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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

THE COMING (*παρουσία*) OF CHRIST
TO RECEIVE HIS SAINTS

AND

HIS APPEARING (*επιφάνεια*) IN GLORY
WITH THEM?

NEW EDITION.

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The accompanying pages were written to meet the difficulties which had arisen in the mind of a christian friend regarding some points relative to our Lord's return. Having been perused by others in M.S., a desire was expressed for their publication, which has led to their appearing in their present form.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THE COMING [*παρουσια*] OF CHRIST TO
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ING [*επιφανεια*] IN GLORY WITH THEM.

It has been supposed that the word of God affords very little, if any, direct proof in support of the idea of any real difference between these two events; and that all that can be offered in its favour is in the way of inference of a rather loose and uncertain character.

The aim of this paper will be to show that we have as full and as complete evidence in its behalf as can be produced for almost any Scriptural truth.

This evidence is of three kinds:—

1st. That of direct statement.

2ndly. That of fair and legitimate inference.

3rdly. That of the general consent and harmony of Scripture with it; whilst such systems of interpretation as do not admit of it, are utterly irreconcilable with many of its well-known principles, and involve a violation of the divine order which pervades it.

This being done, it will appear that the supposition alluded to above, arises either from this evidence not having been brought into sufficient prominence and stated with sufficient clearness; or its not having received from Christians generally the attention and consideration it deserves, whether from inadvertence, or, perhaps, in some cases, from want of proper appreciation of the truth.

This evidence will be adduced, not necessarily in the order above given, but as it presents itself naturally in the Scriptures treated of; and the reader will judge

for himself to which head each argument properly belongs.*

The inquiry itself is evidently of the utmost importance to the Church of God; as, upon the reply which the word of God gives to it, depend both the position and duty of the Church whilst here on earth. If her absent Lord may return at any hour or moment, and this is really felt by the soul, fidelity of heart to Him (and, if that is wanting, the fear of being found unprepared) will dispose to watchfulness until He comes. Whereas, if a variety of events are revealed as intervening previously, the fulfilment of which renders it impossible the Lord should come for a considerable period of time, He will not be waited for in the same way; His coming will be viewed as at some distance, and the practical effect of that uncertainty upon the mind, which the Lord Himself so often insists upon, will be very much weakened if not destroyed. No one, if told that seven years or more must elapse before the Lord's return, would feel it to be the same thing, or as necessary to be prepared, as if warned that He might return before the dawn of another day. Hence the power of this expectation to separate from the world, to fix the heart on heavenly things, or to comfort it in sorrow, is certainly greatly enfeebled.

If this consideration is carefully weighed, it will go a long way towards making those who regard with reverence the expressed directions and commands of the Saviour, mistrustful of any system of interpretation which *of necessity* puts His coming at a distance. Nothing can be clearer than His exhortations to His

* Some of the statements will, perhaps, at first sight, appear to assume what has yet to be established. This arises from its being almost impossible, when treating of subjects which form parts of a whole, to handle them so as to avoid involving other parts which have not previously been considered. In this case, the evidence for what is apparently taken for granted, will be found at some subsequent page.

disciples to watch and to be always on the look-out for His return, at whatever time of the night, i. e., of this present period, it might occur. Again and again He presses on them that they should be "like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding;" that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately—e. g., "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching . . . And *if He shall come* in the *second* watch, or come in the *third* watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." (Luke xii. 36—38; Matt. xxv. 1—13, &c.) The moment the servant began to say in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," he became negligent and unfaithful in the discharge of his duties; (Luke xii.; Matt. xxiv. ;) and the whole Church, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, is represented as only recovering its true position, though it had originally set out with the thought of meeting the Bridegroom, when it is re-awakened to this blessed expectation, by the cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him!" (Matt. xxv.)

In the epistles, the saints are invariably presented, in accordance with these directions, as incessantly looking for Jesus to come again. "Ye turned to God from idols," says the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Thesalonians, "to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for* his Son from heaven." (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) To those, also, at Philippi he writes, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. iii. 20.) Such was their expectation, and such their position, as described by the apostle himself in these and many other passages. Does it seem consistent with this to suppose, that they were anticipating the previous fulfilment of all the scenes of judgment described in the Apocalypse—the return of the Jews to their own land—their establishment there—the manifestation and rule of Antichrist, and the seven years the Jewish nation has to pass

through in connexion with him—besides other events, too numerous to be mentioned here? Would that be looking for Him from heaven; and could they be said to be doing so, if they had to wait for the successive unfolding of all these events ere they could possibly see Him again? These are questions which we should ask at the very threshold of this inquiry, before we allow ourselves to entertain any views so subversive of the evident intentions and directions of our blessed Lord and His apostles.

We will proceed to examine some passages which may throw further light upon these points.

When about to leave His disciples to return to the Father, our blessed Lord told them (John xiv.) that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house; and gave them the cheering promise, that if He did so, He would come again and receive them to Himself, that where He was they might be also. This was to fix their hopes, and fill their hearts with desire; they were to have a home, but it was to be His own home, prepared also by Himself, and to be enjoyed with Him whose love was about to procure them this blessed place in it. It was not with the display and glory of the kingdom that Jesus here sought to comfort them, but with something far more sweet and attractive to the renewed heart. It was to the Father and the Father's house that Jesus Himself was going, as He says, "Whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know; and whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." And this is the place to which He pledges Himself to come and take them. There is nothing here about reigning over the earth, though that we know will take place also in its season; but the coming of the Lord for the saints is put in clear and definite connexion with their removal to the Father's house, and His coming is for the accomplishment of that purpose; so that in considering that blessed event we must leave room for the translation of

the saints to the Father's house, as the first act which the Lord has *given* us in connexion with His return.

If the fulfilment of their expectation does not take place at once, it must be asked, "When and how can it be accomplished, seeing it is not certainly a momentary thing, is it to be indefinitely postponed, or are we to reign over the earth, and exercise the dignities we possess as sons, before being presented to the Father as the children He has loved—before we enjoy the home which is to be common to us, and to Jesus, for ever?" What moment can be found so suitable as this with which it is here associated, if, indeed, any other can be found at all before the millennium is terminated? Certainly the language used by the Lord would naturally lead us to expect that we shall at once be taken to our home on His return, and that He comes to take us there, and not merely up into the air, and down again to the earth, without going there at all.

The further examination of Scripture will show, that what is here only intimated, is elsewhere expressed with great distinctness. In 1 Thessalonians iv. 15—17 the Lord is said to descend from heaven into *the air* with a shout;* and from thence He summons His saints, the dead and the living to join Him, who, being raised and changed respectively, are caught up together in the clouds; and united as one body, ascend above them to meet Him who has called them, and who awaits them in the air. The words here used, "to meet the Lord in the air," do not imply anything more than that the desire and action are mutual. He has descended from heaven for us, and we ascend to Him, attracted by His blessed

* The word here translated "shout," (*κελευσμα*,) is a military term, and signifies the word of command which a general gives to his troops. It is accompanied by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, which last is not for the living inhabitants of the world, but to raise the sleeping saints from their graves, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. xv. 52.)

presence, and quickened by His power. We learn from this, that the Lord remains in the air whilst these things are taking place, and until the whole Church has reached Him.

Here, then, is nothing but what has reference to the saints—nothing that indicates His appearance to the world, or His actings towards it—nothing of His coming *with clouds* or flaming fire, or even of accompanying angels. There is no trace of any descent to the earth, or that He has anything in view at this moment but His saints and their removal. The Holy Ghost only adds, “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” Our future is lost in that of the blessed Saviour, who has thus come from heaven to call us up to Himself, that so we might ever be *with* Him. Where He will be subsequently we learn from other scriptures.

This heavenly event having taken place, the apostle proceeds quite in a different strain, and as if opening quite another subject, (chap. v. 1, &c.): “But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.” Why not, if these relate to the fulfilment of their hopes? Had not the Lord, when on earth, taught His disciples to pay particular regard to the progress of events on the earth; events, moreover, connected with the ushering in the day of the Lord, which is here in question, and making use of the very same language in describing its suddenness, and the judgment that would accompany it? Of the “times and seasons” the Lord then gave full explanation, and called their careful attention to them, that they might watch the successive steps which indicate the near approach of the time of their deliverance. The wars and rumours of wars—the abomination of desolation—the time of unequalled trouble—the signs in the heavens—all these things (as the budding of the figtree shows that summer is nigh) are to tell them that the time is drawing near for the manifestation of the Son of man. But here the apostle will not dwell upon such things, as he

would surely have done had they concerned them; he does not engage them to watch the times and seasons, for they are to be satisfied with knowing the general fact of the way in which the day will appear—for this reason, that they are the children of the light and of *the day*, and belong not to the night, nor to the darkness of this world, which the day comes to judge and disperse. Forming a part of the day which comes from heaven upon the earth, it cannot come without them, still less can it overtake them. So in Matthew xiii. they are said to “shine forth as the sun,” which brings the day with it, reflecting the glory of Christ in the kingdom of their Father.* How different is this thought from that of slowly and painfully watching the gradual approach, by the progressive fulfilment of the events which precede it. It cannot break upon them as it will upon this world; nor can it appear without them, for they form part and parcel of it: and when it unfolds its brightness, they are seen as part of that light which it displays; and that this may be the case, they must previously be removed, or it would appear without them, and they would be overtaken by it.

No wonder the apostle should think it sufficient to say, instead of entering upon the times and seasons, “Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief; ye are all the children of the light and the *children of the day*.” He could not have put in a stronger or more striking light, the groundlessness of their fears, that they should be overtaken by the day when it came; for all that constitutes the day could not be confounded with the earth and its inhabitants

* This difference may be further illustrated by comparing this passage with what is stated in Malachi: “Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” The glorified saints who accompany the Lord when He comes form a part of the rays of His glory, and shine forth like the rays of the sun when it appears, forming a part of its light, whilst it shines *upon* those who are on the earth, who also, being there, must wait the gradual dawning of the day.

on whom it dawns, nor the light with the darkness, day with night, heaven with the earth, or the sun with what it shines upon. The language he employs is far more forcible than it would have been had he entered into details of events that had transpired previously; nor was that needful after the explanation in the preceding chapter concerning their removal.

He gives only the grand conclusion of the whole in the day of the Lord, and what the place of the saints will be in that day. It is remarkable that the Lord Himself, in like manner, *after His resurrection*, refuses to enter into the question of the times and seasons with His disciples, (Acts i. 6—11,) though He tells them of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the testimony they were to bear upon earth in His behalf. The words to which this refusal is the reply are also very important, as they show us to what these “times and seasons” relate. The disciples ask, “Wilt thou at this time restore again *the kingdom to Israel?*” He answers, “It is not for *you* to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power,” thus distinctly connecting the times and the seasons with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel; and, at the same time, that He will not enter upon the progress of events on earth, which are to bring about the kingdom, they are directed to look forward to the moment when He shall “come in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven.” Of this, which relates to themselves, and His return for them, they are informed; whilst their inquiry respecting the setting up of His earthly government in connexion with Israel is left unanswered—thus distinguishing clearly enough these two events.

How is it, we may ask, that the Lord’s instructions after His resurrection differ so widely from those that went before it? and that He says now to His disciples, in words not to be mistaken, “It is not for *you* to know the times and the seasons?” How is it that the Apostle Paul pursues the same line of instruction, and,

though giving the Thessalonian saints full information about the translation of the Church and its heavenly hopes, considers it superfluous for him to write to them about the times and the seasons? The reason is this: that to be taken to heaven, and to enjoy our blessing there, we do not need any fulfilment of the times before appointed, and accomplishment of the counsels of God respecting the earth; whilst those whose expectations are connected with the establishment of the kingdom on earth, and the blessing it will be brought into, must wait and watch till Israel and the earth have gone through all their appointed trials. That kingdom cannot be set up till Antichrist is overthrown, and the entire course of events predicted to happen on earth has run out. Hence, as a result of having earthly hopes, (which in the case of those converted after the removal of the Church are quite legitimate,) they must go through all the time of the closing sorrows of the earth; nor can their deliverance come before. In consequence of this, whilst all these signs are given for their guidance, and they are directed to look out for them one after the other, and comfort themselves by their progressive fulfilment, there is not *one* single passage, after the descent of the Holy Ghost to form the Church, from *Acts* to *Revelation*, inclusive, which directs those who compose it to wait for those signs; but, on the contrary, the only allusions made to them, as we have seen, either say they are not intended for them, or turn their attention from them, as not being the concern of saints, whose hopes are heavenly.

No right-minded Christian would think it strange that the Church should at any time be called upon to suffer for the name of Christ. The word of God everywhere presents such suffering as a privilege—an honourable distinction for those that are called to it. But to have to pass through the trouble which comes upon the world, in consequence of its unbelief and rejection of the Son of God, is quite another thing. The

great tribulation foretold, is the divine visitation for this fearful sin. From the beginning of the creation, the word of God tells us there has been nothing like it, nor ever will be. (Mark xiii. 19, 20; Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.) For the sake of those elect persons who are to enjoy the blessing of the earth under the peaceful rule of Christ, the days are shortened, or *no flesh* would be saved. In Revelation xii. 10, 12, the saints above rejoice that the accuser of their brethren is cast down, and add, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

Is it a privilege to pass through this "woe," inflicted on those who have, for the sake of the enjoyment of this world, preferred its prince to Christ, and have voluntarily submitted to be misled by him? Is it not far happier to be with those who are rejoicing in heaven, and anticipating at this moment Satan's final overthrow? Doubtless, the Church has failed in many things, especially in maintaining the glory of the Son of God, and in waiting for His return from heaven. But that she should have to go through the hour of the world's tribulation, because it has rejected, and still continues to reject, the Saviour, would be, notwithstanding her failure, a thought unworthy of Him with whom she has to do, and to whom she belongs. Weak and erring as she is, she has assuredly believed in Him, loved Him, and owned Him as her Lord; whilst the world has refused either to trust Him or to submit to Him. Besides, the deplorable state to which the few saints who survive the dreadful persecution of Antichrist are reduced would render it anything but desirable that the Church should be on earth during this period. If the days were not shortened, "no flesh would be saved;" because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold; and finally, the Lord says Himself, though the saints are to be avenged speedily, yet, "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" To such a condition,

then, are the few remaining saints brought, that faith is almost extinguished. This language seems quite to forbid the thought of her being there, for it would imply that Christ would find spiritual life at the lowest state of depression, and scarcely have any Church to come for, an idea quite at variance with the teaching of other scriptures, as Matthew xxv. 1-3, and elsewhere, and utterly irreconcilable with the fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost, down here in the Church, who continues with her so long as she is on earth. But the positive promise given in the address to the Church at Philadelphia, settles absolutely this point beyond all possibility of question: "*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*" This is a specific declaration, that, as the reward of waiting for Him, the Church should be kept from that grievous affliction of the world; and not only from it, but from "*the hour*" when it comes upon it. This cannot be but by her translation before its infliction. If she is on earth, she would evidently be in "*the hour*," even if she could be sheltered from the suffering—a thing scarcely possible from the position of the Church while on earth and the prevalence of the judgment, which is declared to be universal. But the promise is distinctly that the Church shall be kept from "*the hour*" of its occurrence, which is far more, and involves evidently her removal beforehand.

In the book of the Revelation, we are naturally led to seek for evidence respecting the place and condition of the Church during the period in question—whether she is in heaven or on earth—whether risen and glorified or still expectant; and also what character is borne by the saints who are alive on the earth at this time.

A well-known division of the contents of the book is given in chapter i., when the apostle is told to write: 1st, "the things that he has seen;" 2ndly, "the things that are;" 3rdly, "the things that shall be after these

things" (μετα ταυτα). "The things that he has seen," refer evidently to the vision of chapter i.; "the things that are," to the seven Churches that are addressed by the Lord; and "the things that shall be after these things," to the more distinctly prophetic part of the book, from chapter iv. to the close of it; the warrant for the application of these two last divisions being found in chapter iv. 1, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must be after these things;" for it is obvious that, since the last head commences with chapter iv., "the things that are" can only apply to the immediate chapters and their contents. If these expressions, and the use the Holy Ghost makes of them, are weighed, some light will be thrown on the divisions of the book to which they are applied, and which they are intended to characterize. "The things that are," expressing the condition of the Church whilst on earth, unfold successive stages of its history during the present period. And though that may not be evident at first sight, yet, from the character of the expression, "the things that are," and from that which follows, "things which shall be after these things," its application to the state of the Church on earth can hardly be doubted. Such a designation as "the things that are," including, as it does, in the natural meaning of the words, all that has an important existence in the mind of Christ on earth, would scarcely be used to represent only these few churches in a small province of Asia Minor; so that it seems needful to give it some wider bearing. Added to this, all futurists, and to such chiefly this inquiry is addressed, apply chapter iv., et seq., to what is yet future, and believe that the fulfilment of the rest of the book, i. e., "the things that are to be after these," has not yet commenced. This requires the signification that has been assigned to "the things that are," as descriptive of the condition of the Church, or "the things that are to be *after them*" would have no meaning; for the words would be quite inap-

propriate if the long interval of time which has existed between the original condition of the seven churches and the yet future fulfilment of the rest of the book were to intervene. Now, it is clear, that if there is this difference in these two parts of the book, as expressed in "the things that are, and the things that shall be after them," they cannot co-exist. Whilst "the things that are" are going on, "the things that are to be after them" cannot have begun. It is only when the first state of things has ceased that the other can be accomplished. "The things that are" must have closed; and the Church can, therefore, be no longer on earth when chapter iv. opens. And this we shall find harmonizes with the remaining portion of the book.

In chapters iv. v., before the seals are opened, or any of the subsequent judgments inflicted, the saints are seen in the place for which God has destined them, in the counsels of His grace, under the figure of the twenty-four elders.

They are seated on thrones, around the throne of God, as kings and priests, in white raiment, and wearing crowns of gold on their heads. In chapter v. they have in addition, harps and vials full of odours; they sing the praises of Him who has redeemed them out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and they anticipate a reign over the earth, which is yet future. All this marks them out as the Church. They are clearly not souls, for souls cannot sit on thrones or wear crowns; and when souls are spoken of in this book, they are distinctly specified as such; (chap. vi. 9, &c. ;) they are risen and glorified saints, in the full possession of that glory and those privileges which Christ, in His love, has purchased for them.

It is, however, supposed by some, that this beautiful scene is anticipative. Of what is it anticipative? we would ask. Of something that will really take place, or not? Without doubt, it will be replied, to be literally fulfilled, as it is here given. If so, how, and where,

and when, if not at that point of time, in the order of events, when it is related? How can the saints behold the Lamb take the book, which He is to open, out of the hand of Him that sat on the throne—how can they praise Him *when* He does so, and as being worthy *to open* these seals—if they are not in heaven to witness this act, and never get there till all the seals have been opened, and the judgments they occasion have been accomplished? How, again, it may be asked, do they take their place *in heaven* on these thrones, and look forward to the reign of the saints over the earth, if they are to be translated after Christ has left heaven, having previously opened all the seals, and instead of returning with Him there, only join Him on His way to the earth, when He descends to reign, and judge, when all that is here represented as taking place, is long passed? Where is there room, in such an idea, for the fulfilment of what is here prefigured, in such a way as shall carry out the terms in which it is described?

These considerations will make it sufficiently appear—as it is most simple and natural from the narrative to suppose, and as the only way in which the passage can really be fulfilled—that the Church has been already translated to heaven, and taken her place there, to witness from thence the judgments that are being poured out on the earth, before she accompanies Christ when He comes to reign. Other passages might be adduced from the body of the book in support of this view, but the most striking will be found in chapter xix. There, upon the overthrow and judgment of the woman, who is the apostate counterfeit of the Church, the marriage of the Lamb is described as taking place in heaven, with the marriage supper, and the blessing of those who are called to it, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, having made herself ready, and being suitably apparelled for it. Again we may ask, how can this be, if she is not in heaven and has not yet been taken there? It cannot take place while she is on earth, and absent from Christ;

nor is there any opportunity for the fulfilment of what is here represented, if she only meets Christ after He has commenced His descent to reign. Besides, we should then have the strange anomaly of a Bride invested with the dignities and honours which belong to her as such, and displayed in the exercise of them, before she is in the enjoyment of the relationship from which they all spring; reigning with Christ as His Bride before she has been united to Him, and taking her place with Him in public glory before she has tasted those personal joys and rights which His own love has given her in Himself.

But the verses that follow afford us most conclusive proof to the contrary, and that the Church is *in heaven* at this time. The apostle sees "heaven *opened*," and Christ coming forth in triumph to judge under the figure of the rider on the white horse; and, he adds, "the armies *which were in heaven* followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." We know that these are the saints who thus share in the triumph of Christ, by their being clothed with white linen, which has just before been declared to be the righteousness of the saints, and with which it was granted to the Bride to be arrayed previous to the marriage. It is certain that the saints could not follow Christ *out of heaven*, which is thus opened to make way for their descent, if they were not *in it*, and had not been before translated to it. So that, had we no other passage to bring forward, this is of itself sufficient to establish that an interval of time must exist between the removal of the Church and its return with Christ to judge and to reign, during which interval it is in heaven.

It must be evident to any one who believes in a future fulfilment of the scenes described in Revelation iv.—xix., that the present employment of Christ is not that of opening seals, which bring down the judgments of God on those dwelling on the earth, nor are they like it; that action marks a period when there is an entire

change in the divine procedure—the grace of God in the gospel is no longer flowing out as it does now; but all that comes from the throne of God is judgment, or proclamation of judgment. God is about to take possession of the earth, and, before doing so, inflicts all these visitations on those who have despised His grace, accompanied with warnings of the personal advent of the Son of man. Hence, the testimony that is borne is no longer to the absolute grace of God towards sinners, but to God's claims upon the earth, which He is about to enforce in the person of Christ, and to which these judgments witness. From this arises, in a great measure, the persecution which the servants of God have to undergo, and which this book relates; for, whilst the gospel, proclaimed whilst the Church is on earth, testifies of God's love to the sinner, and that He is gathering out a people for heaven, leaving in abeyance the title or rights of Christ to this earth, the declaration that God is about to take possession of it, with the accompanying signs of His doing so, arouses all the enmity of the natural heart of man against God; as of old, when Christ was present, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours." In other words, the dealing of God and of Christ being changed, the moment He takes the book and begins to open the seals, a corresponding change takes place in the character of the testimony borne, and its effect upon the minds of men who hear it. So much is this the case, that, as the effect of opening one of the seals, men call on the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. At the present moment, it is the grace of the Lamb, and the blood of the Lamb, that are in activity, and the Holy Ghost is proclaiming, and by no means that which expresses the wrath of the Lamb.

Whilst alluding to this book, it will be useful to examine more particularly who the saints are which are

on earth during the course of its judgments, and what are their distinguishing features.

It should be remarked that throughout the whole of the more prophetic part of the book, from chapter vi. to xviii. inclusive, the Church is never named, nor are the saints on earth ever addressed or alluded to under that designation. On the contrary, those distinctions of Jew and Gentile, which are obliterated on our becoming members of the Church, the body of Christ, come again into view.

Those who are sealed in chapter vii. are of the tribes of *Israel*. There are saints represented in chapter xi. as worshipping in *the temple* and at *the altar*, which are measured to show that they are, to a certain extent, set apart for God, and He again accepts worship in connexion with them, which certainly must be Jewish. The court without the temple is given into the hands of the *Gentiles*, who tread under foot Jerusalem, now again regarded as "the holy city," whilst the woman* (the Jewish nation) and her seed are the special subjects of prophetic interest and testimony; (chap. xii. ;) all this confirming the idea that the Church is gone, and showing us that the current of the election and dealings of God has set in towards His ancient people, who, since God has begun to take them up again, become, in consequence, the objects of Satan's enmity and attack. But the moral characteristics of these persons yet more clearly define who they are. In chapter vi. they cry for judgment, and that God "*avenge their blood*" on their persecutors. As it is the utterance which the Holy Ghost puts in their lips, these feelings, and their expression, must be according to the mind of God, or

* It is obviously inconsistent to regard the woman as the Church; for she brings forth the man child, (Christ,) who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and is caught up to the throne of God; whilst of Israel it is distinctly said, "*of whom* as concerning the flesh Christ came." Her symbols are those of earthly authority and dominion. (Gen. xxxvii. 9.)

the Spirit of God would never thus indite and record them. It is now the day of grace, "the accepted time, the day of salvation." And, in consequence, this prayer would be unfit for us, and as contrary to the will of God now as it will be suitable then, when "the door is shut," and the time of long-suffering, grace, and patience passed away. Similar features are expressed in the parable of the unjust judge, where the saints of that period are presented under the figure of a widow, who cries, "Avenge me of mine adversary;" and upon this the Lord thus comments: "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" The language here used cannot be christian, as it would be totally unsuitable in the lips of those who are taught to love their enemies, and to pray for those who despitefully use them and persecute them. The Church has no need to cry for her enemies to be destroyed in order to enjoy her blessings, for she is to be taken up to heaven out of the reach of all; but those who are to have their portion on the earth must look for the overthrow of their adversaries, both for their own deliverance, and also in order that the kingdom they wait for may be established.

Again, chapter xi., the testimony of the two witnesses is accompanied by judgments resembling those of Moses and Elijah;* fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their adversaries.† They shut heaven, and smite with plagues; whereas the very suggestion of calling fire from heaven upon those who refused to receive Jesus when on earth, drew upon the disciples the rebuke, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye

* This is not intended at all to countenance the mistaken and unscriptural notion, that Moses and Elijah are the persons here intended. They are evidently, as we learn from the account of the transfiguration, in a glorified state, and not now capable of bearing testimony on earth, suffering and dying, as is here related.

† Compare also the effects produced by the prayers of the saints in chapter viii. 4—7.

are of; for the Son of man is *not* come to *destroy* men's lives, but to *save* them." (Luke ix.)

The remarkable change which we have noticed in the spirit and feelings of the saints who are spoken of in this book, and which evidently has the divine sanction and approval, is accounted for, as we have seen, by the alteration which has taken place in the divine dealings. This change appears to be contemporaneous with the removal of the Church, which, as the witness of the grace and long-suffering of God, has been gathered for heaven, and taken there as the four-and-twenty enthroned elders witness to us. Then it is that God prepares to dispossess those who have so long usurped the government of the earth. The Lamb takes the book, after His title to the inheritance has been declared, and opens the seals. The saints of this period declare God's right to the earth, which man disowns, the coming judgment (chap. xiv. 6, 7) and the day of divine vengeance on the ungodly, for which their prayers ascend, reminding us strongly of similar features in the Psalms, where the same rights and kingdom are constantly the subject.

That there are saints who are removed at a different time, and in a way altogether unlike that of the Church, is evident from the description given in chapter xi. of the translation of the two witnesses; more especially if, as seems most probable, we regard them as symbolizing a double character of testimony, borne by two companies of witnesses. There is no descent of the Lord from heaven into the air for them—no meeting other saints in the clouds, and afterwards joining the Lord above them, and the whole accomplished in the twinkling of an eye. But when brought to life, they stand on the earth, and are beheld by their enemies. After this a voice says, "Come up hither," and they ascend direct to heaven in a cloud. In this ascent they are unaccompanied by the dead and living saints, though they go *into heaven* as they have done. A further

proof that the idea of Christ's coming from heaven, and the saints meeting Him after He has arrived in the air, and not ascending into heaven at all, but coming at once with Him to the earth, is entirely unfounded. These witnesses have been slain, as well as those who were seen as souls under the altar, for their active testimony for the truth. Another company, slain for refusing to worship the beast and his image when all the world adore it, are seen in heaven, in chapter xv., on the sea of glass, which was not before occupied, having been left vacant for them. These parties, having been put to death, cannot have an earthly place or portion, we find them, therefore, in Revelation xx., sharing in the blessings of the first resurrection, contrasted as it is there with the second, which is a resurrection of judgment, (John v. 29,) whilst the former includes all who are raised previous to the manifestation of Christ in glory.

Some difficulty may, perhaps, be experienced at first, at the apparently undefined position occupied by those who render testimony to the truth after the Church is in heaven, and how it is that the disciples, during our Lord's sojourn on earth, are looked at as their representatives. But just as many of the Old Testament declarations, respecting what is to take place during the millennium, not easily understood at first, afterwards became simple enough, so it will be found here, and for very much the same reason; the real solution of the difficulty in both cases being in the change of the dispensation, and in the fact that we find it not easy to place ourselves in circumstances, and under the direction of principles differing so widely from our own.

The present period is altogether peculiar and exceptional; and the action of God, while it lasts, in giving up the earth and in calling out a people for heaven, differs entirely from all that precedes or follows it. After the translation of the Church, there will be a time of transition, just as there was when our blessed

Lord was on earth, and with many corresponding features. The gospel of the kingdom was preached, and it will be again; (Matt. xxiv. 14; Rev. xiv. 6, 7;) one who fills a place answering to that of John the Baptist, as the forerunner of Christ, and announcing His coming, will appear; (Matt. xi. 14; xvii. 11; Mal. iv. 5, 6;) the Jews will be again in their own land, and for a time under Gentile dominion, and again persecuting the disciples of Christ; whilst God is about to send His Son again into this world.

During the former period, the Lord sent His disciples on a special mission to the Jewish nation, with these directions: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. x. 5—7.) After some further intimations of what they must expect to meet with, He adds, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." The persons to whom the testimony was confined, the subject of that testimony, as well as the circumstances of it, and the directions by which it was to be regulated, all differ entirely from that which God has sent to man since the death and resurrection of Christ. The gospel is now published far and wide to the *Gentiles*; it is far from being merely a proclamation of the near approach of the kingdom on earth. Evangelists are not now commanded to go utterly unprovided, (Luke xxii. 35—37,) and certainly it cannot be said, that the calling of the Church is at any time to be going over the cities of Israel, as the disciples, or those who take up this testimony again, will be doing when the Son of man comes. The continuance of it at the end is especially remarkable; "when the Son of man comes" those who resume it are engaged in going over "the cities of Israel;" and they are thus addressed: "Ye

shall not have gone over," &c.; so that we have the authority of the Lord Himself for identifying the testimony of His disciples to the Jews whilst He was on earth with that which will be rendered by the Jewish remnant immediately previous to His return, and for identifying the disciples themselves with that remnant. Let us examine other passages which refer to this period, in order to ascertain to whom they more properly relate. Matthew xxiv. contemplates a destruction of Jerusalem yet future: this is evident from verses 29, 30, where the coming of Christ is declared to follow close upon the tribulation, (comp. Dan. xii. 12,) as we also learn to be the case from Zech. xiv. 1—5, where the appearing of the Lord, with His glorified saints, for the deliverance of the city, takes place immediately after its capture. There are certain saints at this time in special connexion with Jerusalem and Judea, with Jewish ideas and in Jewish circumstances: they are warned that many will come in the name of Christ, each one professing to be Christ, or the Messiah of the Jews, and that they are not to be deceived by them; that false *prophets* will arise and deceive many; that they are to flee when they see the abomination of desolation set up in the *holy place*; they are told to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath-day; that unless the days of suffering were shortened, no flesh would be saved; that they are not to listen to those who tell them that Christ is here or there—if they say He is in the desert, they are not to go there; or if in the secret chamber, they are not to believe it. How inconsistent to suppose that such directions could be given or apply to any but Jewish saints. Is the Church likely to be in Judea, so as to have to flee? Can it have begun to regard the temple at Jerusalem as the *holy place*, (Heb. ix. 24,) and the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday, as a day that ought to be kept holy? Is it likely to be deceived by impostors who attempt to pass themselves off for Christ, or by others who say that

He is to be found concealed in this or that locality, and that it is needful to go there to Him? All this is natural enough, if we view the persons here represented as Jewish believers. The dangers described and the warnings given are just suitable to them. They would naturally, as Jews, look for the Messiah in this earthly way, and, therefore, need these instructions to prevent their being deceived. The temple to them will be the holy place, the Jewish Sabbath that which they will observe. Having earthly hopes, viz., those of sharing in the blessings of the new earth when Christ comes to reign, it is needful, for that purpose, that their flesh should be saved, or, in other words, that they should live through all these troubles. But does the Church look for this, or is it any consequence to her whether her flesh is preserved, seeing she must be raised and changed to share the glory of Christ? Does she look for Him in a secret chamber; or would she be in any danger of being deluded by such a pretence, when she expects, the moment He comes out of heaven, to be caught up to meet Him in the air and to be for ever with Him?*

In Daniel xii., where *Daniel's people* are said to be delivered, it is added, "Every one that shall be found written in the book," which answers exactly to the term "elect" used here. Moreover, in Luke xvii. 31, where the same time is in view, and the same circumstances, and where similar directions are given, it is added, "In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." Now, is it not perfectly inconceivable, that such language could be addressed to a heavenly saint, who beholds God's Son descending for him, and

* It is also *after* He has appeared that the Jews, who are scattered among distant nations, are assembled together by the instrumentality of angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, (ver. 31,) which is evidently a collection of them, and not a translation.

also finds himself at the same instant changed into His image, and ascending in the clouds to meet Him. He is not to turn back to take his stuff out of his house! Of what value could it possibly be to him, or how could a changed and glorified saint be supposed to do such a thing? Now, to one who is to remain on earth, and be blest there when Christ governs it, such a warning would be quite appropriate. It is well that he should go forth to meet Christ and not regard his earthly possessions, however useful they may be to him subsequently. Christ will take care of all that concerns him, and he ought, though a saint destined for earthly blessings, to be thinking then of Christ alone.

It is not at all surprising that the apostles should be addressed as the representatives of these persons. We know that, according to the divine purpose, they were afterwards to form the nucleus of the Church; and sometimes they are viewed anticipatively, and spoken of by our Lord according to what they would be when the promised Comforter had come. But they were certainly, in their proper character, Jewish believers, rather than what we call *Christians*, a name which was not given till much later, nor was the Church at that time built or formed. (Matt. xvi. 18; Acts ii. 47.) They could not understand the necessity which there was that Christ should suffer; nor after His death and burial that He would rise again from the dead, though He had expressly foretold both. They trusted that Jesus would have redeemed Israel. (Luke xxiv. 21.) Even after His resurrection they ask Him, as we have already seen, (Acts i.,) "Wilt thou at this time restore again the *kingdom to Israel*?" Their thoughts and hopes, we see by this, were even then connected with, and did not rise beyond, the conditions and prospects of their nation. They clearly did not enter into the counsels of God respecting the Church and their position in it, to which their minds were only opened after the descent of the Holy Ghost, who came to form it, or

they could not have made such an inquiry. They were, up to this time, Jewish believers, who owned Jesus as the true Messiah, and trusted in Him as such, yet retaining their thoughts and feelings as Jews, and looking upon Him in His connexion with the Jewish nation and themselves as a part of it, and believing the promises of God towards it, which they expected He would now fulfil. This makes them very fit representatives of those who will be in much the same circumstances at a day yet to come, and who will have much the same feelings and hopes, and much the same amount of light and confidence in Christ as *the hope of Israel*; and in this way the Lord addresses them, as we have seen in passages such as Matt. x., xxiv.; Mark xiii.; and Luke xvii., xxi.

Many of the passages which relate to the return of the Lord to judge this earth, have a character so peculiarly their own, and differ so widely from those that refer to His coming for the Church, that it seems unaccountable *how* they ever could have been applied to it. For instance, in Revelation i. 7, His advent is thus announced: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Again, "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. xxiv. 30.) And, "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv. 27.) Here, His coming is with clouds; it is like the lightning flash, which spreads from one end of heaven to the other: every eye beholds Him, and terror and dismay follow. When He comes for His saints, as related in 1 Thessalonians iv., He does not come with clouds, which are symbolical of providential power and judicial authority. He is not seen by every eye; nor do we read of any such effects being produced. There is no symptom of anything judicial, He comes purely on a mission of love,

to accomplish which He descends from heaven, to take to Himself the Bride He has purchased with His own blood, and which He has chosen to be His heavenly companion for ever. His concern is with the Church—with His saints, and with them only—to seek and take them to Himself for ever; for such is the desire of His heart. He comes as a Redeemer—a Saviour—a Bridegroom; and every idea is excluded but the fulfilment of the purposes and promises of love. To present, in fine, the Church to Himself—“a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

How unlike this is to the way in which, as we have seen, His return to the earth is portrayed. It is compared, again, to the flood, which swept away the ungodly inhabitants of the world: “As the days of Noe were, so shall also *the coming* of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Matt. xxiv. 37—39.) To the fire which God rained from heaven to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah: “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” (Luke xvii. 28—31.) Are the deluge and the fire, which God sent from heaven, fit emblems of the coming of Christ, when He gathers the Church? Has it that character at all, or are such features exhibited in it as are presented to us in 1 Thessalonians iv., and similar passages? Observe, it is “*the coming*” of Christ that is compared to these things, and has these marks: “He comes” with the clouds of heaven; “His coming” is like the lightning, the deluge, and the

fire rained from heaven. Will He come for His saints as a flood, or as fire, or as lightning?—for His Bride as a judge, or with a two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth, and a rod of iron in His hand, or clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, as He is represented in Revelation xix., and that, moreover, at the very moment when He comes out of heaven, so that it could not be said that He changed His aspect after He left heaven, quitting it in one character and assuming another before He reached the earth!

How much the confounding of these two events together must interfere with that joyful and bright expectation produced by the assurance that the Lord may come *for His saints* at any moment, and which a verse such as this awakens, “unto them *that look for him*, he shall appear the second time without sin unto *salvation*;” for it is evident, that the effect on the heart will vary according to the way in which the Lord’s return is viewed by the believer. As the once commonly received idea of a general judgment and universal conflagration, connected with the Lord’s second advent, operated to hinder its being looked for as an object of desire, and made it almost one of dread, even to His people, in the same way, confusing it with His coming to execute judgment on earth, invests it with a character which must necessarily weaken, if not destroy, the sweetness and attractive power of the anticipation and the desire with which the Bride of Christ should await the coming of her Bridegroom to take her to Himself.

That the statement already above made—that when Christ comes to remove the Church He is not seen by every eye—is correct, is evident from Colossians iii. 4, where we are told that “when Christ who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also *appear with Him in glory*.” So that when He is seen by the world, the Scripture positively declares that we shall be with Him and be seen with Him in His glory. We must, therefore, have been previously removed in order to be with

Him, so that when He comes with clouds, and every eye sees Him, that cannot be His coming for us, or He would appear *without* us, instead of our being *with* Him in glory *when* He appears; nor can it apply to His coming as the lightning, a figure which is used expressly to show what will be public and apparent to all, in contrast to what is hidden or secret. This also is confirmed by what is stated by the apostle Jude, who says, "Behold the Lord cometh *with* ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." (Jude 14, 15; Zech. xiv. 5.)

In 2 Thessalonians ii. the apostle Paul himself draws clearly enough the distinction between the rapture of the Church and the day of the Lord: "I beseech you, brethren, by [*ὑπὲρ*] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand," or, rather, "is present," for such is the undoubted meaning of the word *ἐνέστηκεν*. The Thessalonian saints mistook, it appears, the terrible troubles through which they were passing for the judgments which will accompany the day of the Lord, which, in consequence, they thought had commenced. This idea disquieted their minds and weakened their confidence, and gave occasion to the appeal of the apostle to them by, or for the sake of,* the coming of Christ and their gathering to Him, (which must first take place,) not to suppose that the day had set in. Thus distinguishing these two events, and entreating them, by virtue of one which had relation to themselves, and involved their previous removal, not to be troubled about the other.

Another point of great interest, which is touched on in this epistle, is the power which restrains the progress and development of evil, and the manifestation of Anti-

* Such is the way the translators took it, and such is the force assigned *ὑπὲρ* by Matthiæ and other grammarians, *when used with words of entreaty*.

christ. "And now ye know," says the apostle, "what withholdeth, that he [Antichrist] might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the midst." [*ἐκ μέσον.*] The apostle does not tell us what this power was that held the evil in check; we can only, therefore, gather it from the terms used, from analogy, or from other scriptures.

The Church was first formed when the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost for that purpose. Previous to the death of Christ, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile subsisted; and there could be no such thing, consequently, as their union in one body; nor could that body have any existence until its Head was in heaven and glorified, and that the Holy Ghost was sent down here to dwell in it, and give it its unity. For these two things are evidently necessary in order that any natural body should have life: first, it must have a head; secondly, there must be a spirit in it, to animate it and give it the unity of life. Now, during the lifetime of Christ this unity had not commenced, for it was something far more than a unity of faith in His person. He says of Himself, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth *alone*; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;" (John xii. 24;) so that it is in His resurrection, and by virtue of it, that we have this life in Him, and it could not be before His resurrection. (Compare also Eph. ii. 5, 6.) Not only, therefore, was it needful that Jesus should become man, but He must die and rise again, before a single believer could be united to Him in the same life that He has, (John xiv. 19,) atonement for sin being the basis of everything. It is not, however, life only, but the presence of the Holy Ghost down here that forms the body, who, now that there is a glorified and accepted Man as its Head in heaven, has come to unite us to Him as such, and incorporate all the living saints into one body, by His presence here

on earth; "for," says the apostle, "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. xii. 13.)

This personal presence of the Holy Ghost on earth is the great characteristic of the present period, and of the existence of the Church whilst here. When leaving His disciples, Jesus promised to them another Comforter, who should "abide with them for ever, even the Spirit of truth." This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and then the Church was established on earth; so that it could be said, "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved," and the accomplishment of the previous declaration of Christ, "On this rock [His own person] I *will* build my Church," commenced. Ever since this time, the Holy Ghost has remained on earth in the Church. All operations in it are carried on by His agency. (1 Cor. xii. 11; Acts xiii. 2, &c.) He builds the Church together as God's habitation. (Eph. ii. 22.) This presence of God the Holy Ghost in the body of Christ, and His activity displayed in grace, and power, and blessing, are quite distinct from His providential government in the world, which has subsisted from the beginning, and will subsist after this has ceased, as well as the operations of His grace upon the hearts of *individuals*, which have been carried on in all dispensations. In certain parts of the Book of the Revelation, viz., those which precede and follow the visions, we have further evidence of this truth. In the addresses to the Churches, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what *the Spirit* saith to the Churches," is often repeated; and in chapter xxii. the Spirit down here with the Church is represented as looking up to Christ and inviting His return. "*The Spirit* and the bride say, Come." In these passages, which apply to the present time, the Church is still on earth; and herein we shall perceive the force of the apostle's assertion, that "he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way."

Whilst the Holy Ghost is on earth in the Church,

His presence is a restraint upon the full manifestation of evil. If the presence of a man of God will act in this way upon a company of ungodly persons, as we have often seen, we cannot be surprised that the presence of the Spirit of God, as well as the light which He diffuses whilst on earth, should operate in this way. When once the Church is removed, and the Holy Ghost is no longer here, the restraining influence ceases to exist, the evil displays itself without hindrance, and Antichrist appears. Hence the propriety of the expression, "He who now letteth will let until he be *taken out of the way*," which appropriately describes His sudden removal with the Church. This coincides with what we have already remarked, that it would be inconsistent to suppose that the Holy Ghost could be here when the Son of man comes to take vengeance, and scarcely finds faith on earth. The ancient idea of the Roman Empire being that which stood in the way of the manifestation of Antichrist, would not *now* meet the requirements of the passage, as that empire has long ceased to exist, and a personal Antichrist has not yet appeared; nor can, it is believed, any other consistent interpretation of it be offered by those who object to that which is given above.

There are, without doubt, many passages which speak of the day of the Lord, in relation to the conduct and service of the saints. For whilst the rapture has reference to their privileges alone, the day of the Lord is the grand terminus of their responsibilities. The reason of it is found in this, that the servants are called to account and rewarded, after their Master has first received His own kingdom—and has, therefore, been invested with the authority by which He punishes or distributes rewards as He sees fit. The Evangelist Luke tells us (chap. xix. 15) that "when he was returned, *having received the kingdom*, he commanded his servants to be called to him," and took account of them. The Apostle Paul speaks of a "crown of righteousness"

being laid up for him, "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give him at *that day*, and not to him only, but to all them that love his appearing." It is as the Lord, the righteous Judge, that He bestows this crown; because, as such, He will make the difference between those who have loved and served Him, and those who have not done so. Hence it is not bestowed until that day when He comes and acts publicly in the world in that character. Timothy is told to keep the charge committed to him until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Timothy slept, ages ago, with the departed saints; yet he will not render his account and receive his reward until that time.

It remains to notice some passages which have occasional difficulties in some minds. In Matthew xiii., after the account given of the progress of Christianity in the world and its corruption by the enemy in the parable of the wheat and the tares, the harvest is spoken of which is to make the separation between them. This, however, as is the case in natural things, is a period more or less prolonged, as we learn from the words, "In time of harvest," "the harvest is the end of the age;" and various and successive actions are spoken of as taking place in the course of its duration. Just as is ordinarily the case in the scene from which this illustration is taken, the field is reaped, so that the crop is ready on the field before it is carried. The tares are first gathered and bound in bundles—the wheat is transferred to the garner, afterwards the tares are burned in the fire; and still later it is said, "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." These two last particulars, being given in the explanation (ver. 40—43) of the parable, which enlarges, and goes beyond its previous statements, and which clearly makes a distinction between the removal of the Church, and its public exhibition in the glory of Christ.

The term used in this parable, as descriptive of the

close, "the time of harvest," may help to remove the difficulty felt by some at the idea of the translation of different bodies of saints at different periods, as the expression seems to intimate that the whole epoch bears the character of an ingathering of saints. But what has chiefly given rise to this difficulty is a mistaken view of Revelation xx.—it having been erroneously supposed that this passage describes the resurrection of the Church; whilst, in reality, it assumes that it has taken place, but gives no account of it. The passage runs thus: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Ver. 4.) The apostle had previously seen the Church in glory, both as the enthroned elders in chapter iv., &c., and as the Bride in chapter xix.; and he had also seen it come forth from heaven with Christ just before, when He descended in triumph, as the rider on the white horse, to overthrow the antichristian hosts. He now sees thrones which are occupied by the saints, (they sat upon them,) and judgment is given to them; but he adds that those who had been martyred, and whom he had before seen as *souls*, *lived* and reigned with Christ also. It was unnecessary to speak of the resurrection of the Church, the members of which were long since risen and ascended; and who had been described as enthroned, and often mentioned as in a glorified state, and who had just accompanied Christ from heaven, in order to reign. He, therefore, only says, he "saw thrones, and *they* sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them"—the antecedent to the pronoun "they" being the saints who descended with Christ in chapter xix. 14. The martyrs, also, he now tells us, were raised in order to participate

in the blessing of the reign of Christ. They could not share in it as souls; and, therefore, he adds of them, and of them only, that "they lived" in order to reign "with Christ." "But," he continues, "*the rest* of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished. *This is the first resurrection.*" So that the term, the *first resurrection*, is applied to all who were raised before the commencement of the millennium, in contrast with those who were not raised till the end of it. The apostle includes these different bodies in it whom he now beholds reigning with Christ, and calls it all "the first resurrection." Cavillers may call it two or more resurrections, and the objection may sound somewhat plausible at first; but this will cease to be the case when it is discovered that the Holy Ghost uses the term, "first resurrection," in contrast with that which takes place after the thousand years, and which has a totally different moral character. It is evident that Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, who were translated long ago, will all be included in what is here called the first resurrection, as well as those saints who, as Matthew relates, (chap. xxvii. 52, 53,) arose at the resurrection of our Lord. The two witnesses, whose ascension has been described in chapter xi., must also be partakers in it, so that the attempt to attach the whole of it to one moment of time entirely fails. The different parties named in Revelation xx. 4, though sharing in the first resurrection and its glories, do not form a part of the Church, the Bride of Christ, or their resurrection would not be given here *after* the marriage has taken place. Besides which, we cannot suppose that when Christ returns to present the Church to Himself, she is incomplete. The Spirit and the Bride say "Come," in reply to the Lord, who presents Himself as "the root and offspring of David—the morning star," in Revelation xxii. 16; and we cannot think that as she is thus represented as a Bride, inviting her Bridegroom to come for her, He only finds part of this

Bride when He comes; nor are those saints treated of in the Revelation ever described as sharing in that relationship.

An objection frequently urged, and similar in its nature to that stated above, is, that the views here advocated, make more than one "coming." This argument, when examined, will be found to be of no real force, and very superficial. There would be more truth in saying that the Lord's coming appears to be divided into two parts, which is quite another thing, and quite according to the analogy of Scripture. He comes to remove His saints, as we have seen, and for this purpose He descends, first, to the confines of this earth's atmosphere, (1 Thess. iv.,) and no further. Thus the darkness and slumber of the world are left undisturbed. So far as *it* is in question, He does not then come at all, for the remaining stage of the journey, in which alone it is concerned, is unfulfilled until afterwards, when He returns, accompanied by His saints, to this earth. The first act of His *παρουσία*, "coming" or "presence," is, when He descends for His saints, and so comes to them; the second, when He comes to the world, which He has not done before. It is the latter which is called His *επιφάνεια*, "Epiphany" or "manifestation," and which is never applied to the rapture, but always to Christ's appearing in glory with His saints, whilst *παρουσία* is sometimes used in speaking of one, sometimes of the other, as the context or the persons addressed, or the way in which it is brought forward determines, for He may come or be present in different ways to different persons. The same difference may be observed between the birth of Christ, and that which is ordinarily called His Epiphany at His first coming, though this is only adduced as an illustration, and nothing more. The objection, however, which is merely verbal, is not founded on any specific statement, or application of the expression, in the word of God, which uses the term *second*, in contrast with His *first*

coming; and we all know that His "first coming" embraces a wide range of varied circumstances and appearances, which, both in Scripture and in common parlance, it is used to include. We have seen how plainly the saints are declared to come forth with Christ out of heaven, for the destruction of Antichrist and his hosts, Revelation xix., against which, and other distinct passages, which have been cited, a merely human notion about the use of the term "second advent," cannot be maintained.

Some have concluded, from what is said in Revelation xi., 15—18, that the public assumption by Christ of His kingdom, actually takes place then. This would not be of any great moment to the point we are considering, even if correct; but, upon a closer examination, it will be found otherwise, and that it is an anticipative expression uttered by the saints, who are in heaven, on the seventh angel's sounding. This will be made clear, by reference to the following chapter where almost the very same words are used, when Satan is represented as cast out of heaven: (ver. 10:) "And I heard a loud voice, saying, in heaven, *Now* is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night," though there is a distinct intimation in verse 14 that there are yet three years and a half to expire before Christ actually takes the kingdom. The statement also, in the passage in question, that the time of the dead was come, that they should be judged, makes this more evident, since we know from other scriptures that they are not judged till the end of the thousand years. To this we may add, that the last woe has yet to be endured, that the temple is opened in heaven, and the third, or final series of judgments, the seven last vials, has yet to be inflicted. To these the seventh trumpet is introductory, just as the seventh seal was to the trumpets, chapters xii.—xiv.

being parenthetical. The fact is, that the saints in heaven, who are represented as intelligent in the divine dealings, and able to interpret their meaning, anticipate, both from the sounding of the last trumpet and the overthrow of Satan, the full result upon earth, which will ultimately ensue from what is then taking place in heaven.

In the course of the preceding remarks, many points have been touched upon, which it is not possible to treat fully within so small a compass, and, to do which would lead too far away from the subject we have more immediately before us. The object has been to give a general outline of the testimony of Scripture upon it, and to bring out the principles which are involved in it, rather than to enter into all the details of the fulfilment of prophecy. Hence, many facts predicted have been merely glanced at in their bearing upon the main question, and many Scriptures which throw light upon it, more or less directly, especially in the Old Testament, have been left out.

That these views are comparatively, at least in our day, recent, need not weigh with any one in examining them; for the same may be said of all that has been written upon these subjects. It is not long since all the prophecies in the Old Testament relating to God's earthly people, the Jews, were universally applied to the Church, as descriptive of her future glory, as they are, even to this day, by a large proportion of Christians. Besides this, we know how great is the variety of opinion that exists in matters of prophetic detail, so that, among such uncertain and rival claims, we may feel quite free in following out any prophetic enquiry, which gives a more clear and distinct future, and more in harmony with the word of God generally, than we have known before, relying, as alone of real consequence, on the sanction which that word gives, under the teaching of the Spirit of God.

It will be seen that it is not for the want of plain,

unmistakable evidence in the Scriptures of truth, that the minds of Christians remain in doubt upon these points; but, alas! there are so many prejudices and preconceived notions which have to be got rid of; besides which, the heart is slow, as with the disciples of old, to appreciate the height of the love of Christ, and all that He intends to do on behalf of His Bride, the object of His heart's affection. Added to this, Satan has been endeavouring to throw dust in the eyes of those who were inquiring, by bringing forward, by means of opposers, passages which, from want of full acquaintance with their real meaning, have created some misapprehension, and been a hindrance to full establishment in the truth.

He knows, full well, that to lower and destroy the heavenly hopes which God has given will dim the perception of the love of Christ, which acts so powerfully on the heart, when rightly understood, in separating the affections from everything else, and fixing them on Him alone. We have need, therefore, to have the heart set right, as well as to have the mind enlightened, in order to enter into these things, so that our desire should be for Christ alone. For the apostle says, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things," and he lets us know how great a hindrance the carnality of the Corinthians had been to them, and to his instructing them in these things. (1 Cor. ii. 6; iii. 1.) May God give to us all, by the power of His Spirit, to know and to enjoy the full blessing of His counsels and ways toward the Church, and "to him be glory, by Jesus Christ, in the Church, *throughout all ages, world without end!*"

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