

THE
RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH;

OR,

ARE ANY EVENTS TO BE EXPECTED
BEFORE THE RAPTURE OF
THE CHURCH?

BY

LORD CONGLETON.

“The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s: but the earth hath He given to the children of men.”—PSALM cxv. 16.

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THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH ;

OR,

ARE ANY EVENTS TO BE EXPECTED BEFORE THE
RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH ?

IF the future of the Church be enquired after, there can be no hesitation on the part of those who take the Scriptures with simplicity in answering, The Church will not be always here; the Church, both the dead and the living, will, in due time, be "*caught up*," for so it is written in the word, "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 Thes. iv. 16, 17).

Very readily will those admit this who see the Church to be an election gathered out of a Christ-rejecting world previously to the pouring out of wrath upon that world, the rapture of the Church preceding the pouring out of that wrath. The Millennial day will subsequently arise: then "shall

the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah xi. 9).

And still more readily will those admit this, who know the *Church* to be called with a *heavenly* calling as distinguished from the calling of the *nation* Israel. That is to say, when the *nation* Israel called to an *earthly* inheritance, rejected their King, God proceeded, in the richest grace, to take out of both Jew and Gentile, alike found in unbelief, a people for his Son thus cast out of the earth but received up into heaven, to sit with his Son in *the heavens*—to be the bride of that Lamb—to reign with the Lamb over the world, over both Israel and the Gentiles—*brought*, through the same grace, into saving blessing at a future day. This people is the *Church*, a people called to a *heavenly* inheritance, and therefore said to be called with a *heavenly* calling, as it is written, "Holy brethren, partakers of the *heavenly* calling" (Heb. iii. 1). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ. . . . And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to *the Church*, which is His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 3, 22, 23).

The revival of the *nation* Israel with its *earthly* calling is, of course, implied in the above remark, according to that word concerning Israel: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29). The *nation* Israel called to an *earthly* inheritance has never yet really enjoyed that inheritance (Heb. iv. 8). The days shall yet come when "all Israel shall be saved," and shall dwell in their own

land with the Son of David as their Saviour and King; with this addition, that there shall be blessing for all the Gentiles also (Ps. lxxxvi.9): this is the Millennium.

In the face, then, of this *certain* event—the rapture of the Church of the true people of God out of every community—the question naturally arises, When shall this event take place?

If the question be asked with reference to the year and the day, the answer must be, We cannot tell. But if the question be asked with reference to the prophetic testimony in God's holy word;—if the meaning of this question be, Are there not events to happen before the rapture of the Church? I believe the answer to be, *None*. *Now* is the time for the rapture of the Church.

1.—I used to think that certain events were to be expected before that day. I now see *none*.

I used to think that whilst we have Rev. xx. 4, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years,”—I used to think that whilst we have this passage so plainly telling us that during the reign of the Beast there will be witnesses of Jesus on the earth, who will subsequently share in the Church's glory, it is a very arbitrary thing to say that such do not form part of the Church whilst on earth, that the Church is caught up before their day, or in other words, that the Church will not be

here during the reign of the Beast. It seemed to me from that passage that *one* event, *at least*, must precede the rapture of the Church, namely, the reign of the Beast.

In support of the contrary idea held by many, that the rapture of the Church will precede the reign of the Beast, I used to demand distinct scripture—scripture as distinct as this against it.

I have always (I think I may say), kept myself ready to receive any such Scripture; but I have often had occasion to remark how deficient, in respect of Scripture, those *seemed* to be who supported the contrary idea.

For this reason I am the more desirous of stating how I came to yield to it, because it seems to me that if the subject were properly stated, many (whose jealousy about Scripture proof one cannot but commend) would have no difficulty in seeing it.

It is some five or six years since my attention was awakened to the fact, that, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament are found passages in which a godly remnant in the last days are spoken of—a godly remnant of Israel, in the times immediately preceding the Lord's appearing in glory with His saints—who, according to their *nation's* calling, are destined not to be caught up, but to inherit the *earth* or the *land*. This remnant of Israel are delivered from their enemies, not by being caught up like the *Church*, but by the falling of God's judgments upon their enemies, whereupon they get unhindered enjoyment of the inheritance which God gave to their fathers. The Psalms especially abound with the idea of this remnant. See Psalm xxxvii. —“Fret not thyself because

of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. . . . Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they *shall inherit the earth*. For yet a little while, and the wicked [one] shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek *shall inherit the earth*; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. . . . The righteous *shall inherit the land*, and dwell therein for ever." In Malachi we have this same party thus referred to, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and Him that serveth Him not. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. iii. 16—iv. 3). Also

in Isaiah we read, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. . . . Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" (Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2, 5).

The people referred to in all these passages, are evidently not a people to be brought to the saving knowledge of God by the appearing of the Lord in glory (as we know some will be), but a people already knowing God. They are a people that fear the Lord, that know the name of the Lord, that can trust in the Lord, and delight themselves in the Lord, and are *owned* as such by him. Moreover they are not a people to be caught up, and so delivered from their enemies; but to inherit the *earth* upon the destruction of their enemies.

The existence of such a remnant, a truly godly remnant, being granted, it will follow that, whether we consider them to be the disciples of Jesus or not (yet godly after the manner of Abraham, counted righteous through faith, Gen. xv. 6), the Church *must* be caught up before they come on the stage. If they are the disciples of Jesus, the Church must certainly be caught up first; for there could not be, *at the same time*, upon the earth, disciples of Jesus to be caught up testifying to the *heavenly* calling of the

Church and disciples of Jesus not to be caught up testifying to the *nation's* calling, that is, two different testimonies at the same time. Still less could there be *at the same time* upon the earth disciples of Jesus as the approved ones, and also persons *not* acknowledging Jesus as approved ones; and, therefore, also, if this remnant are *not* the disciples of Jesus, the Church must be caught up first.

Thus, then, if the existence of such a remnant be granted, the Church, whether this remnant are the disciples of Jesus or not, *must* be caught up before they come on the stage at all. Assuredly so, I judged. And therefore I was very slow in admitting the existence of such a remnant, that is, I was very slow in admitting that they are truly godly, *accepted* and *owned* of God; for if they are *not* truly godly, the *previous* rapture of the Church would not appear to be absolutely *necessary*.* And I thought Rev. xx. 4, backed me in this my slowness; for this passage shows, that up to the very end of this dispensation, even during the reign of the Beast, there will be witnesses of Jesus on the earth who will subsequently partake of the Church's glory. This I still believe to be true; nevertheless, I now see I committed an oversight in reference to this passage.

* Some have considered this remnant rather in the light of persons ready to submit to the Lord when he shall appear in glory, than as persons already righteous through faith; but this will not stand in the face of such passages as those in Psalm xxxvii. 17, 29, 39, where they are openly called "the righteous," as they also are in Malachi, iii. 18. That there will be *such* persons as those described above I do not deny, but that *these* in Psalm xxxvii. are accepted as righteous I cannot doubt.

I forgot that *all* those mentioned in this passage as finally partaking of the Church's glory are not persons originally called with the same calling, that is, with the *Church's* calling or the *heavenly* calling. For instance, such as *died* in faith before the Lord's first coming, and therefore *before* the Church properly so called (who therefore were not called with the *heavenly* calling, but with the *earthly*, that is, with the *nation's*),—they will share in the Church's glory; and therefore those witnesses of Jesus mentioned in Rev. xx. 4, as being on the earth during the reign of the Beast, *may be*, although ultimately sharing in the Church's glory, a part of a company brought on the stage *after* the Church, and called with the *nation's* calling, seeing it is through *death*, they enter into the Church's glory. "*May be*," I say.

But to proceed. This godly remnant mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures are also spoken of as exposed to sufferings,—many of them suffer unto death under the Beast, called "the wicked one," and "the enemy and avenger." In Psalm xxxvii. this word of exhortation and comfort is addressed to them: "Fret not thyself in anywise to do evil. . . . For yet a little while, and *the wicked [one]** shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. . . . *The wicked [one]* plotteth against the just [one], and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. *The wicked [one]* watcheth the righteous [one], and seeketh to slay him. . . . I have seen *the wicked [one]* in great power, and spreading himself like a

* The Beast is thus called in 2 Thess. ii. 8, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

green bay tree, yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." In Psalm xlv. we find the remnant thus expressing themselves under their sufferings: "Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. . . . My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, for the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of *the enemy and avenger*. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. . . . *Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*" And again in Psalm lxxix.: "O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. *Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem;* and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us." This last verse identifies the party speaking in this Psalm with those speaking in the previous Psalm quoted. Compare the first verse quoted of that Psalm (line 4, above) with this last verse.

In reference to these last two Psalms, in which we find the same party speaking (as I have just noticed),

the first matter demanding attention is, the period of time that they refer to.

That Psalm xliv., in its *primary* meaning, could not be uttered by Jews brought into the *Church* is certain, for the party there speaking stand distinctly on *national* grounds, that is, under the *nation's* calling,—“thou goest not forth with our armies”; therefore we cannot (on the assumption that they are truly godly) look for any party that will answer to them in Christian times. But when, it may be asked, previously to Christian times, has Israel, or have the Jews, been called to suffer such things whilst cleaving to the Lord? That Israel and the Jews, in former times, often suffered at the hands of their enemies, *when they forsook the Lord*, no one disputes. But here it is witnessed that they have not forgotten the Lord, neither dealt falsely in his covenant; their heart is not turned back, neither have their steps declined from his way. Therefore we are under the necessity of referring the fulfilment of this Psalm to future times; and if of this Psalm, of Psalm lxxix, also.

The next matter in connection with these two Psalms needing attention, is the identification of the godly remnant with their nation. They are *necessarily* bound up with their nation; they stand under the *nation's* calling, as distinguished from the *Church's* calling, and are, in consequence, expecting to inherit the *land* under the peaceful reign of the true Solomon. In the blessing of their nation is their blessing. They may be pardoned through faith as *individuals*, whilst their nation is unpardoned; but they cannot get the

blessing of their calling except the *nation* be pardoned and blessed. By the fact that *they* are only a *remnant*, their *nation* is still unpardoned; and because their blessing is bound up with the blessing of their nation, they cannot but pray for the pardon of their nation and of themselves, *as far as they are a part of the nation.*

Keeping this in mind, certain passages in these two Psalms, which might otherwise seem to prejudice the standing of the remnant as truly godly, will be found in beautiful keeping. For instance, the Lord is said to make them a reproach, a scorn, and a derision; to have sore broken them in the place of dragons, and to have covered them with the shadow of death; the Beast is called the "avenger"—he avenges the Lord's controversy with His *nation*; and, in the latter Psalm, we find the petition, "Purge away our sins for thy name's sake." In the mouth of the remnant, *as bound up with their nation*, such words are most suitable.* On the other hand, the remnant, *as a remnant*, take a position most distinct. "All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way Yea, *for thy sake* are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." We may judge of the value of

* The *Church's* calling is a calling unto sufferings (1 Thess. iii. 3), but the *nation's* calling is unto prosperity (Lev. xxvi. 3—13) in the earth; and therefore the existence of sufferings among those called with this latter calling implies sins unpardoned, either upon the individuals suffering, or upon their nation. The petition, "Purge away our sins for thy name's sake," is the same petition that we have uttered by *godly* Daniel in Dan. ix. 19.

this last expression in a spiritual point of view, by the fact of the Holy Ghost's counting it fit to be used by Christ's suffering apostles — "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 35, 36, 37). If those mentioned in this Psalm were mere natural men, not in acceptance with God, it is inconceivable that the Holy Ghost should select expressions out of their prayers, and put them formally as quotations into the mouth of Christ's apostle.

I would here say, Let it be remembered that if this remnant are truly godly, *accepted* and *owned* of God, the Church *must* be caught up *before* they are brought on the stage at all (page 10).

This question then arises, What will be the future portion of such of this remnant as are slain? Surely, they will be raised up. But when raised up, with whom will they be classed? We have been led to notice what will be the future portion of those who *died* in faith before Christ came, that they will be made to share in the *Church's* glory, although *not* called with the *heavenly* calling (page 12). If those will share in the Church's glory, we cannot but conclude that these faithful ones, who also pass through *death*, will also share in it; and thus we learn the fact, that some will be caught up *after* the Church is caught up.

But there is yet a passage of Scripture to be brought forward—a passage in which these rays of light are made to converge and brought to a focus, and that is

the 7th of Daniel. In that chapter there is nothing of resurrection or rapture. There we find a people who flourish at the close of this dispensation, and who are openly called "the saints," "the saints of the Most High." For a season, namely, three years and a half, that is, during *the whole* period* of the reign of the Beast (there set forth under the symbol of the little horn), they suffer under his persecutions. From him they are delivered by the direct interference of the Most High in judgment; and then they, as the true fifth monarchy, with the Son of Man at their head, take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms *under the whole heaven*, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them,† as Isaiah also tells us—"The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish" (Isa. lx. 12).

To this point, then, have we come in considering the subject of the godly remnant. Whilst we have found proofs of their being truly godly, and of their being destined, according to their *nation's* calling, to inherit the *earth*, we have also found that they suffer under the Beast, during *the whole* of his reign; and further, that those of them who are slain in these persecutions get a place in the *heavenly* inheritance, sharing in the Church's glory.

* Compare Dan. vii. 25, "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of time;" with Rev. xiii. 5, "And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months," that is, three years and a half.

† See Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27. The pronoun in verse 27, refers to the people, and not to the Most High (see the Chaldee).

But if these things be so, then the rapture of the Church must precede the reign of the Beast, seeing the Church and this godly remnant cannot be on the earth *at the same time*. And, consequently, those witnesses of Jesus mentioned in Rev. xx. 4, as slain during the reign of the Beast, and as subsequently sharing in the Church's glory, *cannot* form part of the Church whilst on earth, but *must* be these identical slain ones of the godly remnant of Israel, called with the *nation's* calling after the Church is caught up, and exposed to the persecutions of the Beast.

And now we get another point established, namely, the character of the faith of this godly remnant; and we find it to be faith in Jesus, for that is the faith of these witnesses last named.*

Thus, then, we are brought to the full conclusion that the reign of the Beast does not precede the rapture of the Church; but the rapture of the Church, both of the *dead* and of the *living*, precedes the reign of the Beast, although *some*, called with the *nation's*

* It may here be observed, with regard to the rise of the godly remnant, and the revival of the *nation* Israel in this remnant, that Scripture would lead us to ascribe them to one who, after the rapture of the *Church*, shall, like John the Baptist, come in the spirit and power of Elijah. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. iv. 5, 6). And I know not any Scripture that would give us a better idea of the mission of this coming one than the prophecy of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, seeing it is of the forerunner of *the nation's* deliverer, not of the Bridegroom of the *Church*, that he there speaks (Luke i. 67—79). This Elijah that is to come will, we may suppose, call upon the children of Israel to turn to the Lord, preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus, in connection with *the nation's* calling that is

calling after the rapture of the Church, who pass through *death*, will, *after* the reign of the Beast, be caught up to share the Church's glory. Thus the Bride will be made complete, and then the reign will begin, according to that word—"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 21) "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (Rev. xx. 4, 5). And here let that word be remembered, "In that He put *all* in subjection under Him, He left *nothing* that is not put under Him" (Heb. ii. 8); and "gave Him to be head over all things to *the Church*, which is *His body*, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22, 23). This is the *heavenly* calling.

II.—As to such of the godly remnant as survive the persecutions of the Beast, they will, on the destruction of the Beast by the Lord at His appearing (2 Thes. ii. 8), become the nucleus of the nation. To them, such of the nation as come out of the judgments of the day of the Lord, *brought* to God by that terrible process (Zech. xiii. 8, 9), will be added; and thus the nation Israel *made* to know the Lord, will at

announcing Christ's speedy coming to take the throne of his father David, and to reign over the house of Jacob. That no one could come and preach Jesus in connection with *the nation's* calling whilst the *Church* is on earth, is evident from this, that, whilst the *Church* is here, that word still holds good, that those "that are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord [that is, believers] shall be *caught up*."

last find rest and glory under the sceptre of the Son of David in the land which God gave to their fathers; and there "the Gentiles shall come to [their] light, and Kings to the brightness of [their] rising," (Isaiah lx. 3). "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his Name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, 'The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, 'The Lord liveth which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. xxiii. 5—8). "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations [the Gentiles] shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jer. iii. 17). "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations [the Gentiles] shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth a* law, and the word of the Lord from

* So the Hebrew, as in Isaiah li. 4.

Jerusalem.* And he shall judge among the nations [the Gentiles], and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah ii. 2—4). And whilst in those days there shall be no more war, sickness and death shall also be brought under control,—“I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil” (Exod. xxiii. 25, 26). “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for he who dies a hundred years old is a youth; and he who dies a hundred years old is a sinner accursed” (Isaiah lxxv. 20).† “That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as *the days of heaven upon the earth*” (Deut. xi. 21). Not that people will not be then in unredeemed bodies; but great will be the triumph, in those days, over the evils of the fall. For whilst we may *suppose* that, in those days, all the still-hidden powers of nature will be developed for the service of man, we *know for certainty* that, in the day when the Lord takes to himself his great power and reigns, the

* Doubtless, *the Church* has ever been under responsibility to publish the Gospel in all nations (Mat. xxviii. 19), and all nations are under the deepest responsibility through the Gospel to turn to God (Acts xvii. 30); but it will not be by means of the *Church*, but by means of the *nation* Israel, with Jesus at their head as their Saviour and King, that all the nations will be *effectually* brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God, for “out of Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

† See the Hebrew.

Lord's own power shall be put forth, in miraculous energy, on behalf of his people to over-rule the laws of nature when working against them, so as to give them full victory over all evil, the evil one himself being then bound; for "then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert" (Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6). This is the Millennium, the Golden Age of Scripture, "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts iii. 21.) This is the *earthly* calling.

Nor let it be supposed that this is making too much of these *callings*; for the whole matter is not yet told. We read that there will be after the Millennium "a new heaven and a new earth," in which there is no sea (Rev. xxi. 1). From this it would appear that these two callings, the *heavenly* calling and the *earthly* calling, although limited to a thousand years in their first form, are in their essential character, abiding and *eternal*.

III.—How soon the rapture of the Church will take place none can tell. The foregoing Scriptures warrant us in saying, *Any* day it *may* take place. Nothing prevents it but God's long-suffering towards the world (2 Pet. iii. 9). Great is the coming wrath. God in his love has sent salvation to men through the shed blood of his Son. Eighteen hundred years has this testimony been proclaimed in the earth. What characterised early times characterises late times, "They all with one consent began to make excuse." But for grace that *compels* to come in, none would be

saved; but this does not remove the responsibility of those who reject God's love. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thes. i. 7—10).

For this reason, it *may* still please God, for some years, to go on re-iterating the testimony of his love in the ears of a will-be godless world, and "adding to the Church daily such as should be saved." *At present* there seems to be a clouding in on all sides, but God *may* yet again disperse the clouds and cause His word to have free course in the earth. If so, the rapture of the Church will yet be deferred for a season; but if otherwise, a few days may suffice to make us know experimentally what that rapture is.

Brethren, are we prepared for this alternative? Do our hearts rejoice at the nearness of the prospect? Some eighteen centuries ago an inspired apostle said, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii. 12). How much nearer must it be now? Are our hearts glad? "*Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure*" (1 John iii. 3).

But whilst the Church has been called to share Christ's *throne* in the *heavens*, she has also been called to share one part of Christ's *work* on the *earth*, namely, that of a witness to the truth (John xviii. 37). He testified that with the holy God, who hates sin and must judge sin, there is *grace*, that is, love to his

creatures though sinners; and, more especially, that *the present time* is a time, not of judgment, but of shewing *grace* unto salvation, through the gift of His Son, even to the worst,—that judgment is, indeed, coming but is not present. But men who hate the *holiness* that testifies that the world's works are evil (John vii. 7), hate still more the *grace* that “receiveth sinners and eateth with them” (Luke xv. 2). And therefore, whilst the Church is called to share Christ's work of testimony on the earth, she is also called to share Christ's *sufferings* for that testimony; and, *by suffering for well-doing, and still shewing kindness*, to exhibit, in her walk, as He did in His walk, *what grace means*, if by any means men, through faith in God's grace, may be saved. Her Lord's path down here is the Church's path,—a path of *suffering* in testimony to the *grace* of the holy God. “If any man *serve* me,” says He, “let him *follow* me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be” (John xii. 26). This is the *service* that belongs to those that are called to sit upon Christ's *throne*. It *did* not belong to the *nation* Israel; neither *will* it belong to them in the Millennium. But how often has the Church, in forgetfulness of this her calling to *reign* in *heaven*, to *suffer* on *earth*, been found walking rather as the *nation* Israel than as the *Church*, seeking establishment and dominion here rather than the furtherance of this her holy and beautiful testimony. Hence, what disaster!

Whilst His coming¹ is still deferred, may we be found in all sympathy with His Divine love to sinners, giving ourselves to this *service* of testimony to the *grace* of God, and rejoicing if “counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” “If we suffer, we shall reign with Him” (2 Tim. ii. 12).