

# The Rapture

AND THE

## —Great— Tribulation

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# THE RAPTURE AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION

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## PART I.

**I**N His discourse to the disciples, as recorded in Matthew 24, the Lord foretold that at a certain time there would be "great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no nor ever shall be" (v. 21). He indicated both the time of its occurrence and that of its termination. It would take place when the "abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet" would be seen standing "in the holy place" (v. 15); and immediately after it, He said, "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (vv. 29, 30). That these latter events have never yet been fulfilled is clear.

Turning now to the Book of Daniel we find a prediction of the same period, with similar time indications. The closing chapter, the matter of which runs consecutively on from the eleventh, begins with the statement: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of Thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." As to the termination of the period, the prophecy declares, "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be

found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to (more literally, these shall be for) everlasting life, and some to (those shall be for) shame and everlasting contempt." The latter are set in contrast to the former. "These" are the "many," who are to be raised at that time; "those" are others who do not share in that resurrection, but await a different destiny. The time is to be one of deliverance for the Jewish people, and the intimation is that resurrection will be the portion of many. This deliverance has not yet taken place.

As to the circumstances which are to transpire when this great tribulation takes place, the opening words of the chapter, "At that time," point to what has just been related in the eleventh chapter, which predicts a warfare to take place in Palestine. The unprecedented tribulation cannot therefore be viewed as extending over the long centuries of the present era since A.D. 70. As the time of trouble is connected with a great war and the overthrow of a tyrant, on the one hand, and ends with deliverance and resurrection, on the other, the period must be still future. Again, in the passage in the Gospel of Matthew, the similar time indication, which speaks of the abomination of desolation as standing in the holy place, does not refer to anything which took place in A.D. 70. No warfare has continued all through the centuries. No abomination, or image, or anything of the sort, was set up in the holy place when the Roman armies under Titus besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

The prophecy in the Book of Daniel, concerning the abomination to which Christ referred, is as follows: "and upon the wing (or 'pinnacle') of abomination shall come (or 'be') one that maketh desolate; and even unto the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator" (chap. 9. 27; the R.V.

rendering is undoubtedly accurate here). Nothing that is mentioned in that passage, as to a covenant with the Jews and the pouring out of Divine wrath upon the desolator, was fulfilled in the case of the Roman power in the first century.

That the prediction uttered by the Lord, "when therefore ye see the abomination which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place," had reference to others than the Apostles, is indicated by Matthew's parenthesis, "let him that readeth understand." In similar phraseology Christ said shortly afterwards to Caiaphas and the scribes and elders, "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of Heaven" (chap. 26. 65). Caiaphas and his fellows personally will not be there to see the event. The Lord's words had reference to the Jewish people who will see it, and who were represented by the high priest and the others on the night of the betrayal. The disciples were not necessarily to be there in person to see the abomination or to flee to the mountains, nor is there any evidence that they were in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and that they fled therefrom. There have been times of great tribulation in past history, but that to which the prophecies of the Book of Daniel and those uttered by the Lord refer was clearly a well defined period, unprecedented in its severity, and of comparatively short duration. Jeremiah speaks of the same time when he says: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it, it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30. 7). The whole world will indeed be involved in the Great Tribulation, but what Jeremiah states marks an outstanding feature of it.

Two things stand out clearly, therefore, namely, that the Great Tribulation is destined to take place at the end of the present age, and that it will be terminated by the

manifestation of Christ in glory for the deliverance of His earthly people the Jews.

### **Simultaneous Events. A Period of Divine Wrath.**

The closing period of the age is also marked in Scripture as a time of the wrath of God upon the world. Judgments of God have been remedial, and have brought men to repentance; but the Scriptures show that the judgments meted out in the period referred to will be purely retributive, and will culminate in "the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven, with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1. 7, 8). \*

That the Divine retribution will extend over a period, and that the period is to be distinct from the present time of God's longsuffering grace and mercy is unmistakably demonstrated as follows. The 19th chapter of Revelation describes the culminating act of this closing period, namely, the coming of Christ from Heaven in judgment upon the foes of God (vv. 11-21), an event otherwise mentioned in the passage in 2 Thessalonians 1, already referred to. The 15th and 16th chapters of Revelation describe seven judgments which will precede that event, and the opening statement concerning these is, that "in them is *finished* the wrath of God" (chap. 15. 1, R.V.). These judgments themselves extend over a period, including the execution of God's retribution upon "Babylon the great," which receives "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath" (chap. 16. 19).

Clearly the series of judgments mentioned in chapter

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\*That this passage refers to a pre-millennial event is indicated by the fact that vengeance is rendered to those who obey not "*the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.*" A fuller description of the circumstances is given in Revelation 19. 11-21, where the Lord is seen coming with the armies of Heaven to smite the nations and to tread "the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (v. 15).

16 is to fall upon the world before the Second Advent, which is described in chapter 19. 11 to 20. 3. For under the fifth in that series the kingdom of the Beast is yet in existence (v. 10); under the sixth, the Beast and the False Prophet are still active and are engaged in preparations for "the war of the great day of God Almighty" (v. 14). These passages show, therefore, that this period of wrath will precede the appearing of Christ in glory at His Second Advent, for then it is that the Antichrist will be destroyed by the Lord Himself (2 Thess. 2. 8).

That the calamities which will be inflicted in this period are not confined to the Beast and his confederates, is indicated in preceding chapters, for the woes are pronounced upon "them that dwell on the earth" (chap. 8. 13).

Preceding chapters also describe similar circumstances of Divine retribution upon the world (cp. for example, chap. 14. 9, 10). In chapter 11. 18 the correct rendering is, "the nations were wrath, and Thy wrath came (not 'is come')". The circumstances in these chapters are not those of the display of God's mercy. A distinct period is marked as characterised by the wrath of God. \*

### A Distinctive Assurance.

The Scriptures we have considered indicate, then, firstly, that the Great Tribulation will occupy the closing period of this age, and, secondly, that the world also is at that time to come under the wrath of God. The two are to be simultaneous.

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\* "This wrath is to be understood, then, of the calamities wherewith God will visit men upon the earth when the present period of grace is closed, and which will fall first upon the Jews, then upon the Gentiles (Rom. 2. 2, 9). The calamities of the Jews are referred to in Jeremiah 4. 7; Zechariah 14. 2; Matthew 24. 15-21, and those of the Gentiles in Zechariah 14. 3; Matthew 24. 30; Luke 21. 25-29, among many passages. The believer is assured of deliverance from both through the Lord Jesus Christ (cp. 5. 9; Rom. 5. 9)."—From *"Notes on The Epistles to the Thessalonians,"* by C. F. Hogg and the Writer, p. 49.

### **Deliverance from Coming Wrath.**

In writing to the Church at Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul reminds them how "they turned unto God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come" (lit. 'the coming wrath') (1 Thess. 1. 10). The phrase rendered "which delivereth" consists, in the original, of the article with the present participle. It has been wrongly rendered in the Authorised Version by the past tense. The phrase is, literally, "the One delivering," and is equivalent to a title, "the Deliverer." That indeed is how the same construction of the same word is rightly translated in Romans 11. 26. The accurate rendering, then, is "to wait for His Son from Heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, our Deliverer from the coming wrath." The wrath referred to is therefore not that which abides now on the unbeliever, as in John 3. 36; nor can the phrase be taken to refer to the punishment of the lost in the other world. That the subject with which the Apostle is dealing is that of waiting for the Son of God from Heaven, is itself an indication that His Coming will mean the deliverance of the Church from the impending wrath. We know from the Epistle itself that the Church at Thessalonica had been instructed by Paul orally in matters relating to the Second Advent and the judgments destined to precede it (see chap. 5). The phrase, "the coming wrath," would therefore be familiar to them.

As to the question whether the Church is to pass into the period of wrath and be delivered from the midst of it, light is thrown upon this as the Epistle proceeds. A categorical statement is given in the fifth chapter. There the Apostle says that "God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 9). Here again the subject is the Lord's



coming. We who are "of the day" are to put on as a helmet "the hope of salvation," and for this reason, that "God appointed us not to wrath." The Apostle shows that our deliverance is based on the death of Christ; it is not dependent upon our spiritual condition at the time. He "died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." The deliverance referred to is the completion of our salvation—"the redemption of our body."

In this passage, as in the first chapter, the wrath is obviously not that mentioned in John 3. 36. Nor is the reference to what will take place in the other world. Even were it possible to conceive that there is any such reference, the statement is categorical, that the saints of the Church are not appointed to wrath at any time, and that accordingly they are not appointed to the wrath to be poured out upon the world at the closing period of the present age. They are to obtain salvation when Christ comes to receive them unto Himself. That salvation will be the consummation of the present salvation which they enjoy through the redemptive work of the Cross.

This passage, with that in chapter 1. 10, puts the subject in a clear light. The deliverance is not out of the midst of the wrath, but before it is poured out. This truth is confirmed in the Second Epistle, at the close of the second chapter, where the Apostle says: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation" (v. 13). That "but" sets the deliverance of the saints in contrast to the state of the world just described in the same chapter as under the power of the Man of Sin, a state which meets with Divine retribution.

While these Epistles were addressed to the Church at Thessalonica, it is necessary to bear in mind that they were indited by the Spirit of God as part of the inspired

Scriptures; and were therefore intended as permanent records for the instruction of Churches everywhere. They were designed to abide as truth for the enlightenment and edification of the saints throughout this age. By this time by far the greater portion of the Church, is already with the Lord. For those who remain on the earth, whether now, or subsequently, and so until the Rapture, these Scriptures are provided by God, that, inspired by their stimulating hope, the saints may be maintained in a spirit of expectancy, and that, like the Thessalonian saints of old, they may "wait for His Son from Heaven."

In support of the view that part of the Church will be here during the Great Tribulation, it is urged that, while there is no penal suffering for believers, any disciplinary stroke on Israel or on the nations before Christ comes, has, in part at least, a corrective character, that it should lead to repentance, and that from this the last Tribulation, though of a very special kind, is not to be excepted. This line of teaching, however, does not adequately regard the fact that the Great Tribulation comes into a period distinctively marked as that of the wrath of God. It also fails to recognise the assurances given to the Church in the passages we have just been considering.

The question is asked as to why a promise of deliverance from the wrath to come should be regarded as designed for the Church, when there are other saints to whom the assurance has been given of preservation through the period of the Great Tribulation, and who would in that case themselves be present in the world in the period of wrath. In reply to this, Scripture makes a distinction which it is therefore necessary to observe. The promise given in the Epistle to the Thessalonians shows that, for the Church, deliverance from the wrath to come will be by means of the Rapture (an expression quite Scriptural; see

1 Thess. 4. 17), by the power of the Lord, in the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep and the transformation of the living. That assurance is given to the Church. Deliverance for the faithful who are preserved in the period that follows will come in a different manner. Their's is an earthly destiny, and they are to be kept under God's protecting care in a special way. The Jewish nation, as such, is to be preserved for earthly peace and power in the Millennium. Gentile peoples will also continue, for such are to enjoy Millennial conditions. None of those who have worshipped the Beast and have received his mark will be so kept (Rev. 14. 9-11). It follows that Jews and Gentiles who live through the Great Tribulation into the Millennial reign of Christ are such as have not worshipped the Beast and have been preserved from death.

It is important, then, to distinguish between the teaching given, on the one hand, concerning the Church, its character, its destiny, and its deliverance, and, on the other hand, concerning God's earthly people the Jews, a large number of which are assured of preservation, a residue of Gentiles also escaping death during the time of wrath, and sharing in the blessedness of Messiah's earthly reign.

As for those who are slain for their faithfulness, and will enjoy resurrection glory, God has His own way of dealing with people, and it is for us to accept what is written in the Scriptures, and to forgo reasonings as to why certain people should be dealt with in one manner and certain others in another; why it should be the lot of some people to form part of the Church and to be removed from the earth at the Rapture, other people afterwards having their lot with that part of the Jewish nation which is to be kept for Millennial blessedness; and why, certain people should experience the calamities of that time, and

even suffer death, to enjoy resurrection life, apart from actual incorporation in the Church. These things lie within the determining counsels of God. Deliverance for the Church comes when the Lord comes into the air (1 Thess. 4. 17); deliverance for the Jewish nation takes place when the Lord comes to the earth (Zech. 13. 4, 11).

### **The Interval.**

The Scriptures already noticed indicate, apart from several similar considerations, that the period of "the wrath of God" marks an interval between the Rapture of the saints and the Second Advent of Christ to the earth for the overthrow of the foes of God and the deliverance of the Jewish nation from their time of trouble. The existence of such an interval is entirely consistent with the meaning of the word *Parousia* (lit. 'being with'), which signifies not only a coming to, but a presence with. This point calls for further attention (see p. 16).

The teaching of the Word of God is always consistent. The plain significance of those Scriptures which we have been considering in the preceding pages is not contradicted by other passages. On the contrary, it is confirmed by them.

## PART II.

**Objections Considered.**

We purpose now to notice some of the chief arguments advanced in favour of the view that the Lord will not remove the Church until after the Tribulation.

(1) **We are told that since Jehovah has said to Christ, "Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Psa. 110. 1; Matt. 22. 44), the Lord Jesus could not come to receive the saints to Himself, as in 1 Thessalonians 4. 16, 17, until the time of the overthrow of His foes, which will not take place till after the Great Tribulation.**

This argument presupposes that when Christ comes to receive the Church to Himself, He will cease to be at the right hand of God. That is an unwarranted inference. The Lord will not cease to occupy that position when He descends from Heaven for the Rapture of the saints. The expression signifies a position of authority and power rather than a physical attitude. A king does not cease to occupy the throne of his country when he pays a visit elsewhere. His occupation of the throne does not depend upon his continuous session in the actual chair of State. Moreover, the martyr Stephen saw the Lord "standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7. 56), yet the Scripture was not broken which said, "Sit Thou on My right hand." An interval between the descent of Christ to the air for the Rapture of the saints and His Second Advent for the overthrow of His foes could not involve any change in His authority.

(2) **The word "*apantēsis*," "meet," in 1 Thessalonians 4. 17, is said to signify that those who go to meet a person, return to their starting place with him, and that therefore when the Lord comes for the**

**Church He will come immediately with the Church to the earth.**

This idea forces a meaning into the word which it by no means invariably admits. It is true that the word usually suggests that those who go out to meet a person intend to return, in his company, to the place from whence they set out, but the return is not necessarily immediate. If a person leaves Liverpool for London, intending to meet a friend coming from Paris, and to go back with him to Liverpool, not immediately, but after a more or less prolonged stay with him in London, the word *apantēsis* would be quite applicable to describe the meeting, as much as if the return were immediate. Moreover, the form *apantaō*, "to meet," has a wide range of meaning. It is used of meeting a person in argument, and of kings meeting in battle. It is therefore unsafe to base a doctrine on one particular application of the word. We know that the saints are to be caught up to meet Christ, and are coming back with Him in His glory and power to deal with the kingdoms of the world, but to say that the latter event must immediately follow the former, because of a special significance of *apantēsis*, is untenable.

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(3) **The Apostle Peter testified concerning Christ that the heavens must receive Him "until the times of restoration of all things" spoken of by the prophets (Acts 3. 21). The deduction is made from this that Christ cannot come until the Antichrist has run his course; could the rise and power of God's most awful opponent, it is asked, be "the times of restoration?"**

Before considering the phrase itself, it will be well to remark that we have not stated that Christ will come before even the rise of the Antichrist. Again, it is necessary to distinguish between the Rapture and the Second Advent:

The Advent of Christ signifies His coming into the world. At His first Advent He was born in Bethlehem; at His Second Advent He will come to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14. 4). At "the Coming (or Parousia) of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4. 15) for the Rapture of the saints He will descend to the air (v. 17). The Parousia is not the same as the Second Advent (see p. 16). Nowhere does Scripture state that the Rapture is immediately to be followed by the Second Advent.

As to "the times of restoration of all things," a significance attaches to the fact that it does not say "whom the heavens must receive until the restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets." "The times of the restoration" covers a period. The events which immediately precede the restoration are naturally included in the time relating to it. The wrath of God by which the world suffers retribution for its refusal of Christ and for its reception and worship of the Antichrist, and which will culminate in the destruction of the foes of God, is a necessary preliminary to the setting up of the Kingdom. That period of wrath, therefore, has its place in the times of restoration. In the restoration of a dilapidated building much rubbish has frequently to be cleared out of the way as the first act necessary to the purpose in view. The Rapture of the saints, coming previously to this period of wrath, would consistently be said to introduce "the times of the restoration."

Plainly no doctrine can be built upon this text, as that the Rapture of the saints must be followed in immediate succession by the Advent of the Lord with the saints and with His angels.

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(4) It is stated that as the Man of Sin is to be destroyed by the "Coming" of the Lord, according to 2 Thessalonians 2. 8, this indicates that His Coming

**at the Rapture and the destruction of the Man of Sin must be simultaneous.**

A careful consideration of what is actually stated in this verse will show that the inference is without foundation. The rendering is as follows: "And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming." The word rendered "manifestation" is *epiphaneia*, and is literally 'a shining forth.' The word rendered "coming" is *parousia*, and, as has already been pointed out, this (literally, 'a being with') signifies the presence of a person with others. Its occurrence in Philippians 2. 12, for instance, is a sufficient example, where Paul speaks of His *parousia*, his "presence" at Philippi, in contrast to his *apousia*, his absence from that city. *Parousia* always refers to a period of time, though some particular event in the period may be especially in view. What is here in view, then, is that event, connected with the *parousia* of the Lord with His saints, which will see the destruction of the lawless one. It is called the manifestation, or shining forth, of His *parousia* because, in company with His saints (who will previously have been with Him from the time of the Rapture when His *parousia* began), He will burst in upon the scene of the Man of Sin's activities, and will there and then bring the tyrant to naught, consuming him with the breath of His mouth. That will usher in the Millennial reign of righteousness. "The manifestation of His *parousia*" strikingly confirms, then, the teaching that an interval will elapse between the Rapture and the Second Advent.

It will be well here to quote a paragraph or two on the subject of the Parousia, from notes on the Epistle to the Thessalonians by C. F. Hogg and the Writer. The note is taken from the Commentary on the words in 1 Thessa-



lonians 2. 19, "Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at (lit., in) His coming?"

"Parousia, here rendered "coming," is a noun formed from the verb *pareimi*—to be present, as in Luke 13. 1; John 11. 28; Acts 10. 33, etc., and hence 'a being present with.' In a papyrus document it is used of a royal visit to a certain district; in another a person states that the care of her property demands her 'presence' in a certain city... The usual translation is misleading, because 'coming' is more appropriate to other words, such as *erchomai*, Luke 12. 45; 19. 23; *eleusis*, Acts 7. 52; *eisodos*, 13. 24; the difference being that, whereas these words fix the attention on the journey to, and the arrival at, a place, *parousia* fixes it on the stay which follows on the arrival there. It would be preferable, therefore, to transliterate the word rather than translate it, that is, to use 'parousia,' rather than 'coming,' wherever the reference is to the Lord Jesus.

"Where *parousia* is used of the Lord Jesus it refers to a defined period. Thus in 2 Peter 1. 16 it describes, not the daily and general accompanying of the Lord with His disciples among the people, but that limited period during which He was transfigured before them, Matt. 17. 1-8. Where it is used prophetically, *parousia* refers to a period beginning with the descent of the Lord from Heaven, into the air, 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17, and ending with His revelation and manifestation to the world.

"During the *parousia* of the Lord in the air with His people, Paul expected to give account of his stewardship before the Judgment Seat of Christ, 1 Cor. 4. 1-5; 2 Cor. 5. 10; the presence there of the Thessalonian converts and their commendation by the Lord, would mean reward to the evangelists who had been the means of their conversion and to the pastors and teachers who

had laboured among them. For a similar thought see 1 John 2. 28, and cp. 1 Peter 5. 4. There, too, all would be abundantly compensated for the afflictions they were enduring.

"The *parousia* of the Lord Jesus is thus a period with a beginning, a course, and a conclusion. The beginning is prominent in 4. 15; 5. 23; 2 Thess. 2. 1; 1 Cor. 15. 23; Jas. 5. 7, 8; 2 Peter 3. 4; the course, here and in 3. 13; Matt. 24. 2, 37, 39; 1 John 2. 28; the conclusion, in 2 Thess. 2. 8; Matt. 24. 27."

Again, the passage in Matthew 24. 37-39 clearly indicates a period. The Lord says that "as were the days of Noah so shall be the Parousia of the Son of Man." As the days of Noah ended with the coming of the flood, so the coming period will terminate at the intervention of Christ, in the shining forth, or manifestation, of His Parousia, as in 2 Thessalonians 2. 8. At that event He will be accompanied, not only by His angels, but by His saints. He is then coming "to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed" (2 Thess. 1. 10). That His saints will then come with Him is confirmed by Revelation 19, which describes the same event, for the armies in Heaven are seen following Him on white horses, "clothed in fine linen white and pure" (v. 14). The fine linen is defined in verse 8 as "the righteous acts of the saints." The marriage of the Lamb has by that time taken place in Heaven, and His wife has made herself ready to come with Him.

As a further illustration of the fact that the Parousia is periodic, and not momentary, the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2 goes on to speak of the *parousia* of the Man of Sin himself. The *parousia* of this despot will be "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness." Obviously not merely the occasion of his rise to supremacy

is intended by such a description, but his period of supremacy. These things will characterise his presence, his *parousia*, in the world.

Since the Parousia of Christ is a period, the idea that the outshining or manifestation of that Parousia, for the destruction of the Man of Sin, is the same thing as His descent into the air for His saints, is, to say the least, not proven.

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**(5) In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians the Apostle says "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1. 6-8). It is concluded from this that the Church cannot obtain rest until Christ comes to render this vengeance, and therefore that the Rapture must immediately be followed by the Second Advent.**

There is no valid ground in this passage for the inference that the Second Advent, or the Coming of the Lord Jesus to render vengeance, is to be immediately preceded by the Rapture. The following note is from "Notes on the Epistle to the Thessalonians," by C. F. Hogg and the Writer.

"The subject immediately before the Apostle's mind is not the rest of the saints, but the retribution of God on their persecutors. Hence the words, "and to you that are afflicted rest with us," are an incidental extension of the idea of recompense, and are to be read parenthetically, permitting the words that follow to be connected directly with the close of verse 6, thus: 'affliction to them that afflict you (and to you that are afflicted rest with us), at

the revelation of the Lord Jesus.' The time indicated is not that at which the saints will be relieved of persecution, but that at which their persecutors will be punished. The time of relief for the saints had been stated in the earlier letter, 4. 15-17; here a passing reference to a fact within the knowledge of the readers was all that was necessary. Such extensions of thought are not uncommon in epistolary writings; cp. v. 10, and 1 Thess. 1. 6; 2. 15, 16.

"Since, then, the rest of the saints begins with the Lord's descent into the air, which marks also the inauguration of the Parousia, the Parousia itself will intervene before the vengeance of God begins to be executed. Whether the period so termed is to be of longer duration—say, extending to years, or shorter—say, limited to hours or even to minutes, is not in question here."

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**(6) The Lord gave parting promise to the disciples that He would be with them "always (all the days) even unto the end of the world (age)". This is taken to indicate that the Church must be here until the termination of the rule of the Antichrist and therefore also of the Great Tribulation.**

The word rendered "end" is not *telos*, which might signify "a termination," but *sunteleia*, "a consummation;" so the R. V. *margin* accurately renders it. Not the actual termination, therefore, is in view, but the heading up of events which are destined to transpire at the close of the age. A period is connoted in all the five places in this Gospel where the word is found. Until whatsoever time the affairs of the world should arrive at such a consummation the Lord promised to be with His followers. Events might at any time be approaching such a crisis. The removal of the Church would at once introduce it. This passage affords no proof that any part of the Church must be here until the last day of the age. Other events

to follow would be included in "the consummation." Moreover, the absence of the Church would not render nugatory the presence of the Lord with any who become faithful during the following period.

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(7) **In the First Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle states that the resurrection of the saints who have fallen asleep, and the transformation of the living saints, will take place "at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15. 52). The suggestion is made that this is the last of the series of trumpets mentioned in Revelation 11. 15, which introduces a closing scene before the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom.**

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth long before the Apostle John wrote the Apocalypse. The readers of the Corinthian Epistle, being Greeks, were quite familiar with the metaphor of the last trumpet. To them it was a military metaphor, and simply indicated the signal given for an army to move. The phrase directed the mind not so much to the series of soundings, but to the fact that an army was to be set in motion. There is no valid reason for supposing a connection between Paul's use of the phrase and the series of trumpets described later in the book of Revelation. Moreover, there is no similarity between the event spoken of by Paul and the events introduced by the series of trumpets in the Apocalypse. The inference that Paul is referring to what was afterwards revealed to John is therefore quite unwarranted.

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(8) **The Apostle states, in Romans 11. 25, that "a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved." On the supposition that "the fulness of the Gentiles" is the Church, Israel, it is argued, will be saved immediately upon the completion of**

**the Church. The inference from this is that people will be brought into the Church right up to the time when Israel is to be delivered, and that therefore some members of the Church will be here during the Tribulation.**

Even if "the fulness of the Gentiles" were coextensive with the Church, it would not necessarily follow from the Apostle's words that Israel's salvation will be immediately successive to the completion of the Church. Certainly the one is conditional upon the accomplishment of the other; but the prediction would be amply fulfilled if there were an interval between the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles and the deliverance of Israel. It is not necessary to the meaning of the Apostle's words that, at the moment the fulness has come in, the hardening of Israel should cease. What he states is that one circumstance must precede the other, and that the latter cannot take place till the former is accomplished.

But it is a questionable interpretation which explains the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles by the completion of the Church. The Apostle's subject here is not that of the Church, but the dispensational dealings of God with Jew and Gentile, His judicial severity towards the former and His goodness towards the latter. Paul has already used the word "fulness" to signify the promised blessing to the nation of Israel (v. 12), and has shown how God's mercy brought salvation to Gentiles. Again, in this chapter he distinguishes from Gentiles those Jews even who have accepted Christ, and thereby become part of the Church; for the converted Jews, members of the Church, constitute a spiritual Jewish "remnant" to which the Apostle himself belongs (it being true also that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile). The phrase, "the fulness of the Gentiles," would appear therefore to comprehend all Gentiles, as such, who will in any way

receive deliverance and blessing previously to Israel's national restoration at the beginning of the Millennium.

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(9) It is urged that the word *epiphaneia*, "appearing," signifies the manifestation of Christ in glory at His Second Advent for the overthrow of the ungodly and the establishment of His kingdom, and that, accordingly, the passages where this word occurs relatively to the subject cannot refer to a Rapture to take place some time beforehand.

Thus to limit the application of this word is an unfounded assumption. *Epiphaneia* was used among the Greeks in a variety of ways, as, for instance, of the appearance of an enemy to an army in the field, of one of the heathen gods to men, etc. In Scripture it is used of the manifestation of God's power in the help of His people Israel against the Canaanites (2 Sam. 7. 23, LXX), and of the appearing of the people before Him (Amos 5. 22). In the New Testament it is used of the Advent of the Saviour at His Incarnation (2 Tim. 1. 10).

When the Apostle exhorts Timothy to keep the commandment, "without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 6. 14), it is an unwarrantable interpretation which makes it necessary to suppose that the reference is to His manifestation with His saints and angels in flaming fire. The context indicates that the reference is to the descent of the Lord Jesus into the air to the meeting with the saints, as in 1 Thessalonians 4. 15-17. That event will certainly constitute an *epiphaneia*, an appearing, of Christ to His saints.

A similar passage is 2 Timothy 2. 1, which is accurately rendered in the R. V., "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom." (This has been wrongly rendered in the A. V., which reads as

if the judgment of the living and the dead will be simultaneous.) What we have said above applies here, that there is no ground for the assumption which compels the idea that the appearing and the Kingdom are simultaneous or immediately successive. "The appearing" is quite possibly at the descent of Christ for the Rapture of the saints, and "the Kingdom" the subsequent establishment of the earthly rule of Christ when He comes with His saints.

It is true that "*epiphaneia*" is used with reference to this latter event. This is clearly so in Matthew 24. 27, which speaks of the shining forth of the glory of the Lord Jesus "as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west," but that is immediately consequent upon the unveiling (*apokalupsis*) of His Parousia with His saints. So again in 2 Thessalonians 2. 8, the Man of Sin will be brought to naught "by the manifestation (*epiphaneia*) of His coming (*parousia*);" again in Titus 2. 13, "looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." (Of this more presently.) But because *epiphaneia* is used, in these three passages, of the later event, that does not afford a ground for limiting every occurrence of the word respecting the future, to that event. Moreover this latter *epiphaneia*, or appearing, of Christ will be with the saints and not by way of His coming to call them to the air to meet Him.

It is necessary to guard against putting an undue limitation to the application of words in Scripture, especially when such words show a variety in their usage. The corresponding verb, *epiphainō*, is used of the stars (Acts 27. 20), and of the grace, and kindness and love of God, made manifest in the coming of His Son for the salvation of men (Titus 2. 11; 3. 4). \*

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\* See "The Epistles to Thessalonians," by C. F. Hogg and the Writer, p. 263.



What has been said above applies likewise to the word *apokalupsis*, an uncovering, unveiling. This is used in the New Testament with a number of different applications. As regards the future revelation of Christ, the very variety just referred to forbids its being restricted to one event. Clearly in 2 Thessalonians 1. 7, which speaks of "the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire," the reference is to the Second Advent in judgment upon the world. But this does not justify the conclusion that the word refers to that event in every passage relating to the subject.

For instance, the Apostle's commendation of the Church at Corinth that they came behind in no gift, "waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" may well point to the time of the Rapture; for when the Lord comes to raise the dead saints and change the living, His act will certainly involve an unveiling of His Person to them, and this is quite distinct from His revelation of Himself at His Second Advent, for the overthrow of His foes.

With regard to the trial of our faith, which is to be found "unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ," what is referred to here is by some associated with the time of the setting up of the earthly kingdom, by others to what the saints are to enjoy when the Lord comes to receive them unto Himself. So also in regard to their sufferings, in which they are to rejoice, as being partakers of Christ's sufferings, that "at the revelation of His glory also they may rejoice with exceeding joy" (chap. 4. 13).

Even if the view is correct that this joy is fulfilled at the Second Advent, when the Lord comes to deal with the world in judgment and set up His Kingdom, no ground whatever is thereby provided for deducing therefrom that a period does not intervene between the Rapture and the Second Advent, between the removal of His saints to

meet the Lord in the air, and His coming with them. For as is pointed out on page 33, the latter event is the consummation of the hope of the saints, "the blessed hope," and this would be the time of "exceeding joy" and "praise, honour and glory."

The use of this word *apokalupsis* provides another instance of the need to avoid limiting the meaning and application of the phraseology of Scripture.

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**(10) From the parable of the tares the deduction is made that, since the tares and the wheat "grow together until the harvest," and the tares are bound in bundles to be burned, and the wheat is gathered into the barn, the Church cannot be gathered in until the very end of the age, when the separation takes place, and the righteous shine forth in the Kingdom.**

This conclusion rests upon the assumption that the wheat represents, and is coextensive with, the Church. The assumption will not, however, bear the test of the Scriptures which speak of the Rapture of the saints. Moreover, there is no direct intimation, either in this parable or in our Lord's interpretation of it, that He is speaking of the Church in contradistinction to the ungodly. The parable and its interpretation show that the reapers are the angels, and that to them will be committed the work not only of binding the tares in bundles, but also of gathering the wheat into the barn (v. 30). Now there is no Scripture to show that the angels are agents in the Rapture of the saints. On the contrary, the passages which give details of that event state specifically that the Lord Jesus will accomplish the Rapture by His own power. "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 that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4. 16, 17). The details of this description, as given in the original, apply to Christ Himself. The article is absent both before "voice" and before "archangel," and this expresses the quality of the shout, its majesty and authority, characterising it as being uttered by Christ Himself, and not as being the act of an archangel. In other words, the phrase is practically equivalent to 'with an archangelic voice.' This is confirmed by the preposition *en* (lit. "in," translated "with"), which indicates, not the accompaniment of another being, but the character of the shout itself. So with the phrase "with" (lit. "in") the trump of God. These considerations point to the threefold description as referring to one great signal.

Even if an archangel uttered his voice at the time, there is nothing in this passage to correspond to the gathering in of the wheat by the angels, as mentioned in the parable, or to show that the angels take such a part in the Rapture.

On the other hand, if, as we have endeavoured to show, Scripture elsewhere teaches that there is to be a period intervening between the Rapture of the saints and the Second Advent of Christ "with the angels of His power," then the act of the angels mentioned in the parable of the tares (which takes place at Christ's Second Advent to the earth) refers to the separation of the wicked from the multitude of righteous who during that period have dissociated themselves from the evil of the time and have waited for Messiah's return and kingdom.

There is another point in the parable, and its interpretation, suggesting a distinction between that event and what is said of the Rapture. The angel reapers are first to gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them. The Lord interprets this as the gathering out

of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity, and the casting of them into the furnace of fire (vv. 41, 43). What happens immediately after that is the shining forth of the righteous as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (v. 43). So again, in the interpretation of the other parable of the net, "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous" (v. 49). At the Rapture the righteous will be severed from the wicked. There is nothing to show that the two events are similar or simultaneous. There is much to indicate the contrary.

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(11) **The argument is advanced that the Apostles Peter and Paul expected events to take place before the Rapture; Paul knew that he must stand before Cæsar (Acts 27. 24), that he would suffer death (2 Tim. 4. 6), that certain events must take place at Ephesus (Acts 20. 29, 30), that 'in later times some would fall away from the faith' (1 Tim. 4. 1), and that the time would come when certain believers would not endure the sound doctrine and would turn from the truth (2 Tim. 4. 3, 4); Peter knew that he would live to be old and would die for his Lord (John 21. 18); again the Church at Sardis knew that it was to have tribulation for ten days (Rev. 2. 10); accordingly, in contrast to the view that Christ may return at any time, since certain events were destined to take place before that event, it is to be expected that the Rapture of the Church will take place after the Great Tribulation.**

Let it be noted, firstly, that nowhere have we expressed the view that any Apostle expected the Lord to come during his lifetime, or that they taught the Churches to anticipate the fulfilment of that event before those which they declared must take place in their lifetime or sub-

sequently. Obviously they did not do so. All these things were long ago fulfilled. It is also true that the expectation of the occurrence of these circumstances did not weaken their hope. No view of the coming of Christ for the meeting of the saints with Him in the air has been expressed in these pages which is inconsistent with the expectation, by the Apostles and the Churches, of the events mentioned in connection with their lives.

What we have sought to point out from Scripture is that the Great Tribulation is appointed for the end of this age, that simultaneously with this there is to be a period of Divine wrath upon the world, that from the wrath of God the Church is to be delivered, that therefore no part of the Church will be here during the Great Tribulation, and that this involves an interval between the Rapture and the Second Advent, which interval is called again and again in Scripture the Parousia of our Lord with His saints. Nothing concerning the events which were foretold as to take place during the Apostle's lifetime and afterwards is contrary to this, nor can it be conceived how it could be so. What the Lord made known to an Apostle or to a Church, or what the Apostles made known to Churches, as certain to take place, does not in any way affect the teaching relating to the Rapture as destined to take place before the Great Tribulation. What is clear is that this latter event would not take place in the Apostle's time, nor until after the events which the churches were to experience.

As to the Apostle Paul's outlook, some have supposed that whereas he had formerly anticipated the Lord's return, in his closing days the knowledge of his impending death impaired that anticipation. On the contrary, his closing Epistle, addressed to Timothy, makes clear that Paul was ready not only for death, but for the Rapture, and for winter as well (2 Tim. 4. 6, 8, 21).

(12) It has been argued that, since the title "Anti-christ" signifies "against Christ," and, further, since the Church which is His Body is Christ mystical ("so also is Christ," 1 Cor. 12. 12), therefore the title Antichrist must indicate an antagonism on his part against the Church; and that as his persecutions take place during the Tribulation, the Church (or part of it) must be here at the time.

Such an argument is a sort of special pleading. What is taught concerning the Antichrist shows that he denies the Father and the Son, and the truths relating to Him (1 John 2. 22; 4. 3), and that he will set himself against the cause of God and the Kingdom of Christ (see Rev. 13, etc.). These facts are quite sufficient to account for his title "Antichrist." It is not at all necessary to suppose that his name involves the presence in the world of any part of the Church during his Satanic activities. There is no Scripture which shows it. If he is against the Father and the Son he is thereby against Christ.

An idea connected with this inference is, that, since the Apostle John taught his readers (members of the Church) concerning the advent and activities of the Antichrist, this, being truth for the churches, indicates that churches will be here under those activities.

This, again, is a gratuitous and unfounded assumption. That an Apostle predicted, in writing to a Church, that a certain event was to take place, affords no ground for the supposition that churches are to be on the earth when it does take place. Peter, for instance, tells his readers that the heavens are to pass away with a great noise, and that the elements are to be dissolved with fervent heat, that the earth and its works are to be burnt up, and makes these events the basis of an exhortation to the saints to boldness and godliness of life, and to be "earnestly desiring" the coming of the day of God, in which these

terrific events are to transpire. But that could not afford any ground for supposing that any part of the Church will be here during those events. So neither can predictions concerning the Antichrist afford ground for the conclusion that saints of the Church will be here under his tyranny.

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(13) **Paul and Barnabas taught the churches that they must "through many tribulations enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14. 22). Since, then, the Church was to pass through much tribulation, the conclusion is drawn that it will pass through "the Great Tribulation;" it has even been suggested that the "much tribulation" is practically the same thing as "the great tribulation."**

This is confounding things that differ. Tribulation is indeed the characteristic lot of faithful followers of Christ in this life, but what is said of the Great Tribulation shows that it is of a distinctive and special character, that it affects the Gentile nations as well as the Jewish nation, that it will come as a snare upon "all them that dwell on the face of all the earth" (Luke 21. 35); it is to be "the time of Jacob's trouble," and it is to "try them that dwell upon the earth."

To suppose that the Lord's words, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days... shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven... and they shall see the Son of Man coming... with power and great glory" (Matt. 24. 29, 30), refers to the "much tribulation" through which Paul told the churches they must pass, is an utterly unfounded inference. For the Lord specifies the tribulation of which He was speaking, as appointed for a distinct period at the time of the end. It is a tribulation of unprecedented character, and the days will be such that, unless they were shortened, no flesh would be saved.

**(14) It is stated that what the Lord Jesus addressed to His disciples on the Mount of Olives He addressed to them as members of His Body, the Church, and that accordingly members of the Church will be here to see "the abomination of desolation," and will flee from Judæa to the mountains (Matt. 24. 15, 16).**

At the time of the Lord's discourse Peter, Andrew, James and John, and the rest, were simply His disciples, Jews who had become His followers. The building of the Church, the Body of Christ, was yet future. His words to them were, "I will build My Church" (Matt. 16. 18). It is true that in foretelling the events of chapter 24 to the disciples He especially had regard to those to whom His utterances would be applicable in the age in which they would eventually be fulfilled. But to deduce that these who will then be living will be members of the Church, is assuming what should be proved.

Taking the facts as they stand in the Gospel record, these disciples were at that time in the same position and category as godly Jews will be in the time to come, Jews who believe in Christ, and await the hope of His Kingdom. As we have pointed out, the "ye" was addressed to them representatively in this way, just as the "ye" to Caiaphas and his associates was addressed to them as representatives of those who will actually see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven. The sequence of events, as mentioned in verses 21, 29, 30, marks a time at the end of the age and therefore not in the lifetime of the Apostles.

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**(15) The Scriptures which speak of the Second Advent as the hope of the saints, are referred to as demonstrating that the Rapture must take place at the time of the Second Advent, and that therefore there could be no intervening period.**

This view presupposes that the Rapture is held to be



"the hope" of the saints. Now it is true that some who regard the Rapture as "the hope" argue that to expect the Great Tribulation first would weaken the power of the hope, and they are reasonably met with the answer that the knowledge that certain events must first take place has not had this weakening effect. How needful, then, to have regard to what Scripture states about the hope! While that which is to take place at the Rapture is indicated as a hope 'set on Christ' (see 1 John 3. 2, 3, R. V.), it is not the consummation of the hope. That will be fulfilled only when Christ comes with His saints in manifested glory, for the overthrow of the foes of God and the establishment of His Kingdom. After the Rapture, which will be the initial act of the Parousia, the saints will still eagerly await the Second Advent. That will abide as their hope, until it is realised. Only when Christ is glorified where He was crucified, only when the world is the scene of His Millennial glory, can "the hope" receive its complete fulfilment.

In such a hope there is nothing inconsistent or incompatible with the existence of a period between the Rapture and the Second Advent. In view of certain misunderstandings, therefore, it will be well to set this forth somewhat more fully.

When the Apostle states that the grace of God has instructed us to live "soberly and righteously and godly in this present world: looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2. 13), he is not referring to the Rapture. Believers hope indeed for the Rapture, but it is not "the blessed hope" of that passage. There is a single definite article before the two words "hope" and "appearing," and the *kai*, "and," which joins them makes the second explanatory of the first (as is frequently the case with *kai*). The *kai* is thus equivalent to our English phrase,

“that is to say,” or “namely.” The meaning therefore is, “The blessed hope, namely, the appearing of the glory...”

As we have mentioned, the Rapture is also spoken of as a hope. “We know,” says the Apostle John, “that if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3. 2, 3). This manifestation is not that of Christ’s Second Advent in glory, but His manifestation to His saints at the Rapture, and this is the event spoken of here as “this hope.” When that has taken place, then “the blessed hope,” the consummation of the hope of the saints will still await fulfilment.

The question as to whether the knowledge that certain events will take place weakens the hope does not therefore affect the subject thus viewed. We know of nothing now that must necessarily take place before the Rapture, but we know that certain events will take place before Christ appears in glory to deliver the Jews and set up His kingdom. This will continue, therefore, to be the hope during the period that intervenes between the Rapture and the Second Advent. There is nothing relating to the subject of the hope which compels the view, or must lead to the conclusion, that the Rapture is to take place after the Tribulation, and is to be followed immediately by the Second Advent. To say that “there is no hope set before the Church prior to the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of Heaven” (*i.e.*, when He comes in flaming fire) is a statement unwarranted by the teaching of Scripture.

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(16) Upon the occasion of Christ’s Ascension the assurance was given to the disciples that He would ‘so come in like manner as they had beheld Him going into Heaven’ (Acts 1. 11). From the fact that “a cloud received Him out of their sight” (v. 10) the

deduction is made that the coming of the Lord to the air for the Rapture of the Church is to take place simultaneously with His coming in judgment for the setting up of His Kingdom. For does not the prophecy of Daniel 7. 13, say, "Behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven...and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom?" And did not Christ say, "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24. 30)? Did He not testify the same thing to Caiaphas (Matt. 26. 64)? And does not the Apocalypse say, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall mourn over Him" (Rev. 1. 7)? Moreover the saints of the Church are to be caught up "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4. 17).

Firstly, it is precarious to draw the conclusion that the two events are to be simultaneous from the fact that clouds are mentioned in connection with both; for clouds are associated with other similar events; see, for instance, Rev. 11. 12. That He will come on the clouds at His Second Advent affords no ground for believing that He will not on a previous occasion come to the region of the clouds to receive the saints to Himself.

Secondly, there are several respects in which His Second Advent will differ from the Coming promised in Acts 1. 11. At His Second Advent, for instance, He is coming "in flaming fire," coming "with the angels of His power." To conclude that the appearing of the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and the mourning of the tribes of the earth when they see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven," was the expectation of which the Apostles were again reminded when He had been taken up from them into Heaven, is to put an unwarranted construction

upon these Scriptures. It is an effort to enforce the idea of the coincidence of events for the distinction of which, and their separation in point of time, there is ample Scripture evidence.

Thirdly, in the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Acts, broad general statements of fact are made on the subject, which are differentiated in the Epistles in point of circumstance. Due regard to this would prevent the confounding of things that differ.

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(17) In Revelation 20. 4, 5, we read of "the first resurrection." The passage is as follows: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and such as worshipped not the Beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection." It is concluded from this that this is the time when the saints of the Church who have fallen asleep are to be raised, and that therefore this is the time of the Rapture. It has even been stated that "there can be no resurrection of the saints till then," and again, that "until the Beast and his persecution are destroyed together there can be no first resurrection" (Tregelles). Appeal in support of this is made to 1 Corinthians 15. 22, 23, which states that "in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his order: Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's at His coming."

The statement, "This is the first resurrection," affords no ground for supposing that all the saints who have part

in resurrection are to be raised at that time. For at the death of Christ "the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and, coming forth out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many" (Matt. 27. 52, 53). It cannot be maintained, therefore, that "there can be no resurrection of the saints until the Second Advent."

Again, with regard to the statement, "This is the first resurrection," there is no verb in the original; this of itself suggests, what is borne out by other facts, that the first resurrection is not one summary event, but consists of different parts. It may be rightly understood as 'This completes the first resurrection.'

Further, the first resurrection began when Christ was raised, for, with reference to the resurrection of the saints, the Apostle speaks of Christ as the "Firstfruits" (1 Cor. 15. 23). The firstfruits is essentially a part of the first resurrection—"each in His own order; Christ the firstfruits." The clause which follows, "then they that are Christ's at His Parousia," refers to the act of the Lord at the Rapture, which introduces His Parousia with His saints, and not to the Second Advent. There is again, for instance, another resurrection unto life spoken of in the case of the two witnesses (Rev. 11. 11).

It seems clear, then, that the first resurrection is made up of various events, beginning with the Resurrection of Christ. No one passage describes the whole. Revelation 20. 4, 5 gives the completion. The Apostle John is there giving in detail, not the whole scene of the first resurrection, but the state of blessedness therein involved for those who, at that closing act, have part in the resurrection.

As regards the various companies mentioned in this passage, Revelation 20, they do not form the whole of the saints who are to enjoy resurrection and to share the

reign of Christ, for there are a multitude of others of the saints who are already in glory who are to share the reign of Christ, and to whom the statements concerning the Beast and the image do not apply. Moreover, the undefined "they" at the beginning of the verse, in the statement, "And I saw thrones and they sat upon them," does not necessarily apply to the company of those mentioned at the end of the verse.

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(18) "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15. 54). This is a quotation from Isaiah 25. 8, and since that passage predicts the blessings of restored Israel (v. 7) and the reign of the Lord "in Mount Sion, and in Jerusalem and before his ancients gloriously" (chap. 24. 23), it is argued that only at the time of Israel's restoration will the resurrection of those who are Christ's take place. For it is when He destroys "the face of the covering cast over all peoples and the veil that is spread over all nations," that death will be swallowed up in victory. Therefore, "There can be no coming of the Lord (much more no secret coming) until He appears for the accomplishment of His promises to His ancient people Israel" (Tregelles).

It should be noted that the Revised Version rendering is, "He hath swallowed up death." The accuracy of this past tense is confirmed by the quotation in the passage in 1 Corinthians. Again, it is a well-known principle in the Apostle's method of quotation, that passages which in the Old Testament primarily refer to Israel are applied to the Church, often with a slight variation of meaning. See, for example, Romans 10. 6-11 and the Old Testa-

ment passages from which the quotations are taken. So with the passage in Isaiah 25. 7, 8, when Israel has been restored and the veil is consequently taken away from the nations, death will have been swallowed up in victory. The Apostle's application of these words to the resurrection and transformation of the saints at the time of the Rapture, by no means implies that this event is to take place "at the time of Israel's restored blessing." To say that "any hope of a previous resurrection must be based, not on Scripture teaching, but upon some thought which has been formed in contradistinction to revealed truth," is quite beside the mark. Scripture does not, by the way, speak of a "secret Rapture."

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(19) "After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I said unto him, My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve

**Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of water of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7. 9-17).**

It is stated that those who are thus described as coming out of the Great Tribulation form part of the Church, and that therefore the Rapture must be after the Tribulation.

This interpretation is, again, a gratuitous assumption. There is no actual proof that this great multitude consists of people who have been resurrected. Whether this be so or no, their blessings are peculiarly Millennial. Their service is "by day and by night" (not heavenly conditions). The closing promise is that "God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." This is an earthly scene, judging from Isaiah 25. 8. Again, the figurative description of the palm branches in their hands receives its interpretation from passages which speak of earthly gladness (cp. Lev. 23. 40-42; Ezek. 40. 16; 41. 18; John 12. 13).

Further, there is a distinct company, namely, "the elders," (always elsewhere in Scripture said of human beings), who with the angels and the living creatures are "round about the throne." These elders are themselves on thrones (chap. 5. 4, not "seats," A. V.), are arrayed in white garments, and have crowns (*stephanoi*, crowns of reward) on their heads—three facts which indicate that they are not spirits. A spirit is not arrayed, nor crowned. Each detail is descriptive of reward. Here then is a company of human beings enjoying resurrection life in Heaven, and quite distinct from the great Gentile multi-



tude who come out of the Great Tribulation (which, as we have noted, affects Gentiles as well as Jews). The former are blessed with Christ, the latter are blessed under Christ, Who 'spreads His tabernacle over them' (chap. 7. 15, R.V., which gives the accurate rendering; cp. Isa. 4. 5, 6).

Realising what Scripture teaches as to the Rapture, and the fact that at that event Christ will be "our Deliverer from the coming wrath," and, again, as to the Lord's Parousia with His saints after the Rapture, there is Scriptural justification for the view that this great multitude consists of Gentiles who have refused the worship of the Beast during the interval. There is nothing to show that they form part of the Church.

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(20) Among other passages quoted in support of the view that the Rapture will take place after the Tribulation, are the following:

Believers are "kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1. 4, 5). Meanwhile such suffer manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith "may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (v. 7). They are to set their hope perfectly "on the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (v. 13). They are to rejoice in being partakers of Christ's sufferings, "that at the revelation of His glory" they "may rejoice with exceeding joy" (chap. 4. 12, 13). Again, the faithful elders are assured that "when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested," they will receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away" (chap. 5. 4).

Now none of these passages afford any evidence that there is to be no interval between the Rapture and the

Second Advent. Even if the fact, that the salvation referred to in chapter 1. 5 is "to be revealed in the last time," pointed to the occasion when the Lord comes in flaming fire, that would not show that the Rapture had not taken place at some time previously. For at the time when the Lord comes in judgment to set up His Kingdom, the salvation, already enjoyed by the Church in the Parousia of Christ, will be revealed in its consummated glory. Moreover, what has been already pointed out concerning the noun, *apokalupsis*, "a revelation," holds good for the corresponding verb. It could be used with reference to each of the two distinct events, the Rapture and the Second Advent. The Coming of Christ for the meeting of the saints with Him in the air will be an *apokalupsis* (or 'unveiling') to them, though not to the world; again, the coming of Christ with the angels of His power in flaming fire will be an *apokalupsis* to the world, each revelation having an entirely distinctive event associated with it, and separated the one from the other by an interval.

Verse 7 is understood by some to refer to the second of these events. If that is the meaning, it does not eliminate the occurrence of the interval separating it from the time of the Rapture. When the saints come in resurrection glory with Christ at His Second Advent, the trials experienced by them will certainly be found unto "praise, glory and honour." For Christ is then coming "to be glorified in His saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed" (2 Thess. 1. 10). So with verse 13. The same applies also to the "exceeding joy" in chapter 4. 12, 13.

The passage which speaks of the reward of the crown of glory to be given when the Chief Shepherd appears (*phaneroō*), chapter 5. 4 points to the Judgment Seat which follows upon the Rapture, and not to what will take place when the Lord is revealed in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to the foes of God.

(21) **Appeal is made to the Authorised Version of 2 Thessalonians 2. 2, 3, which makes the Apostle say that the Day of Christ was not at hand, and would not come before the apostasy and the revelation of the Man of Sin.**

The Authorised Version is untenable here. The Revised Version, "The Day of the Lord" is abundantly confirmed by manuscript evidence. The rendering, "is now present," is the accurate one. "The Day of the Lord" is a period distinct from the Day of Christ. That is clear from a consideration of all the passages where the phrases occur.

The Day of Christ begins with the Rapture. The Day of the Lord begins subsequently. What the Apostle was teaching was that this latter period would not begin until after the apostasy and the revelation of the Man of Sin. \*

The Church at Thessalonica was being taught by errorists that the Day of the Lord had already begun. They might well be apprehensive about the fate of their departed loved ones. For the Apostle had instructed them in his first Epistle to expect the Rapture first. Now he writes to confirm his teaching and to correct the false doctrines to which they were listening. He makes his appeal "by (*hyper*, 'in the interests of') the Parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him" (v. 1). It was not to correct a mistake in his first Epistle (as some who discredit the Divine Inspiration of

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\*It has been recently stated that the New Testament "again and again changes 'the day of our Lord' for 'the day of the Lord Jesus' and for 'the day of Jesus Christ,'" and that therefore these varied names are blended into one; further, that "again and again Paul in particular seems to glory in changing the name;" also that when the Apostle Peter says of Paul that "in all his Epistles" he spoke of these things, he was referring "to the very same day of God" as Peter did.

Such inferences are entirely unfounded, and are contrary to that extreme precision of phraseology which is manifested in the God-breathed writings. The passages relating to "the day of the Lord" refer to that period which is introduced by the Second Advent of Christ, whereas the passages which contain the phrases in which the personal titles, Jesus, or Christ, or both, are found, are all used in quite a different connection and have to do with the circumstances of the Rapture of the saints, their presence with the Lord in His Parousia, and the Judgment-Seat of Christ.

Scripture affirm), it was to confirm what he had there written, that he appeals to his readers on the ground of the Rapture, the gathering to Christ, as distinct from and previous to, the Day of the Lord, which is to be ushered in by vengeance. They are still to wait for the Son of God from Heaven, as they had done.

This passage, then, shows the Rapture to be a distinct event, prior to and separated from the revelation of Christ from Heaven with His angels to render vengeance to the ungodly.

(22) In writing to the Thessalonian Church the Apostle says, **"But concerning the times and the seasons brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night...But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief"** (1 Thess. 5. 1, 2, 4). It has been inferred from this that the Day of the Lord will overtake the Church, though not as a thief.

It is not necessary to suppose that the Apostle's statement suggests that the Day of the Lord is to overtake the Church as well as the world, and that the distinction is that it will not overtake the Church as a thief. On the contrary, the order of the words and phraseology of the Original, as well as the whole context of the passage, shows that the Apostle is marking a sharp contrast between the circumstances relating to the Rapture of the saints (chap. 4. 13 to 18) and those relating to the world, upon which the Day of the Lord will come with the personal intervention of Christ in judgment. The distinction, which is one in point both of time and character of event becomes clear when we put together the Scriptures which speak of the Day of the Lord. Here in verse 4 the stress which is placed upon the pronoun "ye" and "you" marks

the contrast between the destiny of believers and the Day of the Lord which is to come upon the world. Taking the order of the original, the rendering is as follows: "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day you as a thief should overtake." The word "you" is distinctive in its emphasis. The phrase "as a thief" goes closely with "overtake," and has no stress attached to it.

If there were any doubt as to the meaning, it would be necessary to understand the passage according to the teaching of other Scriptures, and this very Epistle makes clear what the destiny of the Church is.

What the Apostle means is, not that the day will overtake the saints though not as a thief, but rather that, with regard to the saints, such is their character and destiny, that what will overtake the world as a thief will not come upon them at all. The saints are "sons of light" and "sons of day." When the day of the Lord begins, those who have been caught up to meet Him will come with Him. The saints are not to be overtaken by the Rapture, they are to comfort one another in the prospect of it. The Day of the Lord, which will overtake the world as a thief, is entirely distinct from this.

This distinction in verse 4, which may not be clear to the reader of the English Version, is confirmed, as we have said, by what the Scripture teaches in relation to the Day of the Lord, as well as in other ways which we have sought to point out. There are two Scriptures, for instance, which, if taken together, show that the Day of the Lord will begin when the Lord Jesus comes on the clouds of Heaven, with great glory, for the overthrow of His foes, and the setting up of His Kingdom, while Scripture further makes clear that at that Advent the saints will come in glory with Him, Joel's prophecy declares that the Day of the Lord will follow the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood (Joel 2. 30, 31).

Christ declared that immediately after these calamities in the heavens He Himself would come with power and great glory, and all the tribes of the earth would mourn (Matt. 24. 29, 30). The Day of the Lord is therefore to be ushered in by the Coming of Christ in this manner.

The Second Advent is likewise described in Revelation 17. 14, and in fuller detail in chapter 19. 11-21. When Christ comes with power and great glory, as He foretold, He will overthrow the Beast and those who are gathered together under him. That is how the Day of the Lord will be ushered in. Now concerning those foes of God the passage says: "These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with Him, called, and chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17. 14). Accordingly the saints are with Christ when He comes in glory, when the foes of God are overthrown and the Day of the Lord begins.

The day of the Lord cannot have overtaken them as it will the world, for they are among the hosts of the Lord when it begins. It is the saints who are referred to in a similar passage in chapter 19. 14, which says that "the armies which are in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure." It is not the angels which are clothed in fine linen. The fine linen belongs to the saints. The Day of the Lord will dispel and replace the world's night; the saints, in resurrection life and glory, are coming with Christ to share in the great event. They will have been previously caught up to meet Him before the Day of the Lord begins.

## Conclusion.

The consideration of these objections in the light of Scripture serves, then, to confirm what was set forth in the first chapter, namely, that the period in which the Great Tribulation will take place is to be likewise a period of the wrath of God in a series of retributive judgments; that from the wrath of God the Church is assured of deliverance; and that this deliverance consists, not of preservation through the period of retribution, but of salvation from it at the Rapture.

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