternoon address given by Mr. Jack Atkins at Wildfellow Hall, Catford, on May the 5th, 1962, his subject, Looking Unto Jesus. And now for our scripture reading. This afternoon I want to read to you first from the Gospel of Matthew and chapter 27.

Matthew chapter 27 verse 33.

And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. And when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which [00:01:09] was spoken by the prophet. They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down, they watched him there, and set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Now in the epistle to the Hebrews.

The second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, in the first 10 verses. [00:02:07] Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation. Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come [00:03:01] whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of thy hands. Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

[00:04:01] For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. And just a few verses in Hebrews chapter 9, the same epistle, the ninth chapter, from verse 24.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the truth, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the [00:05:08] end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Last month our speaker in the afternoon told us about the backward look. Possibly many of you who are here now this afternoon will remember the occasion. He told us of how this backward looking could spoil the life and the testimony of the Lord's people, [00:06:10] and also be a cause of sorrow to the Lord who loved us enough to die for us.

We profited, I'm quite certain, by what our brother had to say, for what he said was very much to the point. It was excellent, the substance of his remarks. This afternoon I want, so to speak, more or less to develop, may I say, the theme, and to speak of the ways in which a Christian may legitimately, and with much profit I believe, be in fact engaged in looking.

Our friend last month told us about how wrong it was for a believer to look back [00:07:04] upon the pathway he once had trod with any kind of longing, and of how dangerous it was to slip back into those old paths. I would like to sum up what I want to say to you this afternoon with three words which you may take, if you wish, as a text. In Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2.

Especially the first three words of this wonderful verse, familiar, I'm quite certain, to all of us. Hebrews 12, 2. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, [00:08:04] despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. The writer of this wonderful epistle to the Hebrews, we assume sometimes that it was the apostle Paul, though we have no absolute certainty that it was he. The writer had finished his wonderful 11th chapter, that grand recital of the faith of the worthies of old. It's always a good thing to read the 11th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. It's a wonderful boost to our faith when we think of the faith of some of these saints of God of old. He'd completed this great recital and then there occurs one of his famous wherefores, the first verse of the 12th chapter. Wherefore he says, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, [00:09:07] let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. And then he tells us how to do it. I'm certain that that's the point of this scripture. He gives us the secret in the next three words, how we can lay aside every weight, and that sin which does so easily beset us, there's only one way that is possible, and it is by looking unto Jesus.

And those of us who preach the gospel, and I can see as I look at your faces this afternoon, that there are quite a number of you here now this afternoon, who do engage in the preaching [00:10:05] of the gospel. Those of us who preach the gospel should be well versed in telling folk how to look. We constantly do it as we preach the gospel, don't we? We should be well practiced in it, we're exhorting others to do it constantly. We take for instance the story of the serpent of brass, referred to in numbers, and we press home the point to the unsaved soul for the need of looking to Jesus. We quote the Lord's words in development of the same theme, and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. And so we exhort men and women to look to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Now tonight, or rather it's so easy to say tonight, isn't it? Because most of our meetings are taken in the

evening. This afternoon rather, I want us to be engaged in looking [00:11:04] unto Jesus in three very simple and very familiar ways.

Not so familiar that we can afford to neglect them. They are vitally important. I want us each one here this afternoon in Wildfellow Hall, first to look back. Yes, the back would look, but this time it's right. To look back unto the cross. And I want us to look up unto the glory where Jesus is now.

And I want us to look on or forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Did you notice the words of the hymn that we sung, Hymn 43? Hymn we sometimes sing on Lord's Day morning, some of us. Our souls look back to see the burden endowed it's bear.

[00:12:12] Many of us, you know, do this every Sunday morning. We meet around the table of our Lord Jesus Christ with the express intention of looking back to the cross and remembering our Lord Jesus Christ who hung there, who died there, who suffered there, whose precious blood was shed. And if ever our Sunday morning meeting would, should become anything different to a looking back to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, it would be an awful pity. For that is the express purpose of our coming together, to remember our Lord. But the question is as I see it, what do we really see when we look back to the cross? You see I feel it's very [00:13:08] much a matter of shall I say perspective. In Matthew 27 we read of some together who sitting down they watched him there. But how did they watch him? They watched him there with hatred in their hearts. They hated him without a cause, they scorned him, they'd rejected him. Sitting down they watched him there. But we read in verse 55 of that same chapter, there were many women there beholding afar off and they were those who loved him. And their looking to the cross was vastly different to the looking of those who sitting down watched him there. They were far off and we are far off today.

[00:14:06] And I'm quite certain that to many of us as we think of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and the stretch of time between then and now, it seems, it seems so distant doesn't it? So far away, far away in time. But nevertheless we look back to the cross of Jesus. I believe that there's a priceless blessing in looking back to the cross. What do we gain? Our brother referred to it in his prayer. First as we look back to the cross of Jesus, those of us who are the Lord's, those of us who belong by faith to Jesus, we gain assurance of sins forgiven. We see that the one who hung there upon that cross died for us there upon the tree, that we might be forgiven. As we look back we realize the truth of [00:15:06] the scripture, who his own self bear our sin in his own body on the tree.

And if this doesn't make us very humble, it should do you know. Our souls look back to see the burden he did bear. It gives us great assurance indeed. John the apostle writes these words, I write unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you. Is it a fact that everybody here in Wildfell Hall this afternoon, as you look back to the cross of Jesus can say that? I have the assurance because Jesus died that my sins are forgiven me. If you can say that, praise be God, blessed be God.

[00:16:04] But if you can't, make sure will you today that you can. Make sure that you receive him as your savior, so that you can look back and gain assurance of sins forgiven, as you look back to the cross. Because as we look back to the cross of Jesus, we have not only assurance, but we have peace with God. And we have the peace of God. In the first epistle to the Colossians, Paul writes, he made peace through the blood of his cross. And I believe it should read, making peace through the blood of his cross. It's one thing to have peace with God, where our sins are concerned. And it's

something more, I believe, to have the peace of God, which passes all understanding. But whatever aspect of peace we think of, [00:17:08] and there are many aspects in scripture, it's well for us to remember that that peace is only ours, through the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. What else have we, as we look back to the cross? The assurance that we are justified. Romans 5 says, being now justified by his blood, we have peace with God. Being now justified.

Justified. It's a singular thing, but during this past week, more than one person has said to me, how difficult it is for a Christian to maintain his integrity in this present world.

He was a businessman who spoke thus. And there are businessmen here this afternoon, [00:18:06] who know exactly what I mean. To preserve one's integrity as a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ, to preserve a sense of justice in this world of conniving and wangling and string pulling. The kind of things that are practiced in business today, at times make one shudder. And it is difficult. And some say that it's impossible for a Christian to maintain his integrity in a world of this nature. It is difficult. But in the work of the cross, God's righteousness was fully vindicated. And God is just and the justifier of him that believe it in Jesus. And to me, my friend, I'll confess this, that it's a constant cause of exercise as to whether the kind of things that I [00:19:05] do in my daily work and occupation are consistent with that position into which by God's infinite grace I've been brought. The position of one who is justified, made without blame, just as if I'd never sinned. It's one thing to hold it as a doctrine. It's quite another thing to live it as a fact. We gain the knowledge of this, the assurance of it, and the reminder of it, as we look back to the cross of Jesus. And then also the cross reminds us that we've been brought into relationship with God. It became him by whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings, in bringing [00:20:07] many sons unto glory, brought into relationship with God himself through his Son, Jesus Christ.

And then as we look back to the cross also, do we not see the eternal proof of his love? Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. I love that hymn that was made so famous by Sankey to 1909.

Because in that hymn there occur these words, none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed, or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through, ere he found the sheep that was [00:21:02] lost. There are many in this hall I'm convinced this afternoon who know themselves to have been that lost sheep, but what it cost our Lord. May I suggest that if you never make a practice of looking back to the cross in a regular way, that you do so. Maybe there are believers here this afternoon, maybe there are Christians here who never meet together to remember their Lord in his death, who never in this sense look back to the cross. Let me remind you of the words of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ himself, this do in remembrance of me. Now I want us to look up unto the glory. Notice the verse again, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, [00:22:07] who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. As we look up to the glory this afternoon, and we can by faith do that, we can see that the Lord Jesus is there, we know that he is there, exalted and enthroned, we have God's word for it. We can't see him with these mortal eyes, but with the eye of faith we can see him at the right hand of God, exalted. And as we see him there, we know this, we know that the fact that he is there is the proof that one day we shall be there too. That is the first [00:23:07] blessing we gain as we look up to the glory and see our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. He is there as our advocate, as our great high priest. Did you notice that wonderful verse in Hebrews 9, speaking of Jesus, in verse 24, now to appear it says, now to appear

in the presence of God for us. The Lord Jesus now appears in the very presence of God, and the scripture says, for us. Dear Christian friend, that means for you. It means for you. It means for me. It means for all of us. He's there for us. He died for us. He's in the glory at the right hand of God, [00:24:03] appearing before God for us. What does it mean? What does it mean? I believe that it means this, that he's there to watch our every interest, and I really mean that. I'm convinced that that is true of every individual believer. The Lord Jesus Christ appears in the presence of God and watches your every interest. He is there to hear our confession of sin and failure, and how often we need to confess our sin and failure. He's there to comfort us in trial and sorrow. He's there to strengthen us in duty. He's there to guide us in difficulty. He's there as our blessed advocate with God. I was reading in my SU portion recently in the book of Ezekiel. Others of you possibly have been reading, having the same readings. I was reading [00:25:04] of Ezekiel as the captive in Babylon, and we read of him as one who looked back, you know, and considered the past and the good days that had been. But we read also of Ezekiel, that not only did he look back, and the writer of the notes drew attention to this, but that he looked up. He looked up, and as he looked up we read, he saw visions of God. He saw visions of God.

In verse 26, I think, of the first chapter says, he saw the likeness of a throne, and over the throne, what did he see? He saw the appearance of a man. The appearance of a man.

I believe that God was revealing himself to Ezekiel in a form that Ezekiel could understand. And isn't it a wonderful thing for those of us who are the Lord's here this afternoon, [00:26:04] to know that in the glory and the presence of God appearing there for us, is one in the likeness of a man. The man Christ Jesus, exalted and enthroned.

The Lord Jesus is the man in the glory. In Ephesians chapter 1 verse 21, we read that he is set, he is set at God's right hand, above every name that is named. That is where Jesus is now.

Mr. Kelly, among many other godly men, have pointed out that for him to be above them as God, would be nothing new. For as God, he was always above all. But as man, he is exalted above every name that is named. Doesn't that give joy to your heart, dear Christian friend? It does to me, [00:27:05] to know that my blessed Savior and Lord, who became a perfect man, as a man is exalted and sits at the right hand of God in heaven. And as a man, he appears in the presence of God, as my advocate, as my great high priest. It's true. We gain the knowledge of these things as we look up to the glory. He is there. Our blessed Lord is there in his own blessed person for us. And here, his gracious Holy Spirit indwells us here.

Why do we go wrong? Why do we go wrong corporately? Why do we go wrong individually?

Why do we go wrong? Our verse gives us the key, because we take our eye off the Savior.

[00:28:07] There's no other answer at all. The secret is looking unto Jesus.

It's true, you know. It's absolutely true. If there's trouble in an assembly, if there's trouble in a church or a chapel, you can trace it to its source and you'll find every time that the cause is a failure to be looking unto Jesus. If our eye is upon him, conscious of the fact that he's there for us in the presence of God, conscious of the fact that his Spirit indwells us here, I say we could not go wrong. Human though we are, if we looked unto Jesus all the time, the secret is to keep our eyes upon him.

[00:29:01] Now one last thought. Peter says, him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Savior.

In other words, he's a Savior still. Now this should encourage us in gospel work. My friend Mr. John Allen Weston has reminded us that the gospel has been preached in this hall for 50 years, praise God. Since 1912, the gospel has been preached from this platform. Well I can go back a good many years, but I can't go back to 1912, but I can go back a good many years. And I was brought into this hall as a young lad, possibly almost as a child by my mother, to hear Mr. Weston preach. And I know how powerfully and how wonderfully he's preached over these years. He preached the Savior and souls were saved. The point I want to make is this, he's still the Savior. He is exalted as a prince and a Savior. Can we not go on with this same [00:30:02] gospel? The world has changed, alas it has. The land in which we live has changed. Poor old England has abandoned a lot of its moral standards. What a shame, what a tragedy. But the gospel is the same, and the Savior is the same, and he's just as powerful as ever he was. Exalted at the right hand of God, a prince and a Savior. I say it's a good thing to look up to the glory. And now let us look on or forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And notice the verse again, the author and finisher of our faith, the author and finisher of our faith. We read in Titus 2, looking for that, notice the word, looking for that blessed hope and the appearing in glory of our Savior Jesus Christ. And Hebrews 9 we read, [00:31:09] unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time. Sin apart unto salvation.

It will be a strange thing if we didn't look forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every New Testament writer looks forward to the coming of Jesus without exception. And I'm going to suggest to you now in the closing minutes that I have, three very simple reasons, which I trust are sound reasons in your judgment as in mine, for looking forward, for those of us who are Christians, to the coming of our Lord. We are going to see the Lord.

Now isn't that something that thrills your heart? It does mine. We are going to see the Lord.

[00:32:12] On the Mount of Transfiguration we read, they saw no man save Jesus only.

We're told in the epistle to the Thessalonians that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes, we call it the rapture, and he calls his waiting saints home, we read that the dead in Christ are raised first. Those of us who've lost their loved ones, as I have lost my mother and my father and my brother, my sister, have known what it is to lay them in the grave. We look forward to the time we look forward to the time when we shall see them in his presence. But the wonderful thing, the thing that outshines all else is this, that we shall see the Lord. [00:33:04] We look forward to the coming of Jesus because we're going to see the Lord Jesus himself in person. We shall see the Lord. And then the second reason why we look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus, not only because we shall see him, but the scripture says we're even going to be made like him. Now isn't that something to look forward to? We sometimes sing, he'll give these bodies vile a fashion like his own. It sounds incredible, doesn't it? But it's true, it's true. He's going to make us like himself. In Romans 8 29 we read, whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son. [00:34:07] My friends, you weren't converted in order that you might escape hell. You weren't converted in order simply that you might get to heaven. You were converted in order that you might be made to conform to the image of God's son. Incredible glory that is. Inestimable privilege that we poor sinners should be made like our blessed Lord. How unlike him we are now. We shall be changed, says the scripture.

That's a good thing, isn't it? We need to be changed. Oh my, how we need to be changed, we do indeed. But the scripture says, we shall not all sleep, we shall not all die, that is, natural death. We

shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. When the Lord comes, we shall see him and we shall be made like him. But there's a third [00:35:10] reason, and this is my final reason why I'm looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with real joy and expectation. Not only because we shall see him, not only because we shall be made like him, but because the Lord is to be given his rightful place. He's to be given the place of honour which is his by right. Did you notice that verse in Hebrews again? We see not yet all things put under him. But as we look up to the glory, we see Jesus.

We see not yet all things put under him. But we read that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father. We shall see him take his rightful [00:36:10] place. It won't be in the manger. It won't be as the despised and the rejected one. It won't be as the one who hung upon the cross. But we shall see him exalted and enthroned, and we shall see him in all the wonder of his infinite majesty. Isn't that something to thrill your heart? To know that we shall see our saviour like that. What that majesty will be like, we can't conceive. But the scripture says, we shall see him whom having not seen, we've learned to love, and we shall see him exalted and enthroned. Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, [00:37:11] and they also which pierced him. And we read again, the son of man shall come in glory, in the glory of his father, with his angels. And we read in Thessalonians, he shall be glorified and admired in his saints. There's a hymn you know that says, Jesus takes the highest station, oh what joy the sight affords. My friend, are you looking forward to the coming of Jesus? Or is it possible, I know this isn't a gospel meeting my friend, but I must say this. Is it possible that in this company there's an unsaved soul, to whom the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ [00:38:03] would not be glory, would not be sheer delight, but judgment. Doesn't it say concerning the unsaved, that where they're concerned, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, for them it is a fearful looking for, a fearful looking for, of judgment. Oh what an appalling contrast. My friend, if you're in that position this afternoon, will you first look to Jesus for salvation, know the joy of sins forgiven, know with us the joy of looking up to the glory, and knowing that he's there at the right hand of God, appearing there for us daily to help us, as an advocate with the father, and with us have this wonderful hope and joy to look forward to his coming, because we shall see him, we shall [00:39:08] see his blessed face, we shall be made like him, and we shall see him exalted and enthroned with his holy angels, and with all his saints, ten thousand times ten thousand, glory be his name.

We're looking forward to that, we're anticipating that, and maybe that coming of our Lord Jesus is a good deal nearer than many of us have ever yet imagined. May God bless us for his name's sake.