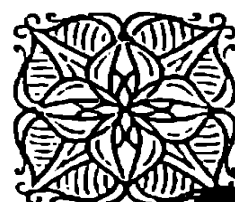
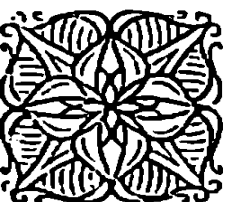


The Coming
The Tribulation
and
The Judgment Seat

By
William Barker

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THE COMING OF OUR LORD.

OF all the scriptures of the New Testament which treat of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ there is none that deals with it more explicitly and with such fullness of detail as 1 Thessalonians iv. 13, 18. In speaking of the Second Coming of our Lord I do not refer especially to that side of it which Charles Wesley celebrates in his majestic hymn—

“Lo ! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain ;
Thousand thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of His train,
Hallelujah !
Jesus comes and comes to reign !”

That He will thus come at the appointed hour we do not doubt. And this passage in its earlier verses expressly alludes to it, as we shall see. That is what may be called the *second* part of His coming, there is an anterior part about which the saints at Thessalonica were now to be further instructed. They were not ignorant of the fact that the Saviour would return. That great truth was an integral portion of the gospel which they had received and wherein they stood. And in receiving it they had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus our

Deliverer from coming wrath. All this is stated in so many words in the closing verses of chapter one, which we shall do well to read. From this we learn that the gospel which Paul preached unto them did not end with a Saviour who had died for their sins, who was risen and in glory. *He was coming again* to receive them unto Himself, afterwards to deal with His foes, to establish His kingdom, and then His saints should have their part in His glorious reign.

But this prospect was not so clear to their minds as it may be to ours, and it gave rise to questions which they felt themselves incompetent to answer. What about those who fall asleep meanwhile? Would they not be great losers? How could they share in the glory of His kingdom if they were not on earth when He came? For we must not suppose that as yet they knew the truth in detail as we should know it. It is more than probable that they did not. That Christ was risen and was coming again they knew very well, but that in itself did not meet their difficulties. And so the Apostle writes to set their mind at rest. He lets them know that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so even, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." No doubt about that. They shall come with Christ and share His glory when the day of His glory dawns.

And then follows a new revelation—something they had never heard before. And what

he is about to tell them is invested with all the authority of "*the word of the Lord.*" This in itself should place us in the position of reverent and attentive hearers anxious not to miss a syllable, but to profit to the utmost by the communication he is now to make. First of all he would have them know that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise take precedence of those who fall asleep. No advantage will accrue to us. Blessed though it be to remain till the Lord returns, it will confer nothing upon us. Indeed, "the dead in Christ shall rise *first.*" It will be theirs to feel the first touch of that divine power which will conform both them and us to the image of our Lord (Phil. III. 20, 21).

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord " (1 Thess. IV. 16, 17).

More than one thing may be noticed here. It is the Lord Himself who shall come for His saints. When the purposes of God begin to ripen for the restoration of Israel to the land of their fathers, it is *the angels* who shall be sent forth to gather His elect from the four winds of heaven (Matt. XXIV. 31). Those celestial

beings shall be His servants to set in motion everything that will be needed to accomplish that sure and great result. But in our case no angels are in view. None but the Lord is seen. And it is into the air He descends. That will be the meeting-place between Him and His heavenly saints. Then His glorious voice shall be heard that calls the dead in Christ from their graves. What an answer there will be from every part of this wide earth where the dead in Christ now lie ! The body sown in weakness shall be raised in power, sown in dishonour it shall be raised in glory, sown a natural body it shall be raised a spiritual body (1 Cor. xv. 42-44). Then shall be heard that triumphant challenge, " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? " Nor is that all. " We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

" How bright the resurrection morn
On all the saints will break !
The Lord Himself will then return,
His ransomed Church to take.

Our Lord Himself we then shall see,
Whose blood for us was shed ;
With Him for ever we shall be,
Made like our glorious Head."

To the man of the world all this may seem like an idle dream, the child of an unbridled imagination. " What ! " he may exclaim in

incredulous tones, “ would you have us believe that at some unknown moment, possibly near at hand, not only the dead shall rise, but every living Christian shall be caught away to heaven as you say Elijah was ? Impossible ! How could such things be ? ” Similar questions were asked by the Sadducean school of old. And the Lord pointed out to them the source of all error, doubt, and unbelief—they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matt. xxii. 29). Now the Scriptures cannot be broken. Every word shall stand. And as for the power of God, it can do all things. Impossibilities vanish away, they flee from the presence of God’s almightiness. With Him nothing is impossible. The Hand that fashioned all worlds and holds them firmly compacted together—the One who gives life and motion and being to every creature in the vast universe, whose wisdom, power, and glory are seen in the infinitely small as in the infinitely great, He is able both to raise the dead and take away the living—changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. xv. 52). Amid these august mysteries of the Christian faith the humble believer walks on a steady step and unreeling brain. He knows that his Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, is able to do everything, and on His sure word he rests.

And if it be “ the dead in Christ ” who shall be raised, so all who are “ *in Christ* ” shall be

caught up when the Lord comes. Not one of them shall be left behind. There are those who would fain persuade us that only some of the dead in Christ shall hear His voice and come forth—those who when on earth attained to a high degree of personal sanctity and to a lofty standard of devotedness — these only. The rest, though they shall have a place in the *eternal* kingdom, shall have no part in Christ's *millennial* reign. They were not faithful, they shall be excluded. And as regards the living saints, only the very true and loyal-hearted shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. All others will be left to go through the great tribulation. With such views we have no sympathy, we believe they lack the support of the Word of God. If we mistake not they originate partly in the failure to observe the difference between the coming of our Lord *for* His saints and His appearing *with* them in glory, and partly through not seeing the unique place the Church holds in her calling and hopes as distinct from the redeemed of a past dispensation and of one yet to come. For there will be another when the Church period ends God begins to fulfil His counsels concerning Israel and all the families of the earth.

“ Israel's race shall then behold Him,
 Full of grace and majesty ;
 Though they set at nought and sold Him,
 Pierced and nailed Him to the tree ;
 Then in glory
 Shall their great Messiah see.”

But to return. As to the resurrection, it is said, "Christ the firstfruits ; afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming " (1 Cor. xv. 23). So in 1 Thessalonians iv. "*the dead in Christ* shall rise first." There is in neither passage the slightest hint that only some of these shall be raised. And as to the living it is said, "*We* shall be changed." "*We* . . . shall be caught up." Beyond doubt, the "WE" of both passages is broad enough to embrace every saint who is alive and remains unto the coming of the Lord. Were it otherwise, were our part in that glorious event to depend on *our* faithfulness rather than on *His* grace, who among us could cry, "Come, Lord Jesus" ? Who with any just sense of his own imperfections, both as a saint and a servant, would be confident that he would be "caught up" if it rested on what he had been ? Such a theory tends either to bondage or pride, and is destructive of the finest spiritual affections which have our precious Saviour as their object.

Nor can any tell when this great event will take place. The day is fixed and written down in the Counsel Book of the Eternal, but no man on earth knows it. It may be to-day, to-morrow or the day after. None can tell. Therefore we should ever watch. And so we shall if Christ be deeply loved. For this watching and waiting for Him is much more a question of the heart than of the head. Clear views have their value, but they are

worthless and cold as a winter day if they stand alone. Two children may know that mother—long absent—is coming home to-morrow. One is as sure about that as the other, but one of them intensely longs for the hours to pass because she intensely loves. And mother, too, in whose affections both children have their place, she longs for the meeting - time. O Christian, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and kept by His mighty power, are you waiting for your Saviour to come? Has the Morning Star arisen in your heart? Are you standing on the hill-top watching for the daybreak and the first silver streaks of the morning? “And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. . . . Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. XXII. 17, 20).

“’Tis Thy heavenly bride and Spirit,
 Jesus, Lord! that bid Thee come;
 All the glory to inherit,
 And to take Thy people home.
 All creation
 ‘Travails, groans, till Thou shalt come.”

THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

I DO not know whether you have met with it, but there is an idea going abroad among Christians that only a part of the Church—the very faithful ones—will be caught up when the Lord comes. All the rest are to be left behind to go through the Great Tribulation. If it were merely a wandering thought it would be well to let it pass and take no notice of it, but when we find it pushed to the front in pamphlets, diligently taught in magazines, and made the subject of conference addresses, it becomes another matter.

One of these addresses has just been sent to me. It is based on Revelation XII.—the woman clothed with the sun and having the moon beneath her feet, of whom was born a man-child who was caught up unto God, and to His throne. The woman, so the speaker says, is “the Church of Christ”—the time of her travail is the present moment—the man-child is “the small company of true believers who are wholly sanctified, watchful—these will be caught up to be the Bride of Christ.” The woman herself represents “unfaithful Christians.” These will pass through the Great Tribulation and will form no part of the Bride. Nor will they reign with Christ—they shall never *sit* upon His throne, nor have a crown—they shall *stand* before it and have palms in

their hands, but throneless and crownless they shall ever be. This loss is the reward of unfaithfulness and of their disloyalty to Christ.

Surely there is enough in all this to make one think. Is it true? Is this what Scripture teaches? We shall not be blamed if we do what the Bereans did even when an apostle preached unto them. They searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Let us imitate their diligence and follow their faith (Acts xvii. 11).

How do we know there is to be any Tribulation at all? Of course, everybody knows that tribulation in a general way has been and is the lot of those who live godly in Christ Jesus. But that is not what is meant. Is there to be a time of *special* tribulation, when the winds shall blow and the waves shall roar and tempests of wrath shall rage—wrath both human and satanic? Is there to be a time when the governmental hand of God shall be upon those tribes of Israel who crucified their Messiah and upon the nations in general? We believe there is. And so it is written, "Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the earth and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke xxi. 25, 26). "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened " (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22). But will the Church see those dark and distressful days ? Are they marked down in her calendar ? or will she, like Enoch, be translated to heaven ere the flood comes while others, like Noah (figure of the Jews), are left to go through it ? Let us turn to the Word of the Lord and see.

Will you allow me to make a little digression ? I ask, What is the Church ? Is it the aggregate of all the redeemed from Abel's day to the moment when the last one shall be gathered in ? The answer must be in the negative. There is indeed but one Saviour, one way of salvation, one principle on which men are or ever will be saved. The grace of God is the source of their salvation, the blood of Christ the meritorious cause, and faith the principle on which they receive it. There is no other. But it pleases God, in His most perfect wisdom, to set the redeemed in families. As in the material universe " there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars," so is it in the universe of grace. In this galaxy of glory the Church—having her beginning on the day of Pentecost and her completion when the Lord shall come—holds her unique place according to the counsels of God. In respect of Israel, " beloved for the fathers' sakes "

(Rom. xi. 28), all the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all the glowing prophecies of her restoration to her own land and to her enjoyment of the blessings of the New Covenant, must be fulfilled. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). But the Church's place is one and Israel's another.

It is when the Church—called with a heavenly calling and destined to be co-heir with Christ in the day of His kingdom and glory—shall have been translated to heaven that God will bring to pass His purposes concerning Israel and fulfil His glorious promises made to the fathers. But ere the elect of that nation shall be brought into their ultimate blessing they will be "purified, and made white and tried" in the fires of earthly tribulation (Dan. xii. 10). So it is written, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xiii. 9).

The passages that speak *specifically* of ~~the~~ *Great Tribulation* are four in number—two in the Old Testament and two in the New. There are, indeed, two others, both of which are in the book of the Revelation (chaps. iii. 10; vii. 14), but these refer to it in a more general way and give it a much wider sweep. The

first two are Jeremiah xxx. 7 and Daniel xii. 1. It will be seen that both of them refer to Israel in a day yet to come—not to the Church or any part of it. Jeremiah tells us that it will be “the time of *Jacob's* trouble,” and Daniel that “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” but his people shall be delivered, “every one that shall be found written in the book.” Now Jacob is not the Church, and Daniel's people are Jews, not Christians.

How important it is that we should distinguish between things that differ. Nothing but confusion can result if we do not discriminate between the hopes of the Church of God and those of the nation of Israel—the former are heavenly, the latter earthly, having Jerusalem as their cherished centre.

And the prophetic utterances of our Lord in Matthew xxiv. and in Mark xiii. entirely agree with Jeremiah and Daniel. If any think that these New Testament passages refer to the Church, I would respectfully suggest that their essentially Jewish features should be observed. There is the reference to Daniel xii., which treats of Daniel's people and of no other. Then those who are in Judæa are to flee to the mountains. Can this be counsel for unfaithful Christians? Will they be in Judæa at that time? And they are bidden to pray that their flight may not be on the Sabbath day (Matt. xxv. 15–20). Surely this is

because of Jewish scruples and not on account of Christian ones. The elect also who are to be gathered from the four winds of heaven by angelic intervention are none other than the elect of Israel. Then shall be fulfilled the words of Jeremiah xxxi., "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth. . . . He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he."

Turning for a moment to Revelation xii., I would ask, Why should we think the man-child, caught up unto God and to His throne, is "the small company of true believers"? Will believers of any description ever sit upon the Throne of God? There is a promise to the overcomer in Laodicea that to him shall be granted to sit down with Christ in *His* throne, even as He also overcame and is set down with His Father in His throne. But that is quite a different matter. To sit with Christ in His throne, to be associated with Him in His rule and reign, does not mean that any one of us shall ever sit upon the Throne of God. There is but One who is worthy to sit there, even He before whom the elders cast their crowns. No creature can ever sit in the Throne of God. This fact in itself disposes of the assumption that the man-child of Revelation xii. repre-

sents "the small company of true believers," or, indeed, any believers at all.

And as for the woman, why should she be "the Church of Christ"? Is the Church ever likely to be portrayed as being clothed with the sun—that emblem of supreme earthly authority and rule? Is it not her lot rather to share the rejection of Him to whom she is espoused and for whom the world had no crown but one of thorns and no throne but a malefactor's cross? When was the Church ever clothed with the sun, having the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars? The days when she accepted earthly honour at the hand of a Roman emperor and placed her foot on the neck of kings, these were the days of her degradation and dishonour. *Israel*, in the counsels of God, was to have the place of supreme earthly distinction, and she had it in a subordinate degree when Solomon ruled. And she will yet have it when the true Solomon is on the throne (Ps. XLV., LXXII.). Then at His right hand shall stand the Queen in gold of Ophir. "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee" (Isa. LX. 3, 10). It was unto Joseph, Jacob's son, that the sun, moon, and stars made obeisance (Gen. xxxvii. 9). And so when the true Joseph shall take His place and be the supreme Administrator

of every good, Israel shall be the head and not the tail of all the kingdoms of the earth. Now it was of Israel, as concerning the flesh, Christ came (Rom. ix. 5)—the man-child caught up unto God and to His throne. For Revelation xii. is both prospective and retrospective, historical and prophetic, joining the past and the future together in one harmonious whole.

It is with her and with the remnant of her seed that the dragon, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, shall make war. Days of tribulation they will be indeed—the time of Jacob's trouble—of the trouble of Daniel's people—trouble such as the world has never seen or will ever see again. But out of it they shall be delivered, "every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. xii. 1). Others too in that day—when Antichrist shall be for a time triumphant—will have tribulation as their lot. The great multitude which no man can number of Revelation vii. come out of it and have their appointed place of blessing according to the manifold wisdom of God who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Singular to say, the conference address to which I have already alluded makes the numberless multitude of the redeemed in Revelation vii. to be unfaithful Christians—who do not sit, but only stand before the Throne. "They had lost their sovereignty—

they were the foolish virgins—they were not ready, so they had to go through the Great Tribulation. They were believers, saved, but as by fire.” If this be true, it is a sorrowful reflection that those who will be caught up to be the Bride of Christ, to sit with Him in His throne, will be but a “small company of true believers,” while the unfaithful will be “a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues.” We think the speaker is mistaken; we trust he is. The heavenly saints are indeed seen here in this prophetic picture—*the elders are they*, who have their place in heaven long ere this, as Revelation iv. plainly shows. This “great multitude” are distinct from them. Gathered out of every nation, they are a witness to the largeness of God’s heart and the greatness of His grace. They are among those who will be blessed and saved after the Church dispensation is closed. Not that this furnishes any hope for those who hear and despise the gospel in this present day of grace. What *their* doom will be is distinctly stated in 2 Thessalonians II. 8–12. But God will yet work wondrously among the heathen. A nation shall be born in a day. Precious fruit of the labours of those whom the Lord shall send in that day to “the isles afar off” that had not heard His fame, neither had seen His glory ! (Isa. LXVI. 19).

There is yet one passage which must not

be passed over in silence. I refer to Revelation III. 10 : “ 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.” Here we have a sure and plain promise. “ *Thou* hast kept . . . *I* will keep thee from the hour of temptation.” It has been sought to limit this to a particular class of Christians, to the exclusion of others, overlooking the fact that the promise is not given to the overcomer but to the assembly at Philadelphia. Besides, a moment’s consideration will show that such ground cannot possibly be maintained. For instance, the overcomer at Ephesus is to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. Will any contend that none but he shall eat of it ? The overcomer at Smyrna shall not be hurt of the second death. Does any sober mind suppose that none but Smyrna overcomers will escape this hurt ? If others share in the promises given both to Ephesus and Smyrna, why not in that to Philadelphia ? And let me further ask, What of those who die in the Lord before this hour of trial comes ? Will any one have the courage to say that some of them will be raised from the dead and sent back to earth for the express purpose of going through this time of tribulation ? None will be so rash. The fact is that the special promise given in each case was the very encouragement

needed in the face of difficulties that had to be overcome. And so the promise to be kept from this hour of trial was of the greatest value to Philadelphia. For if these seven assemblies of Revelation II., III. give the history of the Church as a responsible body upon earth from the beginning to its close, then Philadelphia finds her place towards the end. And though signs are not to be watched for, as they justly will be when Israel's redemption draws nigh (Matt. XXIV. 33), yet ominous shadows of what is looming in the near future may here and there be seen. Let not then the heart of those who cleave to His word and cling to His name be dismayed if these shadows deepen. They shall be kept not only from the trial, *but from the hour of it*. Christ will come for them.

But this must suffice. We will only anticipate some reader saying: But what have you to tell us about the Judgment Seat of Christ with its losses and rewards? If the Church of God, united now to Christ in glory, is to be translated ere these days of the Great Tribulation come, shall we all have equal places in the home of our God and Father and in the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour? Are there no distinctions? Important questions indeed. We will endeavour briefly to answer them.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”—2 COR. V. 10.

SO then one thing is certain—if we are to take the words of the Apostle in their plain and obvious meaning—we shall all be manifested, every one of us, before the judgment seat of Christ. That is not a fact to be treated with levity.

We distinguish at the outset between the judgment seat of Christ, before which the saints shall be manifested, and the great white Throne of Revelation xx. that shall summon the dead, both small and great, to stand before it. Nor should we confound either of these with the judgment of the nations—the sheep and the goats of Matthew xxv. They are different scenes, belonging to different times, as every intelligent Bible student knows.

In case any should not have noticed it we may observe that the judgment of Revelation xx. deals only with “the *dead*, both small and great.” On the other hand, the judgment of Matthew xxv. does not concern the dead—it treats only “of the *living* nations and the brethren of the King.

To some of our readers the thought of

standing before the judgment seat of Christ may seem to disagree with our Lord's words in John v. 24. There we are told that the believer "does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life" (N.T.). And that, of course, is true. The forgiveness of his sins, his acceptance with God, and the certainty of his present and ultimate salvation are not matters of doubt reserved for the day of judgment to decide. The believer, if we may so speak, has already pleaded "guilty" at the bar of God. And guilty indeed he was. But he knows that the One who could have condemned—holy and just is He—is the One by whom he has been justified. Who then shall now condemn? Who lay anything to his charge? (Rom. VIII. 33-4). If justified *from* his sins he cannot be judged *for* them afterwards. The two things are mutually contradictory. Into judgment, in that sense, no believer ever comes.

The judgment seat of Christ, then, implies no uncertainty as to the believer's everlasting happiness. Saved by grace and kept by the power of God through faith, he waits in patience for the coming of the Lord and the day of glory.

Here let me remark that believers stand toward God in the twofold relationship of sons and servants. And each suggests a different train of thought. For instance, here is a friend of mine who is head of a commercial house. As his boys grow up he drafts them into his busi-

ness and gives to each a place according to ability and age. These sons are now his servants also, and subject to promotion or discharge. As sons he is their father ; as servants he is their master. There are differences, too, between the sons themselves. One may hold a higher position than another and receive a larger salary. But when they sit by the fire-side and at the family table there is no difference. All alike, from the eldest to the youngest, are children in the house of their father. Distinctions, rightly recognized in business, have no place in the family circle. Here it is not master and servants, but father and sons, and all the boys are brothers.

And so is it in *our* Father's house, the home of His children who are loved by Him—every one of them—even as our Saviour Himself is loved (John xvii. 23). In this connection there is no difference. All are equally, before Him, "holy and without blame." And He will rejoice to have them around Himself, not as angels, but as sons—each one supremely happy, and all of them conformed to the image of His Son—the Firstborn among many brethren (Eph. i. 4, 5 ; Rom. viii. 29).

Where does the judgment seat of Christ come in, in all this ? Nowhere. It does not connect itself with salvation and the Father's house, but with service and discipleship and our manner of life. Both the parable of the talents in Matthew xxv. 14-30, and that of the pounds

in Luke XIX. 12-27, show this. The former tells of a day of reckoning, the latter of an examination of the servants to see how much each had gained by trading. Here our responsibility as servants necessarily has its place.

But let us look at some passages that treat of the subject with more or less directness.

I.

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment : yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by [or against] myself ; yet am I not hereby justified ; but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts : and then shall every man have praise of God.”—1 COR. IV. 3-5.

The Apostle Paul thought it a very small thing that the Corinthian assembly should summon him to stand at their bar and to submit to be examined at their hands. A greater Judgment Seat made theirs look very small indeed. Nor did he claim to be competent to judge and pass an award on his own actions. For if his conscience had nothing to accuse him of, yet that was not in itself enough to prove him blameless. “He that examines me,” said he, “is the Lord.” Things may have escaped the Apostle’s eye which the Lord saw. Even

the judgment of the best of men is not infallible. The Lord's judgment is. Therefore he counsels them to judge nothing before the time. The Lord is coming, and at His tribunal the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light and the counsels of the heart made manifest, and then every man shall have his praise from God. Solemn considerations indeed, which we shall do well to remember. Happy ones, too, by which our souls shall be strengthened if we walk uprightly.

II.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are."—1 COR. III. 10-17.

The bearing of this passage is not upon the life of all saints in general, but upon those who are in a special sense the servants of the Lord.

Of all saints it may be said “ *Ye serve the Lord Christ,*” but there are gifted men who labour in word and doctrine—they are called to such service in a way that ordinary folks are not. And there are others who take the place of servants and are held responsible for the place they take, though, in fact, they are but unconverted men—teachers of religion, but themselves unsaved. It is of *workmen* that Paul here speaks, and he mentions three sorts. He himself had laid the foundation, but others built upon it, and their labours are likened to gold, silver, precious stones, and also to wood, grass, straw—some worthless, some good. The first is a true workman, his work abides, it stands the test and he shall receive his reward. The second builds with perishable material and his work is burned up. Yet he himself shall be saved, even as Lot was saved, though his possessions perished in the fire that consumed the cities of the plain. The third is one who defiles or corrupts the temple of God. He builds not merely with worthless material but with that which is corrupting. His end shall be destruction, for he is an evil servant and an unsaved man. Of such Paul speaks in Acts xx. 29, 30, and the Apostle Peter in the second chapter of his second epistle.

It is well that we should see that men are dealt with according to their profession. If any one calls himself a servant of the Lord he is bound to accept the responsibilities attach-

ing to that position, even though he be but a Christian in name. Or we might easily take the wicked and slothful servant of Matthew xxv. 26 to be a saved man after all. And there are those who have fallen into that mistake and would fain have us believe that the unprofitable servant, cast into outer darkness, will emerge out of it when his character is perfected. But there is the clearest evidence to the contrary. Is it possible that any one who knows his Lord and Master could describe Him as hard and unjust, reaping where He had not sown, and gathering where He had not strawed? This is proof enough that he knew nothing of the One whose servant he professed to be.

III.

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.”

2 COR. V. 9, 10.

The remembrance of his having to be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ was one of the great factors that influenced the Apostle's life. For human opinion he cared nothing, but if he could win the approbation of Him whose bond-slave he loved to style himself, that would be indeed a prize worth possessing. For this he earnestly strove. Oh, that it were so with

us ! For *we*, too, must be manifested there, and the days of our life, buried in the grave of the forgotten past, shall live again and tell their tale before the judgment seat of Christ. Deeds done in the body shall have their answer there, be they good or bad. What shall be said in that great day about our strifes, our contentions, our divisions to which, alas ! we have attached His sacred Name ? What shall *we* say about them as we look into His eyes who bade us love one another as He had loved us ? One gentle word of reproof from His lips might well break our hearts ! What shall we say about our worldliness when He reminds us that He gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world ? What shall we say about our lack of devotedness, for the want of which we took so little interest in His saints so dear to His heart, and cared next to nothing for dying men and women hastening, by the broad road, to their grave and the doom beyond ? The very thought of it even now might move us to bitter tears such as sinful Peter shed when the Lord looked upon him in His unutterable love ! But there is another side to which it is a relief to turn. What disclosures there will be of His unfailing grace—how He succoured us in hours of danger, guarded us when unseen evils threatened our way, folded us in His bosom and carried us as a shepherd carries his lambs over rough and rugged roads. Oh, what sights

will then appear that shall fill these poor hearts of ours with adoring praise !

“ There with what joy reviewing
 Past conflicts, dangers, fears,
 His hand our foes subduing,
 And drying all our tears,—
 Our hearts with rapture burning,
 The path we shall retrace,
 Where now our souls are learning
 The riches of His grace.”

But if the judgment seat of Christ was a mighty factor in the life of the Apostle Paul, there was a still mightier one, of which he speaks in the same chapter (2 Cor. v. 14). Here are his words : “ For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead ; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” *The love of Christ*—this was the mighty moral force that energized his whole life and led him to live, not unto himself, but unto Him who died for him and rose again. And where this is wanting there may be abundant labour and blamelessness of walk without one shred of *devotedness to Christ*. Service then becomes legality and the life a constant striving for a reward and a high place in the Kingdom of God by and by. And this is the fatal blot in much of the current teaching on the judgment seat of Christ. While not denying the *final* salva-

tion of every true, believing soul, it goads the conscience on, it places upon the shoulders a burden far from light, and frightens us, in case of failure, with threats of many stripes and of our having no place with Christ in His throne and kingdom. This is law, not grace, the drudgery of a slave and not the joyous service of a heart under the all-powerful sway of the love of Christ.

Rewards there will be and places of distinction in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But these are set before us as encouragements, *never as motives*. And as for those who sit at His right hand and at His left in His kingdom—places which the mother of Zebedee's children coveted for her two sons (Matt. xx. 21)—what shall their functions be? For seats of honour will not be idle seats even in that bright day. Now the Lord Himself has told His watching servants that He will make them sit down to meat while *He* comes forth and serves them (Luke xii. 37). Never will He lay aside His servant character, but even in those scenes of unfading glory He will minister to their chiefest joys. And it may be that those who have served Him best on earth in serving His saints, shall still serve Him there in ministering in endless ways to the happiness of His own. Those who are the highest in the kingdom may be likeliest to Him in that respect.

To the overcomer in Pergamos it is promised

that he shall have “ a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it ” (Rev. II. 17). Of all the gifts and rewards which the gracious Lord shall give this seems to us the one that will be most deeply prized.

“ Called by that secret name
Of undisclosed delight,
(Blest answer to reproach and shame)
Graved on the stone of white.”

Thrones, crowns, public recognitions—these will be valued as the gifts of His hand, but this exceeds them all—some secret link between the soul and Christ, some hidden spring of joy which no one else will know.

Now we close. How many things have been left unsaid ! But our pages will allow no more. May it be ours to receive the “ white stone ” of our Lord and Master’s approbation. Should He say to us in that day, “ Well done, good and faithful servant,” what more *as His servants* will there be to seek, though He may give us more ? Other joys connected with the family of God and with the Assembly as the Bride of the Lamb there will be, no doubt, for divine grace is so rich in its giving that it will place in our hands a full and an overflowing cup that shall call forth our endless praise.