

# THE COMING OF CHRIST:

I. IMMINENT.

II. EMBRACIVE.

III. GLORIOUS.

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# THE COMING OF CHRIST:

WHAT IS IT?

WILL ALL OR ONLY PART BE CAUGHT UP?

WILL OR WILL NOT THE CHURCH PASS THROUGH  
THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

BY

J. H. BURRIDGE.

*Author of "Liberty, Joy, and Power," "Secret of Happiness," &*

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Second Edition.

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## The Witness

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## Preface.

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**T**O interest the Lord's people more generally in an event that he believes to be near at hand (which belief is based, *not upon dates, but upon signs*), to turn the hearts of the Lord's people toward Himself and His coming again, so that our lives may be directed, and our characters formed, by the transporting and purifying power of "that blessed hope;" that thus *present* things may not have an undue influence over us, but that we may go through this world as a people "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God," is the aim of the Author in this volume.

The means adopted to this end are simple expositions of certain Scriptures which treat of the Second Advent in its different aspects, and friendly, yet plain, and, we trust, candid examination of the different views that many dear servants of Christ have on some parts of the subject, but which are likely to perplex young students, and which are used by some as an excuse for ignoring the subject altogether, notwithstanding that it has such a large and important place in God's purposes, as revealed in the Scriptures.

May it please the Lord to use this humble effort for the blessing of His people, and may His last words to us, "Surely I come quickly," ring in our very souls, and stir our hearts to the unfeigned response, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

J. H. BURRIDGE.

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The line of Old Testament

The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head.

The Flood.

Call of Abram.

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Prophecies.

Daniel Prophecies.

70 years' captivity.

prophe

Babylon | Med. | O-Persia.

Gr. | Rome

Rome bruised.

Rome revived.

cy making the land and people of Israel its centre.

7 weeks | 62 weeks

70 weeks of Daniel.

The Minor Prophets' Prophecy.

Descent of the Holy Ghost.

Church dispensation.

Rapture of the Church.

Mystery of Iniquity.

One week.

Millennium.

Gentiles.

Jews.

Coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom.

## EXPLANATION OF DIAGRAM.

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THE foregoing diagram may help our readers to understand the whole system of prophecy. It will be seen that the present dispensation comes in between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel.

All the prophets foretell the sufferings of Christ, the great tribulation, the restoration, and day of glory and blessing for the whole nation of Israel, subsequent to, and consequent upon, the rejection of the Messiah, but say nothing whatever about the Church and the present dispensation.

Consequent upon the rejection of Christ the Millennium was put off—and with it the week, or seven years, crowded with events, introductory to it—to make room for the present dispensation. Hence a break in the prophetic line at the cross, implying a cessation in the current of prophetic fulfilment about that time, or at least at the destruction of Jerusalem.

No intelligent student denies that the Millennium is postponed; then why not also the seven years, the events which are introductory to it?

And God is now, during the present dispensation, accomplishing His purpose concerning the Church, which purpose "hath been hid from ages and generations past"—"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is *now revealed* to His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit,"—"Which from the beginning hath been hid in God."

But the history of this present period will merge into the time of great trouble and judgment, that shall set in after the rapture of the Church. So the mystery of iniquity doth already work, but will be unchecked and fully revealed when the Church is gone, and finally fall under the judgment of God, when Christ comes to set up His Kingdom.

# THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR HIS PEOPLE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**W**HEN we consider the place that the Second Coming of Christ has in the Scripture, we may well wonder that it has not a larger place in the Christian ministry, and with the knowledge of the scanty place it has here, we need not wonder that so few Christians have the present enjoyment of the blessed hope, as the bright and morning star twinkling in the horizon of our glorious future, and assuring our hearts of the near approach of that endless day of joy and pleasure, in which our sun shall no more go down, nor shall a cloud ever more cross our sky. What a cheer and stay to our souls through this night of sorrow; in which we are subject to all kinds of human woe; what a bright margin it gives to the dark clouds of our life; how well calculated to allay our fears and alleviate our sorrows.

How very much Christians lose for want of attention to this subject. When looked at as the Lord's way of introducing us to the Father's house, to the glory, it adds a brilliancy to our prospect that can never be known if we look merely at death and the grave as the only way to glory. Truly these may lay in the way; but there is

a gloom and darkness about them that require the Lord's coming to disperse. I can go into the grave with a song of victory on my lips, because of the bright prospect of a glorious resurrection at the coming of my Redeemer; though it is quite true that while my body is crumbling to dust my spirit will be waiting with the Lord, for the same advent that I know from revelation may take place before I leave this world, in which case I shall not pass through death at all.

Is it not certain that if this blessed hope was kept more before the Lord's people they would have a source of comfort that is now unknown, and a motive power to Christian work, and devotedness in the whole cause of Christ, which now seems sadly wanting?

I heard Mr. D. L. Moody ask, a few months ago, in the presence of about 2,000 people, "Why do not your ministers preach the second coming of Christ? I went to church ten years before I heard anything about it; there are 260 chapters in the New Testament and 318 references to the Lord's second coming, and yet how little we hear of it!" We may however be thankful that the Lord's people are getting their eyes open to the blessed truth.

There is not a Christian doctrine that receives more attention in the Word of God than the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; it comes in at every point of Christian life, is associated with every Christian doctrine, and is constantly brought to bear upon the motives and actions of the Lord's people, and is set forth as a warning to those who are not His by redemption.

Is it a question of heart comfort, during the absence of our blessed Lord, and amidst the trials and sorrows of this world? The Lord's coming and our being for ever with Him, is presented as the one consoling object of the heart. John xiv. 1-3; Thess. iv. 15-18.

Is it a question of hope filling the soul with deep longing and holy emulation? The coming of Christ to receive us to glory is brought before us as the "blessed hope." Tit. ii. 13.

Is it a question of motive power in service? The coming of the Lord is brought to bear for this end. 1 Cor. xv. 58; Thess. ii. 19.

Is it a question of holy life? This is looked at in view of the coming of Christ, which is also given as the motive of it. 1 Thess. iii. 13; 1 John iii. 3.

Is it a question of freedom from the sting of death, and victory over the gloom of the grave? For God's believing people this victory will be manifested by the coming of Christ. 1 Cor. xv. 54-57.

Is it a question of an introduction of a new and glorious era for this world? The coming of Christ is the great event that shall bring this about. See Rev. xix. But Scripture everywhere shows this.

Is it a question of the servant's reward for faithful service while his Lord is away? It is associated with the coming of Christ. Matt. xxiv. 45-47, and other passages which the reader may look up.

Does the evil servant begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken? It is because he has said in his heart, "my Lord delayeth His coming." Matt. xxiv. 48-51.

And, finally, the coming of Christ is used as a warning to the sinner. Luke xvii. 26-30.

## PART I.

### What is the Lord's Coming?

#### CHAPTER I.

### YOUNG CONVERTS AND THE COMING OF CHRIST.

THERE are many relations in which we may view the Lord's second coming. It may be viewed in relation to the Church; in relation to the Great Tribulation; in relation to the Gentile nations; in relation to Israel and the kingdom; and in relation to Christendom.

And in connection therewith there are doubtless things hard to be understood, and attendant events, the true bearing of which can only be apprehended by diligent study and careful comparison. But certainly this does not apply to the coming of Christ for His church, as the simple and blessed hope of the hearts of His people. This is brought before us in the most simple language, and in the most natural way. I wish here to say a few words about this latter aspect of the Lord's coming.

It is a mistake to think it unwise to bring this before young converts; it is just what they need; it rejoices their hearts; it confirms their souls; it helps them to understand their position in this world as converted to God; and deepens their interest in the Bible as a revelation from God. All this is quite natural to the new born soul.

The young convert, just brought into a sense of the grace of God, just filled with the love of a

Saviour who died for him, and rose again; I say, is it not natural that he should desire to know how and when he is going to see such a loving Saviour, such a mighty Redeemer, and what is to be his state in glory with Him?

It is said that an old woman was once washing her clothes on the bank of one of the Scotch rivers, and as she was stirring them in the tub, by a sort of three pronged instrument called a dolly, she slipped into the river, tub, dolly, clothes and all. After struggling in the water for some time, she sank and was all but drowned, when a strong arm was stretched forth to save her, and she was drawn safely to the bank, where she lay for a few moments in an unconscious state; then, opening her eyes on a small group of people, she spoke; and what do you think were her first words? Was she thankful for her deliverance? Yes. Was she thankful that she had escaped such a death? Yes. But this was expressed in the following words:—"Show me the man that saved me; I want to see the man that saved me." And when the heroic man was pointed out to her, she fell at his feet saying, "Oh, what can I do for you; what can I give you; I have nothing in the world but this tub and dolly, will you accept them?" Poor woman, she would give the man that saved her *all she had*.

Does not this simple narrative illustrate the feeling of a soul saved by Christ? Should it not be thus with the one saved from eternal death? Does he not wish to see the Man who saved him?

Will he not, under the sense of such a deliverance, and albeit, with the knowledge of what it cost the

Deliverer, be ready to give all he possesses ? It may not be much, perhaps only a short life of devotedness in a world that thinks little of Him, is all he can offer.

But this is a great deal in the Lord's eyes ; He will receive it, yea, He will abundantly reward it. The poor woman was ready to give all that she had ; it was not much, truly. But then, if we are ready to give *all* to Him, no matter how little that all may be, perhaps no more than the widow's mite, yet this is more to Him than *half* from those who have abundance, however much that half may be. The blessed Lord wants all my heart, and if He has this, all else, whatever I may have, will be His, held and used for Him. And if He thus has my heart I shall be found saying, "Oh, how I long to see the Man that saved me !"

The greatest joy of the Christian heart, is that he is going to see Christ—his own beloved Saviour, the Bridegroom of his heart—see the Man of sorrows ; the Man of Sychar's well ; the Man of Golgotha's cross ; the Man through whose name is preached the forgiveness of sins to all mankind ; the Man of glory, now at the right hand of the Majesty on high ; yes, the Christian waits to see Him. For "They shall see His face." Not now "so marred more than any man," but refulgent with the Father's glory. Moses feared and quaked exceedingly at the manifestation of God's glory on Mount Sinai ; Isaiah said "woe is me" when the Lord's glory was manifested before his eyes ; the three disciples on the holy Mount feared as they entered the cloud of glory ; but we, who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, shall see

the full blaze of that glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and shall not be afraid. We shall be in every way united to Himself and to the place where He is, and our presence there will be a standing testimony for ever to the value and efficacy of His precious blood; and not one shall be there who will not own this. "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us by Thine own blood," shall be the highest note in that song of praise which we shall sing there. Hence none shall be there of whom this is not true—who are not redeemed by His precious blood from among the nations of men, during this day of grace and salvation.

I say, then, that the coming of Christ to receive His own is the natural expectation of the young convert, fresh and bright in the love of his newly found Saviour.

Hence we find that the second coming of Christ was part of the gospel preached to sinners. Paul preached it even to the heathen. Of course not to the exclusion of His first coming, but in connection with it. He told the Thessalonian idol worshippers that Christ Jesus who had been crucified at Jerusalem, died to put away their sins, and to fit them for heaven, that if they, therefore, believed on Him, their sins were washed away in His precious blood, and that they were thus made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and he also told them that He, that same Jesus who died for them to fit them for glory, is coming again to receive them to that glory which His first coming had fitted them for.

Is not this order of things admirably adapted to the present condition and position of the Lord's

redeemed people? Hence the Thessalonians, from the moment of their conversion, were waiting, not for death, but for the coming of the Son of God from heaven.

It follows therefore that the more we know about the first coming of Christ, and what He then did, the more shall we desire to know about His second coming and all connected with it. We must have a personal interest in the first coming of Christ before we can have a personal interest in His second coming.

There may be a kind of curiosity concerning coming events without this. But I cannot have a real and personal interest in the second coming of Christ unless I know Him as the One who has been into this world, as the One who died for me, and by doing so, has settled every question that was between my soul and God. I must know this before I can say, "Come, Lord Jesus." Otherwise I should be inviting my Judge, for He is coming in judgment to all those who do not know Him as their Saviour.

Thus we see that the true attitude of believers is expressed in the words, "Turned to God from idols" (or from any kind of sin), "to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Who can estimate the loss of the Church in not keeping this blessed hope before her? How much of the evil which she has fallen into might have been prevented had she done so. It reminds us that this world is not our home, for we are waiting for our Lord to come and take us home. It

reminds us that our only business here is the service of God, for we do not belong to this present evil world, but serve the living and true God, while we wait to be taken out of it by the advent of the One who has redeemed us from it. It stirs us up to real evangelical effort by the knowledge that the coming of the Lord, which, for the redeemed, is to receive them to Himself, is, for the unsaved, banishment from His presence for ever.

Who, in the light of what we have said, does not see the object of the enemy in blinding the eyes of the Lord's people to this blessed hope? Nothing is more clearly made known in the Word of God; yet this is one of the first truths that the church seems to have lost. Let us thank God that He is recovering it to the hearts of His people. May it be so revived in our souls that we may see our true position as a waiting people, and be stirred up to make known His glorious worth to others, the little while that remains to us here.

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## CHAPTER II.

## THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

THE first direct reference in the Bible to the coming of Christ to take a people out of this world to heavenly glory—to the Father's house—is in John; "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The Old Testament Scriptures teem with passages that treat of the coming of Christ to restore Israel, and to establish His kingdom in this world—to prepare a place for His earthly people in their land, but we search in vain in that part of the Scripture for anything about His coming to take a people out of the world to the "Father's house," to a place prepared for them in heaven. This latter is taught only in the New Testament, but is taught there most clearly and simply.

In John xiv. Christ is about to leave this world, having been rejected as the Messiah by His earthly people; "He came unto His own and His own received Him not," it is said, even in the first chapter of this Gospel. In chapter vii., while the Jews kept the feast which anticipated the glory of the kingdom they sought to put the King, who alone could bring in that glory, to death, and went so far as to send officers to take Him; but His own words of grace and power well-nigh melted the hearts of those who were sent to apprehend Him,

so that they could not lay hands upon Him. In chapter xiii. it is seen that they bargain with the traitor to betray Him into their hands, and in chapter xiv. He is, as it were, taking His leave of His own dear ones.

They were still trusting that He was about to redeem Israel, that He was going at that time to establish His kingdom and glory in this world; but no, the King being rejected this is postponed to a future period. Albeit they, the few who had received Him, to whom He was dear, were not going to be the losers by this, for they were to get something better. Their hearts were attached to Christ; the world was nothing to them now without Jesus but an empty, dreary scene. So in the sixth chapter, when many turned back and left Jesus, and He said to them (the twelve) "will ye a'so go away?" they say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" How full of meaning are these words; how touchingly expressive of their attachment to Him. Their hearts were fully absorbed with Him; they saw no happiness in life apart from Jesus, no object worth living for but the furtherance of His cause. And such is Christianity; blessed is the man who knows the reality of such heart attachment to One so worthy and exalted, with the motive power of His love in the soul.

But now, in chapter xiv., the One whose love and attractiveness had got such a hold upon their hearts is about to leave them, and they were filled with trouble on account of it. What was the world to them without Christ? But the Lord is also concerned about them. Nothing could be more blessed than to have indelibly imprinted on

our hearts the fact of the love and solicitude of Christ for His own people who are left in this world during His absence, as shown in these few chapters, *i.e.*, xiv.—xviii.

And what are the means He takes to comfort the hearts of His troubled disciples? First He would give them to understand that, though He was going to leave this world, they were not going to lose Him; they were to know Him in a different way and in a different sphere; but He still desired to be the object of their hearts; though no longer in bodily presence among them He presents Himself as the object of their faith. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." That is, as if the Lord had said, "You do not see God, yet you believe in Him, so now with Myself, though you will not see Me yet believe in Me, let your faith lay hold on Me." And let me here say that faith is not that uncertain, mystical sort of thing that people often take it to be; it is a real, simple principle which evidences the Word of God in the soul, and makes present an absent Christ to the heart, the blessedness and reality of which can be known only by those who exercise it. But not only so, the Lord assures them that He is going to prepare a place for them in heaven—in the Father's house, and that He will come again and receive them to Himself in that place, but while they waited for Him here He would send the other comforter—the Holy Ghost, who should comfort their hearts and teach them the truth. These three great truths (Christ, the object of their faith in heaven, His coming again to receive them to Himself, and the presence of the Holy Ghost with them mean-

while), are brought to bear for the comfort of their troubled hearts, and remain for the comfort of His people still. If one of these truths laid hold of their hearts more than the others it must have been His coming again. Those words, "I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there ye may be also," must indeed have been precious to them at that moment.

Moreover, this was all new to them. They were looking to Him to prepare them a place in their own land, and to command His blessing on Mount Zion, to take His place as the Messiah, and restore Israel; and all this He will do in God's own time. But here He is found telling them that He is going to prepare a place for them *in the Father's house* and coming (not here as King to restore them to their own land, but), to take them to Himself in that place. All this shows that the New Testament saints are here in question, and that this is the same aspect of the coming of Christ as is more fully unfolded in 2 Cor. xv. 51 to end, and 1 Thess. iv. 13 to end; though here, in John, we get only a reference to it as a fact, but there it is unfolded as a doctrine.

It is evident that the Lord here refers to His personal coming, and not to the death of His disciples. To die is to depart and be with Christ, and is far better than being here, but is not the same as His coming for us. Hence in chapter xxi. 18-24 of this same Gospel we have the two things—death and the coming of Christ—put in contrast with each other. The Lord there makes known to Peter that He should die a martyr's death, thereupon Peter turns round and asks what about

John. "If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee; follow thou Me," replied the Lord. Thus we see that unless the Lord *reveals otherwise* to His people they are left as a people waiting for Him:

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## CHAPTER III.

## THE LIVING CHANGED AND DEAD RAISED.

WE have seen that from the first the Lord left His people waiting for Himself. The one special truth chosen by Him to comfort their troubled hearts, when He was leaving them, was that He would come again and receive them to Himself, that they might be with Him. So that their attitude was one of waiting for His return.

The Lord revealed His will concerning Peter, which was that he should die a martyr's death. But His will, not being revealed concerning the others, left them looking for His return. Hence when Peter, having the revelation about himself, asks what about John, he is told that that is a matter of the Lord's will whether he tarries till He comes or not, which will was not revealed. Therefore, most decidedly, the Lord left His disciples waiting for His return. It was their one great comforting hope.

And this same blessed hope, with fuller details from an ascended Christ, was preached to all believers afterwards by the disciples themselves. So that all the early Christians were working on in the service of God in happy expectancy of His return to receive them to Himself. Have they been disappointed? Did they hope in vain? No, certainly not; the same blessed event is before them; they are only waiting in a brighter sphere

for it, while others are being saved for the same blessing. They died truly, but they died with this same blessed hope before them, which had sustained them in life; they have not lost their hope, but have gone to be with Christ, which is far better, till the time of His coming, then they shall be, with all believers who have died, the first on the scene; "the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain," etc.

But let us see what Scripture says as to the way this is to be brought about; for this blessed hope is no mere speculative theory, or a mere inference gathered from other events, but a most positive and clearly revealed event. Nothing could be more clearly revealed. Oh that our souls may lay hold of it in all its living reality, in all its comforting power; that our hearts may be continually in the apprehension of the ravishing prospect; that the glory of that rapturous moment may shine so brightly before our souls that our hearts may glow with happy expectation. Oh let us hasten, my fellow Christians, toward that grand and glorious day when we shall be in glad fruition of all that is celestial and felicitous—of the most exalted creature bliss. What are all present and sublunary attractions compared with the glory of that coming day when our sun shall no more go down? We may ask, has the reality of the glorious wonders of redemption yet dawned upon our souls? How little our poor earthly minds lay hold of the sublime revelations of the heavenly; how feeble seems to be our grasp of the heavenly blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus! We seem to cling with far greater tenacity to the transitory

vanities of this poor, poor world, than we do to substantial and eternal blessings. Dear fellow Christians, it is a reality to have to do with a once crucified but now glorified Christ; all that we are, and have, in Him is an abiding reality before our God, as well as all that we expect to be and have very soon with him.

Turn then to 1 Cor. xv. 51 to the end for a most clear and simple unfolding of this blessed truth—the Lord's coming for His people. "Behold I show you a mystery;" it is revealed as a secret something not told out before. The Old Testament treats of the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom on the earth, and bring His earthly people into the glory of it. But the New Testament gives us another feature of His coming entirely, *i.e.*, His coming to take a people out of this world to *heavenly* glory—to take many people who will be living on the earth to heaven without passing through death at all, hence, "We shall not all sleep," that is, not all die. But we cannot be in heaven with these terrestrial bodies—bodies of flesh and blood; therefore, it is added, "But we shall all be changed." Now let us not go astray here as many have done; we *shall have bodies* in heaven, as the previous part of this chapter shows most clearly; truly they will be spiritual bodies, but they will be bodies like unto the body of Christ, who has gone to heaven with a body of flesh and bones. I emphasize this because *spiritual* body has been explained to mean little or nothing more than a spirit; and at best the thoughts of Christians are very vague on the important subject.

“Spiritual” is characteristic ; just as natural, or carnal is characteristic of our present bodies, so spiritual will be the character or nature of the heavenly and eternal body ; but it will be a body. Jesus has a body in heaven—the body in which He left this earth ; He said, “Handle Me and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have” (Luke xxiv. 39). This was after His resurrection, which term—resurrection—can only be applied to the body, and never to the spirit. And we read in Phil. iii. 21, that Jesus shall change these bodies of humiliation, and fashion them like unto His own glorious body.”

Therefore we read in 1 Cor. xv., “But we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” It is evident that the vague and anti-scriptural theory of evolution, with its long tedious process, avowedly taking ages to effect the least perceptible change, has no place here. The few thousand years of known history are only like one tick of the clock in a century in comparison to the time required by evolutionists to effect any great change ; this runs into millions of years. This is a necessity of the case arising from the fact that history affords no real proof of the theory, therefore it must be sought outside history, outside human observation altogether : then of course it is no proof at all, but simply a speculative theory, and that is just what it is, purely and simply ; then let it be known that those who hold the theory of evolution hold it gratuitously. Moreover, let everyone know that it is an *infidel* theory ; for it is diametrically

opposed to the Scriptures ; yea, it logically disposes of a personal God entirely.

All the *great* changes in the history of the world, physical and moral, are, in the Scriptures, attributed to the miraculous power of God, and have been sudden. The creation, the forming of this world as the abode of mankind ; the flood ; the establishing of the nation of Israel, and the revelation of the truth of God to them ; the introduction of Christianity into this world ; and the introduction of Christians into the glory of God, as seen in the passage we are dwelling upon ; the establishment of the millennium, and the great final change in the heavens and the earth, resulting in the new heaven and the new earth ; I say all these are brought about by the miraculous power of God. The Bible is a record of miracles.

Evolution is therefore, I repeat, diametrically opposed to the Bible ; let men make their choice between the two, but the inconsistency which professes to hold to both is despicable in the very highest degree. An evolutionist cannot consistently claim to be a Christian, much less a Christian minister. But I must proceed.

We see then that this change is to be sudden, that it is to be accomplished by the mighty power of Christ miraculously exerted ; " According to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself " (Phil. iii. 21).

For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (those who are alive and remain at that moment) shall be changed. " For this corruptible must put on incorruption

(or incorruptibility), and this mortal must put on immortality."

What a wonderful change that will be! A change from humiliation to glory; a change from a world of sorrow and suffering to a scene of the most unalloyed joy, and the most exalted bliss; from a state of failure in which we often grieve the Saviour whom we love, to a state that shall be in every way suited to Himself. From a scene of mist and darkness, where His glory and beauty are so obscured to the vision of our souls, to a scene of unsullied light, where His glory shall shine in all its undiminished lustre before our ravishing eyes; where the light of His countenance shall ever be lifted up upon us; where we shall gaze upon His face refulgent with the Father's glory and not be afraid. Oh! what a change! all in a moment.

Yes, it will one day really happen that thousands of people walking about on this earth, struggling with all the difficulties of this life, and suffering from all the sorrows of this world; some mourning, some rejoicing, some in the best of health and strength, some on beds of languishing, expecting to depart and be with Christ every moment; some filled with forebodings of the coming morrow, some looking for a special pleasure; some young and joyous, just commencing life; some old and grave, and only just waiting to pass off the scene; some gathered together around our blessed Lord exalting and praising His name with one heart and with one voice, and some preaching His glorious worth and the value of His finished work; yes, doubtless all this will

be true of thousands of people at one moment, and the next moment they shall be gazing upon Christ in glory, fully conformed to His image, and surrounded by all the felicities of heaven. Oh ! what a change ! Should not such a hope inspire us with holy joy and enthusiasm, and to whole-hearted devotedness in the cause of Christ, and with more real loyalty of heart to our coming Redeemer.

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## CHAPTER IV.

## THE LAST TRUMP.

I WISH now to say a few words about the last trump mentioned in these verses, 1 Cor. xv. 51, etc. We have seen what a mighty change is one day to be effected in the redeemed of the Lord. As sure as Jesus has been into this world and suffered for sin, and has gone back to the Father's house, so surely will He come again to receive His own to Himself and to effect this glorious change in them. "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."

What is meant here by the last trump? It does not mean the last that shall ever sound; for we read of other trumpet sounds after this event has taken place, and in other connections altogether. It means the last of a series; there will be another series immediately following (the seven mentioned in the book of Revelation), the last of which will bring us to another aspect of the second coming of Christ, not His coming for His saints, but His coming with them, or rather they with Him—manifested with Him in glory; "The Lord my God cometh with ten thousand of His saints"; so they have evidently been taken up previously by an earlier trumpet call.

Some have thought that because this is called the *last* trump, it therefore carries us to the time of the sounding of the seventh trumpet of the

Revelation. But those seven are another series connected with judgment; this terminates the career of the Church on earth by translating her to heaven. There is nothing in what happens at the sounding of the last of those seven that answers to this.

It has been the custom in military operations from the earliest stages of known history, to indicate certain manoeuvres by trumpet sounds. May we not then have here an allusion to such custom? I believe we have, and to such custom as well known in the Roman army at the time when this revelation was given.

It is said that in the Roman army of those days there were three sounds of the trumpet, the significance of which was well known to every Roman soldier. Each sound meant a progressive movement. The last blast finished the series of movements, and here I believe is where the allusion comes in. The coming of the Lord for His own will be the last of a series of events concerning His redeemed people.

And now may I be allowed to refer to the preliminary blasts of the trumpet in the Roman army, as, at least, illustrative of earlier events in the history of the Lord's people, preparatory to their being caught up with Him. It will be understood that I am not importing these preliminary trumpet sounds into Scripture teaching, but wish to use them only as illustrations of truths that are most clearly taught in Scripture.

Let us imagine for a moment the Roman soldiers in camp, slumbering and sleeping, or idling away their time; and while in such a state the sound of

the trumpet is heard—the first sound ; the blast resounds throughout the whole camp ; and now see the soldiers, they are all awakened from their slumber and sleep, and every man is brought to his feet before the General, and there they all stand awaiting further orders. Does not this beautifully illustrate the first of the series of events in the Christian's history ; the beginning of a series of events the end of which shall land him safely in glory ? What is this first and great event which *must* precede the second, and the last ? It is the gospel trumpet—that thrilling blast that stirred our very souls and aroused us from our death-like sleep, and brought us to our feet before our God ; that quickened our souls into life, and left us standing consciously before the Lord our Saviour, awaiting further orders. Yes, this is the first trumpet, and, I need not repeat, it comes before the last, and if the result of this life-giving trumpet-like voice of the gospel is not heard and known in the soul, neither will the result of the last (in this series of blessings), calling a people to eternal glory, be known. It will be the terrible blast of judgment alone that shall be heard, and the awful result known to those who hear not the gospel trumpet in its clear, soft, yet life-giving and certain sound. But we will proceed with our illustration.

We now see the Roman soldiers—having heard the first trumpet—every man upon his feet awaiting further orders, to be conveyed in the second trump ; now we hear the blast, and immediately see every man busy packing up his baggage and taking his place in the ranks, and

the whole army thus getting ready to march off. Is not this pregnant with illustrative instruction for the Lord's people? What follows next in the series of events relating to the believer, *i.e.*, what follows the gospel trumpet—what follows conversion? Is it not those trumpet-like exhortations, which bid the believer to pack up his baggage, gird up his loins, and take his place in the ranks of God's people? Is it not the teaching of the Word of God, which instructs the believer as to his place and path in this world? However, this is the next thing in order for a converted soul, having heard the word of the gospel in real saving power, having been made the happy possessor of the salvation of God, he now finds that the One who has saved him is the Captain of his salvation, to whose orders he now has to attend, and to whose discipline he is subject. And does He not instruct us to pack up our baggage, take our place in the ranks of His beloved people, and be ready to march off at any moment. How beautifully, then, the second trumpet sound of the Roman army illustrates this truth.

No less apt is the third and last blast in this series of trumps, as an illustration. We see now the Roman soldiers all in rank, as one army, ready to march off, just awaiting the trumpet sound, listening for it, knowing well what it means the moment it falls upon their ears; hence the moment the last trump rings through the air they march off, in the twinkling of an eye, as it were. Just so it will be with God's redeemed people. They have heard the gospel trump and believed it; it has aroused them from their death-like sleep; they

have heard the second trump calling them into separation from the world as a heavenly company. The next blessed event, and the last in the series, as taught in Scripture, is their rapture to the Father's house, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into the air. This longed-for and glorious event is to be ushered in by the last trump, that is, it completes the whole order of events in regard to the Church, or the saints who compose it, beginning with their conversion out of this world, which lieth in the arms of the wicked one, and ending with their reception into heaven, hence it is called the *last* trump. We use this Roman custom simply as an illustration; it is the truth thus illustrated that we desire our readers to be more especially occupied with.

Really we do not see why there should be any difficulty here, in the *last* trump. The term *last* applies to the subject under consideration and not to another subject altogether, such as is the subject of the seven trumpets of Revelation; these give us another series of events in another connection, and can have no possible application to the Church of the present dispensation, for they indicate a series of judgments upon the sons of men for rejecting Christ and His gospel, while the trump we have been considering is associated only with those who have received Him and His gospel, ushering in not judgment, but blessing, eternal glory. The last of the seven in Revelation is a woe trumpet, and ushers in judgment only.

We read also of the feast of trumps, "a memorial of blowing of trumpets" (Lev. xxiii. 23-26). We believe that this dispensationally applies to the

gathering of Judah and Israel at the coming of Christ for the deliverance of His earthly people, and to bring them into their earthly inheritance, hence it is to be accompanied by the day of atonement, that is, the time when the atonement of Christ shall really be applied to that people. So we read, "Ye shall afflict your souls"; this indicates their repentance. This is followed by the feast of tabernacles, which typifies the millennium. All these three feasts are in the seventh month, one on the seventh, another on the tenth, and the other on the fifteenth day. And all who have knowledge of dispensational truth agree that they will find their antitype in the gathering together, repentance, redemption and blessing of Israel in connection with their earthly possessions, and that the trumpets are especially connected with their ingathering. We believe that Matt. xxiv. 31 applies to the very same events as are typified by the above named feasts, hence we read in verse thirty, "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn," *i.e.*, they shall afflict their souls, then the great sound of a trumpet gathering them together. That such, however, will be the case at the coming of Christ to the earth is everywhere taught in the prophets. That Israel will repent and shall be saved, and be gathered to their own land, is the great theme of the prophets.

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## PART II.

Will all, or only part be caught up?

### CHAPTER V.

#### SCOPE OF THE RAPTURE—WILL ALL BELIEVERS BE TAKEN ?

WE have seen, (1) That the coming of Christ to take His people to the Father's House—to heavenly glory—is the great hope of the Church—that it is always kept before the Lord's people as the very next event of universal interest to the Church; the climax of the *ways* of God with her on the earth, and the realization in glory of His purpose concerning her; (2) That this aspect of the second coming of Christ is peculiar to the New Testament, that it finds no place in the Old Testament revelation; (3) That this coming of Christ is for His own people; and those of them therefore who have fallen asleep will be raised from the dead by the same triumphant shout and trumpet blast which calls up the living; and (4) That this may happen any time; and that there is no warrant whatever in Scripture for setting dates as to such coming. At the same time we have Scripture warrant for concluding that the blessed event draweth very near; for we find ourselves in the midst of a state of things which the Scripture describes as characteristic of the last days. Moreover, the prophetic student can see things progressing even towards events that are introductory to the Millennium itself.

We would now dwell a little upon the nature and scope of this aspect of the coming of our

adorable Lord and Saviour, and the rapture of those who are His. This will give us an opportunity of confirming (if such confirmation be needed) the points which have been before us by reference to other scriptures on the subject. And as there is difference of judgment on this part of the subject, and that on the part of good and earnest men, who are alike diligent students of the Word of God, we shall be all the more anxious to establish our views upon Scripture itself. And the views of those who think differently from ourselves we shall be glad to put side by side with our own, that thus our readers may have an opportunity of hearing what can be said on all sides; providing this be done in the spirit of grace. Not that we wish to perplex our readers, but because we believe that the most effectual means to unity of judgment, on the part of those who equally desire to know the will of God, is the exchanging of notes; and that we believe all such should be heard, and readers may then judge for themselves. This is but following a Scriptural principle. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge" (1 Cor. xiv. 29.) At the same time the great thing to consider is, not the maintenance of our own views, because they are our own; but the edification of our hearers, or readers, by putting the truth in such a clear manner, and with such a gracious spirit, that it will make its way both to their hearts and minds at the same time. For God has revealed things to come, not only that we might know them, *i.e.*, merely know them, but that they should have a moral effect in our souls and react upon our lives.

In view of this we will now go on to consider the following questions: (1) Does Scripture teach a partial rapture of believers at the Lord's coming, or under any circumstances; or does it teach that the rapture will be entire, *i.e.*, including all believers, and that it will happen at the coming of Christ in the aspect which we have been considering? (2) Will the Church be caught up previous to the great tribulation, or be left to go through it? (3) About what time will elapse, as far as we can gather from Scripture, between the catching up of the Church and the coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom, that is, between His coming for His Church and His manifestation in glory?

These are important questions, so important as to render the differences of view on the part of earnest and godly men most regrettable in the eyes of all who love the appearing of Christ. So much, as to the interpretation and application of correlative events, depends upon a right understanding of the nature and scope of the coming of Christ for His people, that we desire to make this as clear as we are able to do. At the same time, it is impossible to understand the true relation of this latter to other events, without some knowledge of the nature of those events themselves, and the importance of dispensational distinctions.

We ask therefore for prayerful and diligent investigation on the part of all who help in the discussion, and that we may fairly weigh each others points, and if we must oppose them, do so in a gracious manner.\* And, above all, let us

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\* Up to this point these chapters were originally written for a Magazine edited by the author, but which has since changed hands and title.

endeavour to study the subject in a dependent and docile spirit before the Lord—as dependent upon the teaching of His Holy Spirit, and as willing to be taught by the same ; in which case we may be sure of profit and blessing.

• We would, moreover, ask a patient and unprejudiced hearing on the part of our readers, and that they also will pursue the subject in prayerful dependence upon the Spirit of God, and with diligent searching of His word.

The first question for consideration now is, will all or a select number only, of believers be caught up at the coming of Christ ? To put it in another way, will any believers of the present dispensation take precedence in their rapture to glory, or the redemption of their bodies, of other believers of the same dispensation ?

This is a most important part of our subject ; if we were simply interpreting Scripture, we see no need to raise such a question, but since we wish to help our readers in regard to current views and difficulties, we find ourselves face to face with it. It has been raised, and raised by godly and devoted men (with whom we are sorry to find ourselves differing), therefore we must give it a patient investigation, and as the majority of our readers have, with ourselves, settled conclusions on the subject, and may think it unnecessary to bring in the question at all, we would assure such, that it is raised not only by one or two who are in the habit of expressing their views without well weighing them over or exercising sufficient care, that they shall be in accordance with the plain teaching of Scripture, but by many good men, and diligent

students, who are men of sober judgment. This should make us see well to our own views, and subject them to the light of Scripture with an unprejudiced mind ; while we should be all the more careful to found them on Scripture teaching.

We will look therefore at the question, firstly, in view of the work of Christ as being *the only* ground of our fitness for heavenly glory ; secondly, in view of the distinct character of the present dispensation ; thirdly, in view of the plain statements of Scripture, and fourthly, in view of current arguments and interpretations, on which they are based.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE QUESTION LOOKED AT IN VIEW  
OF THE WORK OF CHRIST.

IF only part of the Lord's people are to be taken up when He comes it must be on account of some special merit of their own, such as will distinguish them from those of the redeemed who will be left behind ; and it is certain that these latter will not be left in this world after that blessed event, because they are unfit for the holy presence of God, or for the place that Christ has gone to prepare for them. To say that such is the case (*i.e.*, that they are unfit), would be a dishonour to the work of Christ ; because His work it is which prepares them for the place, and, having accomplished that work, He has gone to prepare the place for them ; and His coming again is to take them to the place which His first coming has fitted them for. For, be it remembered, we are speaking of those who are really saved through the precious blood of Christ. The question is, will all or part only of *these* be caught up at the coming of Christ as predicted in 1 Cor. xv. 51, &c., and 1 Thes. iv. 13, &c. ? The view we are questioning says that only part of them will participate in this rapture to glory, *viz.*: the faithful and watchful.

This view simply makes the rapture a reward for faithfulness, to be obtained, therefore, by a certain number of the Lord's people only, *i.e.*, the

faithful; while those of His people who are left behind are left to the trials of the great tribulation as a retribution of their unfaithfulness.

I think this fairly states the view of those who believe in a partial rapture, though details may differ a little with different interpreters. We may now therefore look at what this means.

Satan is ever ready to discredit the work of Christ, to frustrate the grace of God, and to inculcate a self-righteous spirit even among the Lord's own people. And does not something of this kind appear in the view just described? Though we are far from believing that those who advocate the view think so, most of them are quite clear and sound in gospel truth, and earnest in seeking souls. But still we ask, does not the view, *in itself*, make the translation of the saints dependent on their own merit more than on the work of Christ? Truly it does not turn me in upon myself and my works for salvation, but it certainly does turn me in upon myself and my faithfulness for my translation at the Lord's coming, *i.e.*, though my salvation does not depend upon what I do in the way of righteousness, my rapture to glory among those who are first caught up does. I shall have to give myself credit for participation in at least one great event in God's economy of grace, of which my fellow believers were not worthy, though it is true that the Lord will reward faithfulness, and those of His servants who have been more faithful than myself will have a reward that I am not worthy of. But the great sovereign act of Christ's coming for His people is not put as a reward for faithful service, though often urged as an incentive to it.

Yet there is a sense in which *every* blessing may take the place or character of reward. Even eternal life when looked at in contrast to any present suffering and loss we may be subjected to, is viewed as a reward (Mark x. 28-31). Yet this is the common possession of believers. The Lord's people may have to give up many things to become *true* disciples of Christ. But what of that? They have many mercies from God Himself now, and in the future eternal life, in place of what they thus give up; and so the glory which is common to the Lord's people is put as a reward—a compensation—for present suffering. Thus we see that life and glory, things that belong to all true Christians in Christ, are kept before us as the fullest compensation for any suffering and loss that we may be put to now in our faithfulness to Christ, but that is a very different thing from such suffering and sacrifice *meriting* the life and glory. Nevertheless, there will be rewards given to the Lord's people as *merited* by their faithfulness, which will differ in character and value, as many Scriptures show. But we must not confound these with the blessings that are common to all believers and secured to them, in the most absolute way, by the sovereign grace of God, and through the redemption work of Christ.

The question of reward will, however, come before us in its place. We are here looking at our subject from one point of view only. We do not think that the coming of the Lord, or the rapture of the saints, is a reward, in the sense of something given for something done. Though, truly, saints will be rewarded *at His coming*. But the

coming itself, and the translation of the saints, form a part of the *purposes* of God concerning His people, and *not His ways with them*, as does the matter of rewards. It is very important to distinguish between these two things, as they are distinct in the teaching of Scripture.

But suppose for a moment the view we are criticising to be right, would it not leave us in great uncertainty as to whether or not we should be among the happy number who will be counted worthy of this rapture?

There is among God's people a gradation of faithfulness, ascending from the most worldly and unfaithful of His children to the most devoted and loyal. Where, then, is the line to be drawn, *i.e.*, at what particular degree of faithfulness do we insure this hope to our souls? May it not require a little self-righteousness and self complacency to lay claim to the necessary measure of faithfulness? May not our own estimate of our faithfulness be very different from the Lord's? Who would say "I am among the faithful number." This would have at least the appearance of arrogance, yet I must be able to say it before I can *know* that I shall be among the raptured ones, at least, among those who will be the first to be caught up.

It may be said that this must be left with the Lord; He knows who are worthy; and if the view were scriptural, this would be the only conclusion we could come to in Christian humility. But, as we have said, this leaves us uncertain as to whether or not we are faithful and devoted enough; and hence, as to whether we shall be caught up or not; and yet Scripture shows that

God's people should not be in doubt about it. For it is the Lord's absolute promise, "I will come again and receive you to Myself"; "The Lord shall come," etc.

If it be said that intelligence as to the coming of Christ, and the watching and waiting for Him are the necessary conditions; our objection is, that many believe in His coming as a doctrine, and are professedly looking for Him, and yet are living anything but devoted Christian lives, while some others who are not intelligent as to His coming, and hence not professedly looking for Him in this way, are living most practical and devoted Christian lives; though we are thankful to say that such are now becoming interested in the blessed subject. But we cannot think that the holding of the truth of Christ's coming as a doctrine merely is a guarantee of faithfulness, or secures our translation when the wondrous event shall take place. Scripture everywhere shows that the holding of the truth in theory, without its effectual working in the life, is nothing, unless indeed it be sin. At the same time, without being intelligent in the letter of the doctrine, or theologically clear, there may be the practice that becomes it, arising from spiritual instinct, or love to Christ; still we acknowledge that such will be in a right condition to learn the truth as revealed in Scripture, and none of us can, with impunity, ignore, or make light of what is written.

It is only fair to say that some expositors dissociate this secret rapture, as it is sometimes called, from the coming of Christ, and say yes, we agree that all will be caught up at Christ's coming,

but the faithful, we believe, will be translated to heaven before His coming. How this has originated, or by what means it can be supported, we are at a loss to tell, certainly we turn in vain to the Scripture for any such idea; the Word of God speaks of no rapture of believers, except at the coming of Christ. However, the arguments here urged against the rapture of a discriminative selection by the Lord's coming, apply with equal force to this view also.

We believe that Scripture clearly teaches that neither devotedness, nor intelligence, but living association with Christ by His Spirit, and through His own precious blood, secures our translation to heaven at His coming; though surely all associated with Christ thus, should seek to be both intelligent in His Word, and devoted to Himself.

Indeed, it is wrong to dissociate a godly and devoted life from the possession of salvation; the former is the practical evidence of the latter, and without such evidence the possession of salvation may be questioned. At the same time I get the salvation, the possession of which is thus evidenced by sovereign grace, through the work of Christ alone. One thing is certain, viz., the work of Christ makes us fit for the divine presence, fit to stand before God and before the Son of Man; so that all truly saved people are ready in this sense; made ready by the blood of the cross, and made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and as redeemed ones they belong to Him; He has bought and cleansed them; they are as much His now as they ever will be, and this very truth (the absolute character of salvation), is urged as a reason for

devotedness of life, and not as the outcome of such a life, or reward for it.

So, too, with the coming of Christ for His own. Is it not urged as a reason for, and incentive to, practical holiness of life, rather than as the reward of such a life? Is He not coming for His own because they are His own, and because He desires to have them with Him where He is?

Christ is not coming for us *because* we are looking for Him; but we should be looking for Him *because* He is coming for us. So also with regard to our conformity to Christ. We are not going to be like Him when He appears because we purify ourselves now, but we purify ourselves now because we are going to be like Christ then. "We *know* that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." That is a settled and absolute fact for all the Lord's people. And it is having this hope in Him that leads us to purify ourselves "even as He is pure." If I lay hold of the blessed truth that, in that day of glory I am going to be perfectly like Christ, it produces the desire to be morally like Him now. Just so, too, if I lay hold of the truth that Christ is coming for me, it produces the desire in my heart to be *practically* ready, and waiting for Him.

Moreover, if only the faithful and watching among the Lord's people who are alive and remain at His coming are to be caught up, and the rest left behind for tribulation, or discipline, the same discriminative view must apply to those who have fallen asleep in Jesus: only those who were faithful and watching during their sojourn on earth will be raised and caught up, while such

as were unfaithful will be left in their graves a little longer, and we may well ask what for? Not for tribulation and discipline, that is certain, for their spirits are "present with the Lord," which is far better.

And if those who hold the view will not admit such a division among those who have died in Christ, in all consistency they cannot do so among those who are alive and remain at His coming. If He is coming for those who have been faithful and watching for Him in this world, then such alone will be taken, whether they be among the dead or living. But if He is coming for His own, because they are His own, then all that are His will be taken.

Certainly there is no such discrimination or qualification in those passages which describe the resurrection of the Lord's people. It says: "They that *are Christ's* at His coming," "They also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." These words admit of no selection among the Lord's people who sleep in Jesus, such as the view in question requires, neither do the words used concerning those that are alive and remain admit of any such distinction among them. But we will examine these Scriptures a little later on.

We next look at the question from a dispensational point of view.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE QUESTION LOOKED AT FROM A DISPENSATIONAL POINT OF VIEW.

WE have no need here to go minutely into dispensational teaching; it will suffice for our present purpose to look at one or two of the great dispensational characteristics of the Church.

And the first truth in this connection that claims our attention is the unity and association of the Church. She is one. This is the greatest characteristic feature of the present dispensation. All who are converted under it are brought into indissoluble association with Christ, and with each other. (No intelligent Bible student will deny this, any more than he will our previous point, viz., that the work of Christ in all its sublime dignity makes those who believe in Him fit for His own holy presence. We are here viewing our subject in relation to the most obvious and generally admitted truths; but truths which we wish to show are fatal to the idea of a partial rapture of real members of the true Church of God.) So intimate is this unity, that the Church is spoken of as *one body*, of which Christ is the Head, and all true believers the members.

Hence it is to go on growing and increasing, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a *perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. iv. 13).

All believers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, are by one spirit baptised into one body (see 1 Cor. xii.). I need not say that this is peculiar to the present dispensation. And Christ, as the exalted One, is spoken of as the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. i. 22, 23).

Wonderful association! Glorious unity! And very soon to be fully manifested in brightest glory. May the Lord enlarge our scanty thought of the wonders and glories of His grace! Since then the Church is one by such an intimate unity, and as such is the body of Christ, will the Lord make a breach in that unity? Will He (to speak in accordance with this wondrous figure of unity) have a mutilated body? Why, it is that moment—the moment of His coming—that this blessed unity is to be completed! that the whole body will appear as a “*perfect man* unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ!” Does not this Scripture mean that the dispensation-administration (which is distinctly the subject in this passage, see the few previous verses) will go on till the body has grown to its divinely designed proportions, “*till we all*”—*i.e.*, all who are converted under the administration here spoken of—come to “a perfect man?”

If all believers are baptised into one body—the body of Christ—and under this blessed ministry this body is to be edified, to go on growing, member after member being added, till the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ is reached, will not all be needed to make up the “perfect man”? Can it be a perfect man without

all its members? Will our blessed Lord, then, after having waited and allowed the dispensation to go on till all are brought into the unity, to make the perfect man, leave most of the members behind when He comes? The Church is His body; shall not that body appear complete at that blessed moment which in the Scripture is ever kept before the saints, or will some members be wanting? Will not that touching prayer of our Lord in John xvii. be answered in that day, viz., "that they may be made *perfect in one*, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me"? We have, to our shame, grievously failed to exhibit this oneness in testimony in this day, but will not the sovereign grace which has brought us into such a glorious unity according to the eternal purpose of God, manifest it in glory at the coming of Christ, when His purpose will have been fully accomplished?

No true Christian will deny that sovereign grace has brought us into the unity; though every godly and intelligent Christian must own that we have sadly failed to manifest it before the world; but who will say that God will on this account fail to manifest it at the coming of Christ for His own, when the unity is completed? God is forming the unity and He will at that time manifest it in its perfection, however much we may have failed to do so in testimony during the present period. Shall our failure to manifest the unity here be allowed to mar its manifestation in glory? No, certainly not. Its present manifestation in this

world is connected with our responsibility in which we have so miserably failed ; but its future manifestation in glory depends upon the purpose and grace of God, which shall never be frustrated.

The coming of Christ for us is as much an act of sovereign grace as is the new birth. The passages that give us His coming all show us this. In John xiv., the only conditional "if" refers to His going away, "if I go away"—then the sovereign and unconditional "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Further down in the chapter the manifested presence of Christ and of the Father to us now is conditional upon our obedience.

So in 1 Cor. xi. 51, etc., the language is most absolute: "we *shall* not all sleep," "we *shall* all be changed." Also in 1 Thess. iv. 15, etc. "The Lord Himself *shall* descend" etc., no condition whatever (that is taking for granted that we are His); it is an act of sovereign grace, and if the coming of Christ for His people is an act of sovereign grace, it cannot be consequent upon any merit of life or conduct in themselves. Though surely, like every blessing secured in this sovereign and absolute way, it should beget a deeper desire in the souls of God's people to walk worthily of it—to answer in our life and conduct to the grace that bestows it. We believe that a true apprehension of the distinct character of the present dispensation is indispensable to a correct understanding of events in relation to the second coming of Christ. We shall have occasion to turn to the subject again in connection with

other views of the rapture of the saints. Hence having sought to shed the light of this subject on the question before us, and said, as we judge, as much on it as is necessary to our present purpose, we leave it for the moment and proceed with our enquiry from other points of view.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUESTION IN THE LIGHT OF SOME  
PLAIN STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE.

WE have had occasion to refer in an incidental way to some Scriptures on the question before us. But we desire here to arrange in order those passages which relate directly and indirectly to the point, except two or three passages on which the idea of a partial rapture is based, as these will come before us for consideration under our next heading, *viz.*, The question looked at in view of arguments and interpretations current among those who teach a partial rapture. There are in connection with every truth of Christianity passages which teach such truth in the most clear and absolute manner, and there are others which put the same truth in a less absolute way and which appear to us more obscure; indeed, that even seem, to our darkened minds, to clash with the Scriptures which are so simple and clear on the subject.

If those passages which seem to us obscure on any part of Christian doctrine are interpreted independently of those which are most clear on the same truth, error of judgment will sure to be the result. It is always wrong to interpret the meaning of any author on any given subject from figurative, obscure, and ambiguous passages, in such a way as to make it clash with what the same author

has written on the same subject in more simple and unambiguous language. This is also true in regard to Scripture; it may be taken as a rule without exception to be wrong to interpret figurative or obscure passages in such a way as to make them clash with other passages which teach the same truth in clear and simple and unmistakable language. Take for instance the way of salvation. There are passages, thank God, which teach this in the most simple and clear language, and make the way so clear that a way-faring man though a fool need not err therein; that show that salvation is of the Lord; that it is through the finished work of Christ, with faith in Him alone. There are other passages which *seem* to clash with these, which are less absolute in their application, and more obscure in their meaning. But that it is wrong to set these latter against the former is obvious. The safe way is to interpret those passages which seem to us obscure in the light of others which are clear and plain; and, if we find this impossible, then wait for light, for be sure the darkness is in ourselves.

I have said passages which *seem* obscure, because I believe for the most part that when we get before us the point of view from which any such passage treats the subject under consideration, the obscurity vanishes; we see the darkness was in ourselves and not in the Scripture.

And so in regard to the way of salvation. Some passages speak of it in an objective, or absolute, sense, while others treat of it from a subjective, or practical, point of view. The former makes its possession depend entirely upon Christ and His

finished work. The latter look at it in view of the life and conduct of the one who possesses it ; and as the practical life is not the ground, but the proof, or denial of its possession, these are less absolute, and seem to make all depend upon the life of the Christian ; because in these passages the whole question is not the ground of salvation, but the proof of its possession. Hence the conditional "if." The apostle does not say, "By which ye are saved, *because* ye keep in memory," but "if ye keep in memory"; not, *because* ye hold fast, but "if ye hold fast"; not "*because* ye continue," but "if ye continue." This is, if interpreted in the light of all simple gospel texts, that we are not saved by holding fast, etc., but our holding fast is a proof that we are saved.

The fact that apples grow upon a tree is the surest proof that it is an apple tree ; and, if I say, "that is an apple tree if apples grow upon it," I put what I wish to be known (*i.e.* that a certain tree is an apple tree), beyond all question. But this is not saying that the apples made it an apple tree, or keep it such after it is made one ; but that they prove it to be one. Holding fast does not secure our salvation but evidences it.

We make these remarks on general principles, because of their importance in connection with our subject ; for some passages view the Lord's coming in relation to the purposes of God concerning His people, while others view it in relation to His ways with them.

There are at least seven passages which speak of the Lord's coming in relation to believers of this dispensation in the most positive and absolute

way ; viz. (1) John xiv. 3 ; (2) 1 Cor. xv. 51-58 ; (3) 1 Thess. iv. 13-18 ; (4) Phil. iii. 20, 21 ; (5) 1 John iii. 1-3 ; (6) Rev. xxii. 7, 16, 17 ; (7) Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13. We do not *limit* the application of all these passages to the Lord's coming *for* His people, for we believe that some have a more general bearing ; and in 1 John iii. it is more especially His manifestation that is brought before us ; but the truth taught in 1 Cor. xv., 1 Thess. iv. and Phil. iii. shall then be seen as an accomplished fact, *i.e.*, " We shall be like Him."

There are other passages which refer incidentally, or perhaps more or less directly, to the subject, but we here choose the most positive, believing, as we do, the importance of being clear in our apprehension of the truth objectively before we can rightly understand its application subjectively.

While all these passages, in greater or less degree, look at the Lord's coming in relation to His believing people, the first three show more distinctly and clearly their rapture at His coming.

In the first the Lord says " If I go away I will come again to receive you unto Myself." As we have remarked in an early chapter, this presents a new aspect of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Jewish mind.

The Lord does not here say " I will come to redeem Israel," or " I will come and set up My kingdom," though assuredly He will do this. But here it is a different thing altogether, it is His coming to receive His people, who believe in Him, as the rejected One, to Himself in the Father's house. In the second passage, 1 Cor. xv., we

have the same event before us, *i.e.* the Lord's coming to receive His people from earth to heaven ; and here the way in which it is to be brought about is explained in the most simple manner possible.

The points in this chapter that bear especially upon our present question are the following:—  
(1) That the resurrection of the Lord's people is at His coming, for those that are Christ's will then be raised, v. 23 ; (2) That some of His people will not need to be raised from the dead, for they "shall not all sleep," *i.e.*, not all die, but that these latter will be changed ; (3) That by this event the resurrection of the dead, and the change of the living, will be fully manifested—"brought to pass"—the victory of the redeemed over death and the grave ; and (4) That this victory is a given victory, and through our Lord Jesus Christ. These are the four main points in this passage, and they are all most absolute ; the fruit of the sovereign grace of our God, and the redemption work of Christ. There is not a single word in this whole passage, which is a cardinal Scripture on the subject, to imply that the change of the living saints from a mortal to an immortal state (which takes place at the rapture), depends in any way upon, or is in any sense a reward for faithfulness down here, or that any of the Lord's people will be excluded when the glorious event takes place. But there is everything in the passage to exclude such an idea.

Yes, it is clearly His people that the Lord is coming for, and they will be caught up with Him, because they are His (of course, their lives are supposed to evidence this), both those that sleep,

and those that are alive and remain. The event is, for those that are alive and remain, just as absolute and indiscriminate (*i.e.*, as far as the redeemed are concerned) as it is for those that sleep. Hence the same blessed event brings us into the fullest fruition of glory and victory. Can this in any sense be a reward to some of God's people for their faithfulness, and hence true of them, and not of others, or at least that others have to wait a little longer to merit it by a more faithful walk? We should say certainly not, it is a given victory, and "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Blessed, glorious future! Ravishing prospect for all the people of God! All the glory be to our God and the mighty work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But surely while sovereign grace in redemption work has secured such a prospect to us, the apprehension of that grace acts as a mighty motive power in our souls to holiness and faithfulness.

The third passage given above (*i.e.*, 1 Thess. iv.) most fully and unequivocally confirms all that we have gathered from 1 Cor. xv. The same absolute character stamps the passage. The same truths are if possible more simply told. Certainly the catching up of the saints as being simultaneously with the resurrection of the sleeping, and the change of the living saints, is put beyond all question, and the victory implied in the wonderful and soul-stirring words: "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

We think all fair and unprejudiced students must admit that these Scriptures exclude the idea of a partial rapture in any sense whatso-

ever. It is the Lord's people—believers, the redeemed, as such, and without exception—that are the subjects of this rapture—all who are among the redeemed when Christ comes, whether they have died, or are still living.

The four remaining Scriptures, referred to above, all present the coming of our Lord as a recognised and absolute fact, which shall bring about the changing of these bodies of humiliation into the likeness of His glorious body, a most sovereign act which is nowhere made conditional upon our faithfulness, but is connected in Romans viii. 28-31, with the eternal purpose of God, and is always looked at as taking place at the Lord's coming for His own in respect to all who believe in Him till that moment.

In the last of these seven Scriptures we find that the reception of salvation, the practical life of those who receive it, and the coming of Christ—the blessed hope, and appearing of the glory, are all connected in an unbroken chain. So it should be, and will be with every child of God who is subject to the teaching of His grace. But the salvation is mine through faith in Christ alone, and now I should live as a saved one. The apprehension of the very grace that brought the salvation teaches this, and it teaches me also to look for that blessed hope, for a blessed hope there assuredly is before all who are saved.

We shall have occasion to turn to this passage in a subsequent chapter, so we will leave it for the moment.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE QUESTION LOOKED AT  
IN VIEW OF CERTAIN ARGUMENTS AND  
INTERPRETATIONS.

WE have now to enter upon an examination of such passages as are so interpreted as to make them teach a partial rapture. These are mainly the following:—Matt. xxv. 1-13; Luke lxxi. 36; Rev. xiv.; and Heb. ix. 28.

We have in our last chapter laid down a principle of interpretation which we think all must allow as not only being a safe principle, but the only right one, viz., that a truth taught in figurative language or isolated passages, presenting that truth in a different connection from that in which cardinal passages teach it, must not be interpreted so as to clash with such cardinal passages which teach the same truth in the most positive, simple, and unequivocal language; but that these latter must govern the meaning of the former. Such clear and simple passages have been before us, and we think that every unbiassed reader is bound to admit that they exclude all idea of a partial rapture.

And as to the Scriptures referred to above, which are supposed to teach such a rapture, the first is entirely figurative. The second and third treat of a different subject altogether. There is not a reference to the rapture in them, even if they apply to the saints that are caught up at the

coming of Christ for His own at all. As to the fourth we acknowledge that it might be thought at first sight to give support to the rapture of a select company; but such a conclusion is by no means inevitable; and seeing that other passages, which teach the Lord's coming to receive His people, so obviously exclude such an idea, it would be, to say the least, rash to teach it from this one. But we proceed to state and examine the arguments (as far as we have been able to ascertain them) that are based upon these passages.

We begin with Matthew xxv. 1-13. It is said that the foolish virgins of this chapter represent the saved, as well as the wise, but that they are unfaithful.

The wise virgins, our friends of the partial rapture view say, are faithful and watchful Christians, and the foolish are unfaithful and unwatchful Christians, but they are all Christians. And this interpretation is based upon the fact that they are all spoken of as virgins; and certainly if this fails there is nothing else in the parable to suggest such an idea.

It has often been observed that it is wrong to overstrain a parable, or to expect the dictionary meaning of every word in the figure used to indicate the truth illustrated by the parable as clearly as simple narrative language would do. How very misleading it must be, therefore, to take just one word out of a parable and base a theory upon it without regard to the meaning of the whole, especially when that theory is not only against the plain teaching of other passages where the same truth is clearly taught, but even against the

cardinal and essential part of the parable itself, as is the case in the instance before us.

For the most part parables teach general principles in an outline sort of way. Hence, at least some feeble grasp of the whole is necessary to a true interpretation of a parable, and to a right understanding of any part of it; while if we occupy ourselves with the detail without due regard to the general bearing of the whole we are almost sure to err. And such is pre-eminently the case with the parable, or simile, before us at this time; for it gives in the most general manner the great features of a whole dispensation, yet all in view of the important event which terminates such dispensation.

We have, generally speaking, in the parable, an ancient Eastern custom used to illustrate the history of two classes of people in their relation to one spoken of as the Bridegroom, in view of a great crisis at the end.

The Bridegroom is the Lord Jesus. The two classes spoken of generally as virgins, and particularly as wise and foolish, are those who during the Bridegroom's absence occupy by profession a certain place in relation to Himself. The object of the parable is to show that profession in the light of the crisis at the end; that is, the truth and reality, or the falsity, of the profession is proven by the coming again of the Bridegroom.

Though the parable begins with a reference to the end, "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven,*" &c., yet it is obvious that the object of this is to look at the history given in view of the end referred to. For such history there is: "The virgins go forth";

“The Bridegroom tarries” ; “They all slumbered and slept” ; “They are awakened and go forth a second time.” After which there is an indefinite time long enough to prove that some have oil and some have not. The test is the light (true testimony) ; just as in another place it is the fruits by which real possession as well as profession is proven. At length the expected event takes place, which event shows that only five of the virgins are ready for, and received by, the Bridegroom. The others are utterly rejected, and the oil is seen to be the one essential thing for acceptance with the Bridegroom, and those who had no oil are not only rejected by Him, but unknown to Him.

Now, with the main points thus before us, does it not become clear that the parable applies to the present dispensation, and to real and professing Christians ? It cannot be, as some have said it is, entirely Jewish, for a long history with different stages is clearly one great part of the parable. Hence the words : “Go forth” ; “The Bridegroom tarried” ; “They all slumbered and slept” ; “They were awakened and went out.” Then there is still time to prove that the wise have oil, and the foolish have not. Such history is incompatible with the present position of the Jews, who have no special place in the present dispensation *as Jews*, but who are saved in the same way as Gentiles and brought into the same blessing ; where there is neither Jew nor Greek. And as to the crisis of the end, in which they will figure *as Jews*, in a very special way, it will be short and severe.

The ten virgins are clearly a figure of all professing Christians, real and unreal. The real are distinguished by the possession of oil in their vessels with their lamps, and hence designated wise. The unreal, or false professors, are without that oil; and hence are designated "foolish."

They are all alike spoken of as virgins, *i.e.*, they are all Christians by profession; and hence, they all have the lamps, which signify that profession. But the great essential is the oil, without which the lamps are not a bit of use. Oil is a figure of the spirit of God, so used everywhere in Scripture; this was wanting on the part of the foolish virgins; hence they are seen not to be ready when the Bridegroom comes, and rejected by Him when they afterwards come knocking. He says, I know you not. He knows all His sheep; and *all* who are saved *are* His sheep; but "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ (the oil), he is none of His."

The fact that they are all called virgins does not necessarily mean that they represent *only* real Christians, any more than the fact that because people take the place of being Christians and call themselves by that name, in itself, proves that they are really born again, and have the Spirit of God. It is the light shining out in the life; such as can be supported by the Spirit of God alone, that proves the reality of the profession. Hence, "by their fruits ye shall know them." The possession of the oil is essential to life, or, rather, inseparable from life.

There are several Scriptures which make special reference to the class of people represented there

by the foolish virgins; viz., such as accept the religion of Christianity without accepting Christ; who have the lamps, but have not—the possession of life in the Spirit—the oil—which is necessary to sustain the light. See Matt. vii. 21–24; xxiv. 48; xxv. 24–30. Will any one say that the evil servant of chapter xxiv. is a really converted man simply because he is called a servant? Or that the wicked servant of the chapter before us, verses referred to above, is a child of God for the same reason? Any such thought is forbidden by the verses that follow, which show that both are committed to the judgment of the lost, one has his portion with the hypocrites where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth”; the other is cast into outer darkness where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” And yet it would be just as consistent and logical to say that they were truly saved because they are called servants, as to say that the foolish virgins are saved people because they are called virgins. The New Testament everywhere shows that there are those who outwardly connect themselves with Christianity—with the name of Christ—whose lives prove that they were never truly converted into it; were never really born again, and as all men are to be judged on the ground they take, these are judged as unfaithful and wicked servants just as the Jews will be judged as Jews, and the heathen as heathen, those under the law by the law, and those without the law, as without law. This is very solemn, and should lead to self examination on the part of all who profess the name of Christ.

I have heard it argued, that because the word

is "our lamps are *going out*" that therefore they must have been burning. This is logical enough. But does not even the profession of Christianity—because of what it is in itself—give a little light for a time like the flickering wick of a lamp without oil? However, we are distinctly told that, "they took no oil with them;" and this is why their lamps went out, why they were shut out, and why the king would not acknowledge them. Just so if a soul has not divine life, whatever profession there may be, there will be no real and sustained testimony for Christ, and no fitness for His presence at His coming. There may be Christian works without Christian fruit, see Matt. vii. 21–24 and Luke xiii. 26–28. The fruit of the Spirit can only be borne by those in whom the Spirit dwells; "the fruits of righteousness *which are by Jesus Christ*" can only be borne by those who are in living association with Jesus Christ.

Thus we see that whatever there is common by way of profession and name in the wise and foolish virgins, there is nothing by way of real inward possession.

But one would think that the *end* of the foolish virgins makes it clear that they represent false and not real Christians—not even unfaithful redeemed souls; but we believe that when there is divine life there will certainly be some real fruit in the life.

As to the second Scripture referred to on a preceding page, Luke xxi. 36, as one of the passages adduced to prove a partial rapture, we do not see that it has anything at all to do with it. Certainly there is nothing whatever said in this

chapter about the catching up of the Church. It treats of things especially in relation to the Jews and Jerusalem, of the scattering of the Jewish people and the consequent desolation of their city "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," the present dispensation as such being left out of the question, the words just quoted stretching right over the present period and bringing us down to the end, hence the next paragraph, verse 25, begins with the words "And there shall be signs in the sun and the moon," etc., referring to the coming of the Son of Man, which therefore is definitely spoken of in verse 27, His coming here being looked at in relation to Israel and the Kingdom; the words "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled," referring to the Jews, "generation" being understood in the sense of *race*.

The words at the end of verse 24, "Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," imply an indefinite period between the troubles and scattering of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ for the redemption of Israel, and the establishment of His kingdom; and this is given especially in relation to the *Gentiles*, it is until their times be fulfilled, without saying anything about what God is doing during these times, viz., gathering out a people for the heavens. Thus, the troubles of the Jews at the beginning of this period are connected with their troubles at the end of the same; the trials of the great tribulation being looked at as a continuance (after an interval of desolation) of those experienced at the destruction of Jerusalem. Hence the disciples to whom the

Lord here addresses Himself are looked at as a remnant of that people—the Jews, therefore the exhortation given them will apply most strictly to those converted Jews who will occupy that place in the time of trouble that is coming at the end.

As to the disciples themselves, they were afterwards brought, under another, parenthetical, and newly revealed dispensation, into the church, which is something distinct from both Jew and Gentile.

Thus, we see that this whole chapter has to do with the Jews, Jerusalem, and the coming of the Son of Man to establish His kingdom. Why then import the rapture into it?

But, perhaps some of our readers may not be aware how this is done. The argument is that those who watch and pray always, and hence are counted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man, are the faithful among the Lord's people, who only will be caught up at the time of the rapture. But we ask again, why bring the rapture in here, and import it into a part of Scripture where not a word about it is found? It is the coming of the Son of Man to establish His kingdom and redeem Israel that is before us in this chapter; and why, we ask, should not the verse in question apply to the remnant of that people, for whose redemption He appears in this chapter?

The things they were to escape, we judge, are the judgments of God that at that time shall be executed upon the ungodly, as well as the sins mentioned in the two previous verses. However,

what the Lord's people are set to wait for in this chapter is not the coming of the Lord to catch them up to meet Him in the air, as Christians of the present dispensation are; but the coming of the Son of Man to establish His kingdom on this earth, and to redeem Israel. See verses 28 and 31.

Is it not clear then that this Scripture is appealed to in vain to support a partial rapture? We are saying more on these passages than is needed to show that they do not support the idea that we are examining, with the desire to help our understanding of what they do mean.

We turn now to Rev. xiv. It is said that the hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned in this chapter, represent the faithful from among the children of God in the present dispensation.

As it would take too much space here to go into and demonstrate what we believe to be the right interpretation of this chapter, we content ourselves by showing that whatever it teaches, it does not teach a partial rapture; for, even supposing it applies to the saints of the present time, and implies their rapture as it is said, still it gives no warrant whatever for saying that it represents only part of them, viz., such as were faithful and watching. Truly it is said they are without fault before the throne of God, and that they were followers of the Lamb, and that they sing a song which no others can sing. But even if they represent the saints of the present dispensation, this gives no authority for saying they represent part of them only, forasmuch as this is said of the Lord's people generally. In Ephesians i. we read that those who

were chosen in Christ are chosen that they should be holy, and without blame before Him in love. Does not this apply to all His saints? to all who are washed in His blood? To say that it does not is equivalent to saying that those who are thus before Him are so by their own merit, for either we are "holy and without blame in love before God," by the redemption we have in Christ, or by our own merit. If the former, it is true of all redeemed souls. If the latter, it is only true of those who have been faithful. But we know that this is impossible. Nothing that we are in ourselves, or can do by ourselves, could give us such a place before our holy God. Nothing but the precious blood of Christ could make a once sinful people so suited to the divine presence.

All true and intelligent Christians know that it is through redemption, and hence true of all believers. Another passage speaks of our being "complete in Christ," and another of our being "perfected for ever through the sacrifice of Christ"; and as to being followers of the Lamb, the Lord speaks of His sheep as following Him. Those who do not follow Him are not His sheep.

Though we know how we all fail when we come to examine our conduct in the light of His word, still every newly born soul is looked at as a follower of the Lamb.

And never do we read of part of the Church singing a song in which the other part could not join. For the Church is one before God.

Thus we see, then, that supposing the passage applies to the saints of the present dispensation (though we do not think it does), it does not

teach a partial rapture, and this is all we need to show for our present purpose.

Now we come to our last passage (Heb. ix. 28), and the only Scripture that at first sight appears to lend any sanction to the idea we are examining, but certainly not necessarily so; and when we find other passages forbid such a meaning, we should pause before attributing it. Three things are clearly taught in this verse, (1) Christ has appeared once in this world "to bear the sins of many"; (2) He is coming again "for those who look for Him"; (3) His second coming is without (literally, apart from) sin unto salvation. But salvation for whom? Surely for those whose sins He bore at His first coming. And who would say that the words, "Those that look for Him," or, as it is literally, "Those who await Him," necessarily mean those who are *intelligently* and *faithfully* looking for Him? And certainly in some way or other all truly redeemed souls are looking for Christ.

Their hope is to see Christ, and be with Him. They may not be able to tell us how this is to be brought about. Perhaps they know no other way than by their own death. But still they look to see Jesus. If a man does not in some way or other expect to see Jesus, and is not in some little measure at least looking for the time when this hope shall be realized, we may ask is he a truly converted man? Is it possible to know Jesus as our Saviour, and yet not be expecting to see Him? We believe, then, that this Scripture views all the Lord's people as looking for Him, with more or less intelligence and faith-

fulness. But I question if the passage can be limited even to the whole of the Church, much less to a remnant of it. Does it not also apply to Israel? Will He not appear the second time to the remnant of Israel unto salvation? The first time was to have to do with sin by making atonement for it. The second time shall be apart from sin for the deliverance of those who await Him. As a fact this will be true of the Church at the rapture, and of Israel subsequently, when the Lord comes to establish His kingdom.

And the fact that other passages which teach the truth of the Lord's coming in a simple, clear, and cardinal way makes this certain, fully justifies such a conclusion.

May the gracious Lord stir up our hearts to more real fidelity and devotedness to Himself, and earnestness in His service, until the glorious moment arrives when He will call us up to be for ever with Himself!

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## PART III.

### Will or will not the Church pass through great tribulation?

#### CHAPTER X.

### PRINCIPLES AND DISTINCTIONS TO BE OBSERVED.

IN determining the question before us, we must give heed to certain distinctions in the order of the Scriptures, and God's ways with man, and to purposes concerning him, also to the relations that certain leading truths bear to each other. If this is ignored, clearness must not be expected. The only way to get at the true application of any prophetic event, is by seeing its place in relation to other prophetic events.

That there are different dispensations and different families presented to us in Scripture is certain. And dispensations that are so different in character that they cannot go together. So much is this so sometimes, that an event of one dispensation cannot be brought into another.

Events that were quite in place in the dispensation of law, might be thoroughly incompatible with that of grace, and things that would be quite out of place now for a people of heavenly calling, passing through this world as pilgrims and strangers, will be quite proper for a people established in blessing on this earth in the glorious reign of Christ—a period that is to come.

And we think we shall see that the main characteristics of the short period of "Jacob's trouble" are incompatible with the great characteristics of

the present time, yea, that the dispensations themselves are so diverse, that they cannot go together.

It is impossible for a Conservative and Liberal government to be both in power at the same time. The two administrations, or dispensations, cannot go together. Hence, if we were studying the history of England, we should know that laws made by a Liberal government were not enacted during any period in which a Conservative government was in power.

With God's dispensations the object of one is completed before another has fairly set in, though there may be a sort of transitional period, shorter or longer as the case may be. Scripture is not one jumbled mass, something like a jelly fish, though truly it always looks at things in relation to one Person, viz., Christ, and is one glorious whole, yet it is made up of distinct parts, like a well organized body in which is presented the greatest verity in the most perfect unity. There is more distinction, order, and classification in the Holy Scriptures than most of us are yet aware of, though all is made to contribute to one great object, *i.e.*, the exaltation of Christ in whom the glory of God is made good.

There are distinct purposes of God in connection with heaven and earth respectively, different dispensations for the administration and accomplishment of those purposes, and ways of God which are distinct from both His purposes and dispensations. His purposes concerning Israel as a nation, with all nations in relation to this one, and His purposes concerning the Church, should

never be confounded. All these are distinct in themselves, though all filling a place in God's great and glorious plan concerning man, hence, how important rightly to divide the word of truth!

We do not think that what we here state about the order and distinctions presented in the Scriptures will be questioned by any intelligent Bible student. However, our observations among the Lord's people lead us to this conclusion.

But while we admit such distinctions, we must not fail to recognize them in our studies, or attempt to draw our conclusions without regard to them. And especially is this important for the examination of the question before us at this time.

Let this be remembered as we go on, it will greatly help us, and our examination of certain Scriptures will confirm such order and distinctions. In this connection we will remark that before determining whether the Church will, or will not, go through the Great Tribulation, we must learn what that Church is, its character and its hope, and also what are the cause, character and object of the Great Tribulation through which the Church is or is not to pass.

We have heard arguments against the view we take, based upon the need of, and blessing derived from, trial, on the part of the Church, and proceeded with in a way that reflects a want of courage on the part of those who hold the view, and are looking for the Coming of Christ, and not the Great Tribulation first, as if they held this view because they shrink from that time of trial.

At the same time the argument attributes a certain amount of Christian valour to those who

are looking for the Great Tribulation before the coming of Christ for His Church.

Now all this is, I need scarcely say, irrelevant to the question before us. What has the likes and dislikes of the Lord's people to do in the matter? It is a question of the revealed will of God. We think that if it were the will of God, and as such revealed in the Scriptures, that the Church should pass through that time of unparalleled trouble, such as were practically ready and longing for the Lord to come and take them to Himself, would be the best fitted to go through such a time for His glory; but if it is not His revealed will, it is only an affected valour that would desire it. But we are far from attributing this to many who do believe that the Church will pass through that period of persecution, and governmental judgments upon the earth, for they *think it is* the revealed will of God.

Hence, our present task, or rather pleasure (for we have no prejudicial or unkind feelings in the matter), is to give our reasons for believing that it is not.

But all will agree that whether *we* would, or would not, has nothing whatever to do with the case. The whole question is, What is the will of God in the matter, as revealed in His Word? *This* is the subject before us at the present time. May the Lord help us in our inquiry into His word about it!

We will now proceed more particularly with our investigations. And as we desire to be as simple, clear, orderly, and demonstrative as possible, we will divide our examination into parts, and

classify our evidence in as simple and concise a manner as we are able to do ; looking at the question from different points of view, and in different relations to other truths. And as we believe that the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation, we think it will facilitate enquiry if we honestly take this position at the outset, and proceed to give Scripture ground for such belief.

We are all the more anxious to do this clearly because our belief is not shared by some dear servants of Christ.

We will, therefore, mark out seven standpoints from which to view the subject ; and we think that if our reader will take notes of the evidence we gather from each standpoint and then put all together, he will agree that Scripture affords good ground for our belief.

The following are the seven points of view from which we propose to look at the question :—

1st.—The Cause, Nature, and Object of the Great Tribulation.

2nd.—The Parenthetical Character of the Present Dispensation.

3rd.—The Distinct Character of the Church.

4th.—The Hope of the Church.

5th.—The Coming of Christ as King of Kings.

6th.—Direct Scripture Testimony.

7th.—Objections and Arguments against a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

Will our reader then accompany us in a friendly (we do not say uncritical, for we desire him to judge), but unprejudiced spirit ?

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE CAUSE, NATURE, AND OBJECT OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION.

THE designations applied by Scripture to the Great Tribulation are the following: "The time of Jacob's trouble"; "The time of indignation"; "The day of His fierce anger"; "The great and terrible day of the Lord"; "A time of trouble, such as was not since there was a nation"; "The great tribulation"; and "The day of vengeance of our God." None of these terms could possibly be applied to the present dispensation. The characteristics of the present dispensation are given in terms quite the opposite of these, viz., "The acceptable year of the Lord"; "The day of Salvation"; and "The day of the long-suffering of God." This is a day characterized by grace, and not of fury. A day during which pardon and peace are being proclaimed, and not indignation poured out.

Hence, is it not certain that a great change is to take place, by which the "Acceptable year of the Lord," "The day of long suffering" is to give way to the day of vengeance?

Generally speaking, the short period known as the Great Tribulation is the day when God will reckon with the nations of the earth, among which the nation of Israel will occupy a central position and come in for special judgments, just as after-

wards they will be the centre of glory and a blessing on earth. Hence specifically it is called "Jacob's trouble." But "The day of vengeance of our God" is a more general term, and applies to the whole world to "the uttermost parts of the earth," for He shall "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Psa. ii. 9. There is yet another aspect in which that time of judgment may be looked at, viz., in its bearing upon Christendom. For the true church being taken to Christ Himself, the false church, or corrupt Christianity comes into remembrance before God, "to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath."

Though the main characteristics of the Great Tribulation are given in the Prophets and the book of Revelation, and have more particularly to do with Israel and the nations, yet the *apostacy* of the present dispensation (a dispensation not taken into account in the Prophets), as given in the New Testament, merges into it for the reception of her cup of judgment. 2 Thess. ii.

The terribleness of that awful day baffles all description; it is beyond our conception in these comparatively easy going times, during which God allows evil to take its course and is not bringing men and nations to immediate judgment. It is said that the darkest hours of the night are the two or three hours that immediately precede the dawn of day; and so it will be dispensationally; the last hours of the dispensational night, which immediately precede the dawn of that fair millennial morn, will be the darkest hours in this world's history. It may be described as a tremendous struggle between the powers of light and darkness,

but light shall gain the day and fill the whole world with glory. Yes, that awful time ; those dark hours shall be succeeded by the dawn of the brightest day in this world's history. A day without a cloud, in which restored Israel's sun shall no more go down.

Oh, to know the power and reality of these things in our souls in such a way that they may influence our whole lives, and deepen our desire to live to the glory of our God, imparting such real and pure motives as shall stir us up to more godly energy, more whole-hearted devotedness, and holy enthusiasm in the cause of Christ. Surely if these things have the place and power in our souls that the spirit of prophecy intended they should have, we shall be thereby freed from the undue influence of present things, which tend so powerfully to absorb our hearts and engross our whole attention ; we shall be willing to lose the present world for that which is to come, and hence, ever ready to leave it for a brighter scene. Is it not when the power of the world to come is known in our own souls to such a degree as to free us from the influence of the present world, that we can more powerfully and effectively present that world to come, in all its glories, to those who are thoroughly enslaved to the present world, who have no interests outside this sublunary region ; who have no other prospect than "a few days to live and full of trouble" ; who have no better treasure than a little white and yellow earth ; who have no other glory than that which is as the flower of the grass, which to-day appears in all its fascinating charms, and to-morrow fades and dies away ; I

say, is it not when our souls are, by the power of things to come, freed from the power of these present things, that we are able more effectively to show up the vanities of this life and the glories of that which is to come? Nor is it a small matter that our own souls should be free from slavery to the vanities of this alienated world, and brought into a fuller enjoyment of the liberty of our heavenly relationship, and filled with gratitude because of our knowledge of deliverance from the "wrath to come," and with joyful anticipation of the ravishing prospect of seeing our blessed Saviour and being glorified with Him. And is not this the effect of a true apprehension in our souls of things to come?

The cause, then, of the Great Tribulation is, particularly, the sin of Israel; and generally, the sin of all nations. Compare Deut. xxviii., Isa. i. 21-24, Jer. xiii., Ezek. xx. 8, etc., xx. 17, etc. The nature of the Great Tribulation is judgment by governmental means, war, pestilence, famine, persecution, delusion, etc. See Isa. ix. 5, and chapter xiii., Joel iii. 9, to the end, Matt. xxiv. 21, etc., Rev. v. to xix.

The Great Tribulation is always looked at either in relation to Israel, the Gentile nations, or corrupt Christendom, and never is the Church—the true Church—of the present dispensation threatened with, or prepared by warning for the troubles of that day of vengeance. This statement takes for granted the view, held by the most profound prophetic students, that the disciples in the time of Matt. xxiv. held the place of the *remnant* of the *Jewish nation*, and that the great multitude

mentioned in Rev. vii. is made up of Gentiles who will be saved under the Jewish missionaries and by that aspect of the gospel which proclaims (as the portion of those who believe it) the glories of the earthly kingdom then about to be ushered in by the coming of the Messiah, the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." But more of this further on.

Moreover, the Great Tribulation is essentially retributive and purgative in its character. It is the time when God will exercise judgment in righteous retribution upon the nations of which Israel will be the centre, in view of purging out "all that offend and they which do iniquity," and the bringing the remnant of Israel into their promised blessing, and the remnants of all nations into a new and glorious era. I would emphasize the fact that it is always Israel, the nations, and corrupt Christendom that are in question when that day of vengeance is brought before us. And when the saved are referred to the great distinction between Jew and Gentile is again conspicuous, the middle wall of partition (which in the present dispensation is broken down) is again constructed. This is clear in Rev. vii.

While the Church is spoken of as being *called out from* among the nations as not being of the world—her calling is a heavenly calling—she is both distinct from Israel and the nations; "there is neither Jew nor Greek." The relationship of the Church is above and beyond all the relationships and nationalities of this world entirely; also her citizenship is heavenly, and her sphere in that millennial day of glory heavenly *over* the earth.

Who can read the epistles of Paul (to whom the dispensation of the Church was especially given) without seeing this? God's purposes concerning the Church are most distinct from His purposes concerning Israel and the nations, and the Gentiles who will be saved and blest with Israel, who are represented by the great multitude in Rev. vii.

When once all this is admitted, the incongruity of bringing the Church into Jacob's trouble or the time of God's judgment upon the nations becomes obvious.

The object of the Great Tribulation is, generally, to thoroughly purge the whole earth, and particularly, to purge the nation of Israel, and to bring that people through, refined, into their promised blessing, after executing judgment upon their enemies, for He shall "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity." See Isaiah i. 25-31, and iv. 4; Zechariah xiii. 9; Malachi iii. 2-6; Matthew iii. 10-12. All the passages which speak of "the Great Tribulation" show that the earth, nations, and earthly reign of Christ, form the subjects of it. The glory and blessing of the earthly kingdom is promised to those who are saved during and through that time of purging, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Whereas the Church is called out from the nations, it is heavenly in its character, and heavenly glory, the Father's house, and rapture to heaven are kept before her as her prospect. She looks not as does the Jew, for the Messiah to come and restore her to glory and blessing on this earth (for she never possessed an earthly inheritance, it was never promised to her), but she looks for her Lord

to come and call her up to heavenly glory, where her inheritance is reserved for her.

But the Jewish nation, as such, has an earthly inheritance reserved on earth for it, and they—as represented in the believing remnant by and by—will most certainly be brought into it. The main object of the Great Tribulation is to refine them by purging out the rebels and thus prepare them for the promised inheritance. “The consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.”

Though truly the Church is interested in that age of blessing which shall immediately succeed the Great Tribulation, and to which that awful time of trial is introductory; for though her specific inheritance is not on earth, she is most interested in the earthly sphere of the glory of her Lord, yea, is to reign with Him *over* the earth. But this is a different thing from being blest *on* earth under His reign.

Surely the most feeble spiritual understanding perceives the great difference between God’s purposes concerning His Church, and His purposes concerning Israel and the nations. And once such distinction is admitted, we are in a better position to understand the order of events at the end of the age, at which time the full accomplishment of God’s purposes concerning the Church will be realized, and the resumption of His purposes concerning Israel, and the nations of the earth in relation to them, will take place, and in a short time be accomplished. But if such obvious distinction be denied, no clear understanding of the order of events in relation to the Church, Israel,

and the nations, in the coming crisis can be expected.

And this is the question we are here considering. It is admitted by all intelligent Bible students that the events which form the subject of this work are to take place, but the question before us is the order and arrangement of such events in the purpose of God. Does Scripture throw any light upon the subject? Be it remembered that this is our inquiry.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PARENTHETICAL CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT DISPENSATION.

PROPHECY, as a whole, presents one vast plan, giving us, beforehand, an outline of the history of man, with more or less detail here and there, according to the importance of the epoch or event predicted. And, "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation," *i.e.*, no prophecy can be rightly interpreted independently of other parts, or in a way that is against the plan itself. Each event has its place in relation to other events. It is important, therefore, in determining the application and time of any particular event to see that synchronal and co-relative events have their place; otherwise we may be found taking certain events as the fulfilment of some prophecies, because they possess a few features which seem to answer to the prophetic description, and yet they may have nothing whatever to do with the predicted event; though there may be a kind of typical fulfilment of certain prophecies. For instance, some of the Jews thought that Antiochus Epiphanes was the Antichrist, and that the sacrifice by which he polluted the Temple was the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet; but the co-relative and great events that were wanting at that time show that it could not be; hence the Lord spoke of the

Antichrist and the abomination as future in His day. And yet no doubt that cruel and wicked monarch was a type of the yet future Antichrist, and his wicked sacrifice a type of the abomination of desolation.

Where history has really filled in prophetic events there is no possibility of mistake. Hence all interpreters agree that the predictions of Scripture and history fit in most perfectly with each other up to the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem. But here is a break, and for want of a general recognition of such break, interpreters begin to differ at this point, and different systems of interpretation are applied, and the greatest ingenuity is brought to bear to show, on the one hand, a continuation of prophetic fulfilment in the history of the present dispensation, and, on the other hand, to explain all away by a spiritualizing system. But neither of these systems can satisfy a host of prophetic students; they do not accord at all well with the accurate and literal way in which prophecy was fulfilled up to the point of time we have named. Many of those who have compared prophecy and its fulfilment previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, find that no such satisfactory fulfilment has yet been seen of prophecy, as a system, subsequent to that epoch.

Why is this so? Surely it should lead us to enquiry.

There is yet another system of interpretation, which is followed by many—a vast majority—of prophetic students, who say that there is an interruption in the prophetic scheme after the

rejection and cutting off of Messiah, and that the present dispensation occupies a parenthetical position in such scheme; and that there will soon be a change of dispensation, as there manifestly was at the beginning of the Christian era, when the past dispensation was displaced by the present; just so the present will soon give place to another, in which the course of prophetic events will be resumed.

Nevertheless there are prophecies in the New Testament—such as Matt. xiii., 1 Tim. iv., and 2 Tim. iii.—which have to do with the present time; but, at the end of the age, these merge into, and add new features to, the Great Tribulation, which occupies such an important place in the prophetic plan, the outline of which we have in the Old Testament; but which is amplified, filled up, and completed in the New Testament; thus keeping the future continually before the Church, and showing her place with her Lord in that glorious day which prophecy holds out.

The coming of Christ to suffer and to reign may be looked at as a kind of pivot around which all revolve. For, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, we might conclude that Christ would be born into this world, be rejected and suffer, be raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God, His enemies immediately being made His footstool, then His advent in judgment to establish His kingdom, and deliver His chosen people Israel, and reign over them and the whole world. The present dispensation and its peculiar character was hidden from Old Testament view, “it was not made known in the ages past.” But now, in the

light of the New Testament, we see that these two comings, *i.e.*, His coming to suffer, and His subsequent coming to reign, are separated from each other by the present dispensation, for the bringing in of which the kingdom has been postponed; and the special character of which is given in the Epistles, and more particularly in those of Paul; to which Apostle the dispensation was committed in a very special way. See Col. i. 24-29, and Eph. iii.

We must remember too, as harmonizing with this mode of interpretation, that the country of Palestine is the geographical centre of prophecy; the North, South, East, and West, are always given in relation to that country; while the Jewish people form the moral centre, and all other peoples are dealt with in relation to them; whereas the Church forms the centre of God's ways with man during the present period.

All this confirms the parenthetical character of the present dispensation. And much more may be said in support of it.

Though the present interval is not predicted in the Old Testament, yet that part of it which deals with time in relation to the Jews and their city, leaves room for it in the most designed way. Who can read the account of Daniel's 70 weeks without noticing a break between the 69th and 70th week? We are told that *after* 69 weeks Messiah is to be cut off, and then (an event which took place 40 years after that), the city and the sanctuary is to be destroyed; then, after a reference to the end, we have mention of the 70th week.

It may be easy to find certain features of evil

and of good in events of the present era, resembling those which shall characterize events predicted for another period. But this is not enough for the identification of such events as particular and primary prophetic fulfilments; for this co-relative events must have their place.

The present period is most clearly presented as a parenthesis in God's dealings with Israel in Romans xi., where Israel is looked at as the natural Olive Tree to whom pertain the promises, but as being at the present time "*cut off*," and the Gentiles (or nations, the gospel being sent to all; hence the Jews, for the moment are set aside nationally, though a remnant of them are brought under the present dispensation into the Church) are saved by grace for heavenly blessing and by a heavenly calling altogether distinct from the promises of *earthly* blessing. This will be the subject of our next chapter.

The present period is here looked at as a dispensation of Sovereign grace to all nations, hence the gospel proclaiming a full and free salvation to mankind is sent forth through the whole world, apart from Israel altogether. But we are warned in the same part of God's Word that the Gentiles, despising the goodness of God, will be cut off, and the natural branches—Israel—will be grafted in again; then the nation shall be saved.

We partake of the root and fatness of the same tree it is true, for Abraham is the root of all promised blessing not only earthly but heavenly. This gives the sense in which we Gentile believers are Abraham's children.

The covenant made with Abraham in its widest

sense embraces all believers of every dispensation ; but this does not interfere in the slightest degree with the fact—which is so obvious all through the Scripture—that a special line of promise, earthly in its character, is peculiar to his *literal* seed, nor is it at all discordant with the fact, so apparent in the epistles of the New Testament, that the believers of the present dispensation are brought into distinct relationships peculiar to themselves according to the purpose of God.

Whatever else may be taught in this chapter, it must be apparent to the most cursory reader that the cessation of God's special dealings with Israel, as in the line of promised blessing on the earth ; a parenthetical dispensation of grace to the Gentiles as outside the line of *earthly* promise ; and the resumption of His dealings with Israel to fulfil the promises made to them after the Gentiles have despised His goodness, are most clearly presented.

As I have said, this part of Scripture presents the present period in relation to God's ways with men and nations here on the earth, His manifested goodness to them, their despising of that goodness, and His consequent judgment upon them. We must go to other passages for the distinct character of the blessing and relationship into which those are brought who do not despise God's goodness but accept the offer of His grace, such as we shall need to turn to in our next chapter.

If, then, the present dispensation is entirely parenthetical (and who with the slightest spiritual understanding can doubt it ?), must not its object (*i.e.*, the gathering out from among the nations a

people for heavenly glory) be accomplished before it ends ?

And can an entirely different dispensation which contrasts with the present in every respect—a dispensation of indignation and judgment, which has for its object the purging of the earth and the deliverance of an earthly people *on the earth, and for earthly glory and blessing*—I say, can such a dispensation fairly set in till the present one be ended ? Truly there may be a kind of overlapping as we shall see there was at the beginning of the Christian era ; indeed we see at the present time that events, in the direction of a change, are rapidly developing ; already the land of Palestine, and *the Jews in that land*, are attracting the attention of the nations in such a way as has not been known since the destruction of Jerusalem ; from that time the Jews have been dispersed, with no desire to return to their land until now. But at the present moment that desire is almost general among them, and in some parts very intense.

The subject of our next chapter will afford further confirmation of the point before us in this.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE DISTINCT CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH AND THE JEWISH REMNANT.

THE standpoint from which we are now to view our important subject, and seek help in the solution of the question before us, is the marked distinction between the Church of the present dispensation as revealed in the New Testament, and the Jewish remnant predicted for the most part in the Old Testament but recognised in the New. A position which, we believe, will be seen to be most advantageous to, and, as seems to us, confirming beyond question the view we share.

We therefore ask the indulgence of our reader in a patient perusal and a fair weighing of all we have to say from this standpoint.

We wish to remember, as we proceed, that we have taken for granted that both those who agree with us, and those who differ, at least desire to know the truth as taught in Scripture on the subject. Here we are at perfect agreement; we all (*i.e.*, those for whom we especially write) desire the Scriptural answer to the question. I think, too, all will admit that either side may have overlooked some special line of teaching, or misunderstood some passages on the subject. We believe, too, that it will be admitted by all that both sides *think* they have the truth. Since therefore we are exhorted to "hold fast that which we

have," the tenacity which characterizes each side is not to be wondered at, and looking at it in this light is rather to be commended than condemned, *i.e.*, so long as there is loyalty to Christ and His word generally.

What, then, in such circumstances, is the godly course to pursue in order that our testimony on such an important subject may be united? We are far from believing that it would either be godly or manly to allow the fact of a majority on either side to decide the question for us. If this were our judgment there would be no need to write these chapters, the matter would soon be settled.

We believe that the godly course for the servants of God in this, and any other subject of disagreement that is not fundamental in its character, is to cultivate sufficient patience and grace in our dealings with each other as will enable us freely to interchange notes, and fairly examine each others teaching, in a friendly and Christlike spirit. This is not agreeing to differ, but agreeing as far as possible to remove all difference, and to bear with each other in the grace of Christ in such difference as cannot be removed. May the blessed Lord give us such grace!

But let us not forget that it is spiritual things that we are dealing with; it is divine revelation that we have before us, and not a mathematical problem which the unassisted intellect might solve.

Therefore, it is divine light we need rather than intellectual ability; it is spiritual understanding, rather than the wisdom of man, that will help us here; for, "The natural man receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God . . . . because they are spiritually discerned." And admittedly the subject before us in this chapter, viz., Christ and the Church, is a part of divine revelation which even the Lord's people cannot receive while in a carnal state of mind. The second and third chapters of 1 Cor. makes all this certain. We are there told that the wisdom of God—the hidden wisdom of God—is spoken in a mystery; that none of the princes of this world knew it, that the natural man cannot receive it, and that even the Corinthian Christians themselves were not in a state to receive it. It is necessary that a Christian should be full-grown, *i.e.*, established in the truth of the heavenly calling, which the calling of God in the gospel of the present dispensation especially is. Such Christians are, in this chapter, 1 Cor. ii., called perfect, *i.e.*, no longer an infant but fully developed into a full-grown man. Let us therefore seek the aid of the Spirit of God, and pursue the subject in a reverent and dependent spirit.

No apology is needed for the above digression, for we believe that all Christian readers will acknowledge the importance of what we have said, and especially in connection with the subject of our present chapter.

We will now say a few words about the character of the Church; for it seems to us that we must understand the nature of the Church as well as that of the Great Tribulation, that she is, or is not, to go through, before we can come to any just decision on the question.

We must still remember that the present dis-

pensation is parenthetical in its character; this will help us in considering the nature and calling of the Church, and a true understanding of the latter will confirm the former.

The present period is especially the dispensation of the Church, and the Church is especially the Church of the present dispensation, and therefore made up of all that are saved under it.

It is quite true that God *always* had a Church, that is, an assembly of saved people; but *the* Church of the New Testament, which is the body of Christ, is distinct from that, or indeed from anything that existed before. The term Church might be applied to any assembly, but that does not say that God may not have one assembly, the characteristics of which distinguish it from all others. Are not *such* characteristics obvious in the Church of the present dispensation as presented in the New Testament?

The gospel of the present interval calls sinners from among all nations for heavenly glory and unites them to a risen Christ as members of His body. Men saved from all parts of the world, of all classes and of all nationalities, are brought into *one relationship* and form one blessed unity in which there is neither Jew, Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but all one in Christ.

This is entirely peculiar to the present dispensation; it was not known, nor was it at all compatible with the nature of things in the Old Testament times, neither will it be so in the Millennium, and hence, as we believe, not in the Great Tribulation, during which, as we have seen, all Jewish distinctions are again recognised: every-

thing is looked at in relation to the Jews and the nations.

Those who do not see the distinct nature of the Church argue that it is selfish and presumptuous to say that the saints of the present dispensation are brought into an unity in which Old Testament saints do not share. We must say that this line of argument is unfair and illogical; it has no premises

It is not a question of selfishness or unselfishness nor of our thoughts at all, but of revelation. If Scripture teaches it, it is neither selfish nor presumptuous to believe it. The question therefore is, Does or does not Scripture teach it? Such assertions as the above give the question no answer, and is therefore irrelevant.

There are many things in God's plan of salvation for man that are common to the saved of all times. All are saved by the covenant of sovereign grace through the work of Christ, and for eternal life and glory. But that does not interfere with the dispensational distinctions that we believe to be clearly taught in the Scripture, any more than the fact that our being as individuals saved with one common salvation, Saviour and calling, is incompatible with the truth that we shall differ from one another in glory.

There are certain great truths and blessings which unite all saints of every period into one great general unity under one glorious Head, namely, Christ. But this does not deny special dispensational distinctions and the *special* unity of the Church; for Christ is spoken of as the Head of His body the Church, as well as the Head of the

whole regenerate race, the last Adam. And in another sense as Head *over* all things.

Many see this *general* unity which embraces all the redeemed of every period, but they do not see the *specific* unity which only embraces the redeemed of the present dispensation.

But is there not such a special unity and relationship that are peculiar to the saints of the present dispensation? Is it possible to study the New Testament—especially the Epistles—without seeing it?

The Epistle to the Ephesians shows most clearly that we have now an entirely new thing, something that was not known and did not obtain in the Old Testament times; that this special dispensation was committed unto Paul, given to him as a revelation. A mystery, "which in other ages was not made known." "The mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." In Col. i. 26, we have the same truth. Nor can it be truly said that, that which is revealed as a secret, a mystery—that which is new—is only the fact that the Gentiles are brought into blessing with the Jews; for this is not the case, the position and the relationship are new to Jews as well as Gentiles. The Jews are brought into a new position and relationship, so much so that they cease to be Jews, as to their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, and before God.

The present dispensation is altogether above and beyond nationalities. It makes no difference between Jew or Gentile to begin with; all are guilty—the Jews are put on the same ground with the Gentiles—their national promises and blessing

being postponed. One gospel message goes out to all, and all who believe are called by the same heavenly calling, and brought into the same relationship, all "builded together."

Does not this help to explain the meaning of John x., in which chapter the Lord speaks of *leading out His sheep*, verses 3 and 4. He came into the Jewish fold as the Shepherd; He was rejected by the nation, but His sheep hear His voice and He *leadeth them out*—out from the Jewish fold—out from Judaism entirely. (See the whole Epistle to the Hebrews.) Then lower down in the chapter, verse 16, He says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one *flock* (not fold; this it not the same word as the other), and one Shepherd."

We humbly ask then, in all good feeling toward those who think differently, Is it possible to study the Acts and Epistles closely without seeing that the purpose of God, which is finding its accomplishment in the present dispensation, and for the accomplishment of which the present dispensation is introduced and to make way for which His purposes concerning Israel and the Kingdom are postponed,—I say is it possible to read the Epistles and compare them with the Old Testament without seeing that the purpose of God now made known, the mystery,—the Church,—is entirely distinct from His purposes concerning Israel and the nations?

And not only so, but that all who are saved under the dispensation are brought into a relationship unheard of before; different from any

relationship known to and of the saints in the Old Testament, and also different from that which will be true of the Millennial saints.

That the present dispensation and the blessing and relationship of those who are saved under it, in some sort differs from all others, every intelligent Bible student must admit.

Then does it not behove us to learn what that difference is? And in doing so we must observe certain things, and be guided by certain principles, such as "rightly dividing the word of Truth." Things that are general and things that are particular; the leading characteristic features of different dispensations, and the difference that obviously exists in the nature of respective purposes of God. Is this not so? If, then, the present dispensation is parenthetical in its character, and all saints saved under it brought into a relationship, an unity, peculiar to it—so peculiar that God's purposes concerning the earth, earthly glory, and Israel, are all brought to a standstill until it is effected—there must be a time when it began and when it will end.

We must therefore devote a little consideration to this, as well as the manner in which it began, and the manner in which it will be brought to a close. In this connection we shall have to make a little enquiry about the Jewish remnant. And may the Lord open our understanding that we may understand these things!

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE JEWISH REMNANT.

WE enter now upon a part of the teaching of Scripture which, taken in connection with what we have said concerning the Church, affords most convincing, if not conclusive evidence to the candid and enlightened mind of a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church; *i.e.*, the true character and prospect of the Jewish remnant.

Every Bible student must see that there will be a believing remnant of the Jews in the Great Tribulation, who will be brought through it into the Millennial glory.

Scripture clearly teaches that there will be a believing remnant of the Jewish nation in that awful time of trial who will *represent that nation* before God, and have as their hope, not the coming of Christ to catch them up to heaven, but His coming as their Messiah to judge their enemies, to deliver them, and to bring them into the glory of the *earthly kingdom*—to establish them in their own land.

No matter how many Jews are converted under the present dispensation, they do not represent the Jewish nation, but are all brought into the Church, as we have seen, and no longer occupy the place and blessing of Israel as a nation. "There is neither Jew nor Greek." Whereas the remnant in the Great Tribulation *do*

represent the nation, and look for the nation's deliverance and blessings as promised in the Prophets. Hence the characteristic features of that time and people will be altogether different; and in some respects in contrast to the present period and the Church. It is wrong for the saints of the present dispensation to pray for vengeance and call down fire from heaven upon their enemies, while this very thing will be *characteristic of the believers* in that day of gross darkness. Yes, while we are exhorted to pray for our enemies, and bless them that persecute us, it will be quite proper for them to pray against their enemies, and call for judgment upon their persecutors.

And while the hope of the Church is the coming of Christ to take her from this earth to heavenly glory, the hope of the Jewish remnant will be the coming of Christ to bless them on this earth:

We have seen in the first part of this work that *all* who are alive and remain when Christ comes for His people, will go, and yet we find, when He comes to the earth, there will be a vast number of believers whom He does *not take away* but blesses on the earth. So that the case stands thus—either the Lord must have previously taken up His people to Himself and saved others during the time of trial *subsequent* to this event; or when He comes to reign only part must go, and the rest be brought into the earthly kingdom. For if, as some say, “be caught up to meet Him,” means on His way to take His kingdom, *i.e.*, synchronal with His coming to the Mount of Olives, and *all* that are alive and remain are to be caught up, *i.e.*, *all* the saved, then there will be

none left to be brought out of the Great Tribulation, to be delivered from their enemies into the glory of the Messiah's Kingdom *on earth*. We think it would be superfluous to stop to prove, that however many are to be converted when they see the Lord, a vast number will be waiting for an earthly deliverance when He comes to reign, and will be established in blessing *on the earth*. Is it not therefore obvious that all believers of the present dispensation must have been taken up at a previous time, since which rapture God has been working wonderfully among His earthly people, in view of the accomplishment of His purposes concerning them on the earth ?

If, then, there is to be a Jewish remnant in the Great Tribulation, with all the characteristics peculiar to that nation as a chosen earthly people with the glory of an earthly deliverance and kingdom as their hope, is it not clear that the object of the present dispensation, which is distinct from and outside the peculiar privileges of Israel, and incompatible with the dispensation which is to usher in the promised blessing of that nation, so much so, that a cessation in God's dealings with them, and a postponement of His purposes concerning them, as a nation, were necessary for its accomplishment—I say does not this prove, in a way that can scarcely be called inference, that such object has been completely accomplished ?

Surely, if in the Great Tribulation there is a resumption of purposes which were revealed of old, but postponed for the accomplishment of a

grand purpose which hitherto had been "kept secret," then the purpose for which the postponement took place must be accomplished.

We believe that this line of truth is immensely important to the understanding of the whole prophetic plan, and we fail to see how there can be any such thing as the "rightly dividing of the word of truth," or the understanding of the perfect order and consonance which we are sure obtains in the Word of God, without some apprehension of it. And yet we have heard some beloved servants of Christ speak slightly of it as a theory.

It would be impossible for us with the space at our disposal in this brief summary of evidence, to examine *all* the passages which show most clearly that there is to be thus a Jewish remnant in the Great Tribulation. The greater part of the Psalms and the Prophets are taken up with predictions of the Millennial glory and the time of "indignation"—"Jacob's trouble,"—as being introductory to it. These two things are always kept before Israel.

But let the reader at least study the following Scriptures in connection with those that have been before us in a previous chapter (*i.e.*, The cause and nature of the present dispensation), and if acquainted with the distinct character of the Church he will be able to judge for himself whether they can apply to saints of the present dispensation or not. Isaiah x. 20-23, xxviii. 5-6, xxx. 20-30, xxxvii. 31-32, xliii. 1-2, xlvi. 10. Psalms xlv. xlvi. xlvii. lix. lx. lxviii. lxxiv. lxxix. lxxx. lxxxiii. xciv. cii. 17, etc., cvi. 6, 47,

48, cviii. 11, etc., cxxiv. cxxix. cxi. cxliii. cxliv. Generally speaking there are three things presented to us in these passages, viz. :—

1.—A believing remnant of the Jewish nation *as such* will pass through the Great Tribulation and be refined by it.

2.—They will pray continually for judgment upon their enemies.

3.—They will be brought out of the Great Tribulation into the earthly kingdom and blessing. All these three things are characteristic of the predicted dispensation of God's dealings with His earthly people for the fulfilment of His promises to them as a chosen nation, and are not only distinct from, but incompatible with the present dispensation and the Church of God as revealed in the Epistles. We do not mean to say by this that no parts of these Scriptures are to be used by the Lord's people now, but that the principal characteristic and primary application refer us to another time and people.

We have one verse in one of the above Psalms applied by the inspired apostle himself to saints of the present time (Psalm xliv. 22). This verse may be true of us as well as them. But this does not affect what we have said about the special subject, character and primary application of the whole psalm. Hence, we think all will admit that the verses which immediately follow the one given above, could not apply at the present time. The prophetic character of many of the Psalms is admitted by all intelligent Bible students.

We will now enquire as briefly as possible when and how the change involving the suspen-

sion of God's purposes and promises concerning Israel took place.

It is generally admitted that the four Gospels present our Lord Jesus Christ in four different aspects: that they are not mere repetitions; but while John presents our blessed Lord as Son of God, Luke presents Him as Son of Man, Mark as the faithful Servant, and Matthew as the Messiah. Hence, even when the same incidents are related in two, or even three Gospels, they are surrounded respectively by such other incidents, and sometimes vary in presentation—omitting or adding certain details—so as to make them coincide with the characteristic feature of the Gospel in which they appear. This gives us a remarkable example of the order and classification there is to be found in the Book of God.

It is not that one aspect is adhered to *exclusively*, or without regard to all else that is true of Christ, in any given Gospel, but that one aspect is kept more prominently before us as its characteristic feature.

No one denies that the Lord Jesus is presented in Matthew to the Jewish nation as their Messiah. The first two chapters make this unquestionable. The very first verse introduces Him as the Son of David; and His genealogy is traced down from Abraham through the royal line; and in the first two chapters we have no less than five quotations from the Old Testament, concerning the promised One, applied to Christ.

That Christ was presented as the Messiah to the Jewish nation and rejected by that nation is obvious and generally admitted. It is also clear

that consequent upon their rejection of Him the present dispensation was ushered in, Romans xi. 12. Thus much—concerning Christ and the nation of Israel—we believe all for whom we write are agreed upon.

Now then, if Christ is thus presented to the Jews as their Messiah and rejected by them as a nation, and yet received by a few individuals, what would be the position of those individuals? What would be their relationship to Christ? Would it not be that of a believing remnant of the nation? We believe that it is clear that the position occupied by all the disciples, all that truly believed in Him, was that of the Jewish remnant, till after His death and resurrection, when a new dispensation dawned, under which they were brought into a different relationship. How could it be otherwise when Christ was presented to the nation as their Messiah and was rejected by all except a few individuals? Such individuals *must* have occupied at that time the position of a remnant of that people to whom Christ appeared, for the position and relationship of the Church was not then revealed. And yet after the ascension of Christ we see them in a different relationship and association altogether, with a heavenly instead of an earthly prospect. Nor can we read the Acts of the Apostles—where the transition is so manifest—without seeing that the relationship and position into which they were thus brought was quite new to them and unexpected by them, yea, they needed fresh revelations from the ascended Christ to convince them of such a change.

Glimpses of this new and hitherto unrevealed era, are given by Christ in the Gospels; and it is brought into full relief in the Acts; but the great characteristics and object of it are revealed by Paul in his epistles.

Surely we must see a great difference between the object and character of the gospel as preached in Matt. x. and that preached from the time of the Acts, or in the Gospel of John (which Gospel takes for granted the utter rejection of Christ from its commencement). In Matt. x. there is nothing about the gift of the Son, death and resurrection, or heavenly glory. But as Christ is ushered in by the first chapter as Son of David and King of Israel, so in chapter x. the Lord sends forth His disciples to proclaim the Kingdom *to the "house of Israel" only*. "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand" is the burden of their message.

How can we close our eyes to the distinctive and earthly character of this gospel, or confound it with the gospel as preached now? And yet some dear people do.

But the King was rejected, and also the proclamation of His messengers. Hence the Kingdom is postponed, and a gospel, the object of which is to gather a people from among all nations for heavenly glory, is proclaimed. The one message has the earthly kingdom and its blessing as its object, the other, the calling out a people for heavenly association and glory.

Albeit the kingdom will be established at a future time, and we believe that the same message—perhaps with a little variation—will

be preached introductory to it, only that its sphere will be extended to all nations, as intimated in Matthew xxiv. 14, in which chapter the disciples were addressed as a remnant of the nation, which position they at that time clearly held, and a similar remnant will go forth with the same proclamation in the time of the Great Tribulation.

Hence, it seems to us clear that both Matthew xxiv. and Luke xxi. look at the Great Tribulation as a continuation of the troubles of the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, not taking the present dispensation into account. It is the same line and character of things grouped together irrespective of time. Is not this also clearly the case in Daniel ix. 26? Where, immediately after mention is made of the destruction of the city and sanctuary, we are told, "and the *end* thereof shall be with a flood," which words we believe carry us on to the Great Tribulation.

The same thing appears in chap. xi. where the troubles of the Jews in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes are linked with their future troubles under Antichrist.

We have said very little about a large subject in this chapter. Time and space will here admit no more.

But we believe that we have said enough to convince the candid reader that there will be a remnant of believing Jews, representing the nation before God, in the Great Tribulation. And does not this prove that the object of the present dispensation is accomplished? For under the latter the believing Jews, whether they be few or

many, are brought into the body of Christ, where no nation is represented, but people saved from among all nations are one in Christ Jesus.

The fact of there being a great multitude of Gentiles saved as well during the Great Tribulation only goes to strengthen this point, for the chapter (Rev. vii.) which gives us this great multitude gives them *as distinct from the saved of Israel*. First, the twelve tribes are numbered, and "after this" the great multitude of Gentiles are seen; they are clearly distinguished from the twelve tribes, or rather, the saved among those tribes. The partition wall between Jew and Gentile is again seen, even though both are saved.

This is not so now.

Are not these distinctions clearly taught in Scripture?

Is it possible, then, in the light of all this, to avoid the conclusion, that the rapture of the Church will take place before the time of the Great Tribulation?

May the Lord give us spiritual understanding!

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE DESTINY OF THE CHURCH.

AS we have had occasion to refer to this part of our subject several times in previous chapters, we will do no more here than seek to use it to shed a little light upon the question at issue.

Nowhere in the New Testament—after the true character of the Church is revealed—do we find that the Great Tribulation, or deliverance from it on earth and into earthly blessing, is put before the Church as her hope. And nowhere in the whole of the Bible do we find a translation to heavenly glory and a reigning with Christ over the earth put before Israel—or even the saved remnant (who, as we have seen, will represent that nation before God in the coming time of trial) as their prospect. A mighty deliverance on earth, out of the most terrible trial and most severe persecution, into the greatest possible blessing and glory of an earthly inheritance, is ever kept before the latter as their prospect—a deliverance which shall be shared by the whole creation in subordination to them. Whereas her rapture to glory, and a heavenly inheritance, is given as the special prospect of the Church, and she should be in momentary expectation of this; “not of the world,” serving the living and true God, while “waiting for His Son from heaven” to take her to heaven.

This also requires what we have seen to be true, viz., the suspension of God's purposes and promises concerning Israel; for if God's people of the present dispensation are in a different relationship to Israel (or even the believing remnant of that people to whom all the promises of God to the nation are to be made good), and have a prospect distinct from them, it is clear from this point of view—as well as from many others—that a postponement of God's purposes in connexion with the earth and His earthly people must have taken place.

In accordance with this, too, the rapture of the saints of the present period is given as a new revelation. The two mysteries, or secrets (*i.e.*, the dispensational character of the Church, and her rapture to glory), are revealed at the same time and by the same writer. The one gives the purpose of God concerning the Church, as well as the dispensation by which it is accomplished; the other, the means by which she is to be translated to the sphere of her destined blessing when such purpose is fully accomplished.

If, then, the accomplishment of God's purpose concerning the Church necessitated an interruption in the fulfilment of promises concerning Israel—a postponement of their blessing, as also of the Great Tribulation introductory to it, and a break in the fulfilment of prophetic events; I say, if such is the case (and we do not think it can be fairly denied), is it not obvious that such purpose concerning the Church must be completed before a resumption of God's purposes concerning Israel, before the threads of promise are again gathered up, and prophetic events concerning an

earthly people allowed to resume their interrupted course? And the completion of this purpose is the rapture of the Church to heaven.

This does not diminish our interest in Israel and their blessing any more than it does our interest in the glory of Christ on the earth in that blessed day.

Indeed, as being so intimately associated with Christ as the Church is, the whole sphere of His glory is revealed to her and kept before her, though His coming for her is her immediate hope. But we look for more than that. In a general way we may think of the Lord's coming as including both aspects, and look for it thus. Hence we do not think the fact that the Church, or saints of the present dispensation, love the Epiphany—the word used for the *manifestation* of Christ to this world—is a proof that His revelation—His appearing in glory—is her immediate hope, or that she is not to be taken up before such revelation. In Titus we learn that it is “the blessed hope” (Christ's coming for us), “and the appearing of the glory,” or glorious appearing—*i.e.*, His manifestation in majesty and glory, when He comes with “ten thousands of His saints with Him” who must have been previously translated.

The Church is interested in *all* that concerns Christ; but there is that which is proper and peculiar to her, and that which is proper and peculiar to saved Israel.

Oh! that the Lord's people were more interested in all that our God has seen fit to reveal to us concerning Christ, whether it be in the Church, in Israel, or in the nations of the earth.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE COMING OF CHRIST AS KING OF KINGS.

WE fully admit that the Church is—or ought to be, and certainly will be—interested in all that will happen on the earth during that eventful time that may be looked upon as the short transitional period, from the present to the future dispensation.

At the same time, we believe that there is clearly discernable in the Scripture, to the intelligent and spiritually minded student, an order of those great events which will bring about the looked-for change of dispensation in which the Rapture of the Church stands first on the list.

That there is a great difference amounting to contrast in the two aspects of the Lord's coming as presented in the New Testament, no one can deny. And if such difference of aspect does not *necessitate* two different events we may safely say that they indicate them; however, it is certain that they are in perfect harmony with such a conclusion. There is not one circumstance in either one aspect of our Lord's coming that would confound it with the other; every feature is dissimilar. And yet they are sometimes put before the Church as two aspects of one great event, as in the passage quoted in the previous chapter from Titus, "That blessed hope and appearing of the

glory." We believe that this embraces the two things, without taking account of the short period of Jacob's trouble between, or perhaps rather taking for granted or including the correlative events of that period. The linking of two or more events together in one sentence, which may be, as far as time is concerned, separated by years, or even hundreds of years, is common in prophetic portions of Scripture.

One well known example will suffice as proof of this, which is to be found in Isaiah lxi. 2: "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." In Luke iv., where the Lord is seen reading this commission as applying to Himself He left off in the middle of the sentence, thus: "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and He closed the book and gave it again to the minister." "The acceptable year of the Lord" has lasted for more than 1800 years, and the day of vengeance of our God has not yet set in.

We believe also that some passages which refer in a general way to the Lord's coming include both aspects, *i.e.*, His coming for, and His coming with His people; at least, so we understand such a passage as 1 John iii. 3: "When He shall appear (be manifested), we shall be like Him." This refers to His manifestation in glory, but includes, or takes for granted, the accomplishment of the Rapture.

There is a great deal of what logicians call generalizing (*i.e.*, grouping things, or events, together under general terms), and particularizing (*i.e.*, speaking of the particularities of each several event), in Scripture, which we do well to observe.

We will now give an example of the striking contrast between these two aspects of the coming of Christ.

In 1 Thess. iv. 15-18, we have the coming of the Lord for His people given in the most simple language—"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (not go before), them which are asleep. For the *Lord Himself* shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, *to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The following passage gives the other aspect of His coming:—

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled *rest with us* when the Lord Jesus shall be *revealed* with His mighty angels, *in flaming fire taking vengeance* on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of the 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 all His saints and admired in all them that believe." 2 Thess. i. 6-10.

Surely no one can fail to see that we have two distinct events here. In the former case, it says: the Lord shall descend with a shout to call His own people to Himself, to be for ever with Him in heavenly glory; nothing but blessing accompanies

His descent *into the air* as described here and in 1 Cor. xv. 51, etc., whereas in the latter case we are told that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire to take vengeance, and to banish those who obey not the gospel *from His presence*. And at the time this occurs the believers will be at rest, and the Lord will be glorified in them: and this because the gospel testimony was believed.

The coming of Christ in judgment upon His enemies and for the deliverance of His earthly people is everywhere seen in Scripture, but His coming to take a people to heavenly glory is given as a fresh revelation in the New Testament, and as a distinct event, though in close connection with His coming and kingdom, as one of the many great events to take place at the end of the age.

From this point of view also it seems clear to us that the coming of Christ for His people is distinct from, and preliminary to, His manifestation to set up His kingdom.

In all good feeling, we must humbly submit a few remarks here upon what is said in the lecture forming the first chapter in this book. The saints who were troubled were truly on earth, they were the Thessalonians themselves, applying as the text would to all who suffer persecution from the enemies of Christ during the present dispensation. The day of vengeance is coming when the persecutors shall be recompensed, and the saints now persecuted will be at rest, *i.e.*, rest will be recompensed to the latter *when tribulation* will be recompensed to the former. It does not say that they will *enter* the rest at that very moment, but they

will then be at rest ; their recompense will be rest, when that of their persecutors will be tribulation ; at least this is the way we read it. And this is in harmony with what we have sought to show is one great characteristic of the Great Tribulation, *i.e.*, the retributive judgment of God.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### DIRECT SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE.

WE believe that the dispensational distinctions and teachings that have been under consideration in the foregoing chapters show clearly that the Lord's coming for His Church will be before the Great Tribulation, and show it in more than inferential evidence.

Is it not the natural and obvious sequence of such teaching? True it is that some think that such distinctions are not taught in Scripture, indeed all that we have had any conversation with on the subject, who believe that the Church will pass through the Great Tribulation, do not see the dispensational distinction of the Church; and this is why we have sought—as far as our space here would allow—to prove such distinction from the Scripture. For ourselves we confess that we cannot help seeing it, and the more we study the Scripture the more clear it becomes to us. If our friends (and we consider all the Lord's people our friends, and will by grace entertain nothing but friendly feelings towards them), will read the Scripture without due regard to the different dispensations and distinctions, we cannot help it; we are sure they are there, and should be regarded. As for those who slightly call the view we advocate a theory, we would graciously bear with them. We have firm convictions, based, as we

believe, upon the true teaching of the Word of God, and no one will blame us for acting and teaching according to them.

But we must say, that a theory which sets the Lord's people looking and longing for Himself is, to our mind, according to Scripture teaching; however, it is not so much to be dreaded, for even if those who think the Great Tribulation will come first should be right, would not such as are looking and longing to see their Lord be best prepared for it? However, we all look for His coming to receive us, whatever may be our difference as to correlative events.

At the same time we believe that there is most direct Scripture evidence of the view we take, simple texts that cannot be understood in any other way than as applied to a pre-tribulation rapture.

The first passage we will turn to now is one that is used by those who think the Church will pass through the Great Tribulation to support their view, but we must leave the reader to judge for himself whether it does do so or not.

The Scripture we refer to is 2 Thess. ii. On entering upon this passage, if we would rightly understand it, we must see the difference between the "Day of Christ" and the "Coming of the Lord;" that such difference exists is to us obvious, and we wonder how any intelligent student can fail to see it.

The Coming of the Lord and the 'Day of the Lord, though closely connected, are nevertheless distinct, and never confounded in the Scripture. The one is an event, the other is a period in which

the event takes place, or, at least, which is introduced by the event. More especially is this so in regard to the coming of Christ for His Church as presented in the New Testament, and therein revealed as a secret—a new revelation, while the Old Testament abounds with instruction about the day of the Lord before His coming to take His Church was revealed. But even His coming in judgment upon the ungodly and to establish His Kingdom on earth, though happening in, or may be ushering in, the day of the Lord, is looked at as a distinct event, while the “day” comprehends much more.

But we believe also that there are shades of difference in the period itself according to the designation applied to it. “The day of the Lord,” “The day of Christ,” and “The day of God,” all we believe give us different aspects of the same period. These differences, however, we cannot go into here; it is enough for our present purpose to show that the coming of the Lord for His people, and the day of Christ, is not one and the same thing.

In regard to the day of the Lord, in the Old Testament we read continually of events that will take place *in* that day. In Isa. xi. we read “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse,” and “in that day” the remnant of His people shall be gathered back to their own land.

“The day of the Lord” is a time more especially applying to the Millennium, but it also includes the great and terrible events which will take place introductory to that blessed era—the Great Tribulation. We have the fullest proof of this in

Zech. xiv., where, in the first verse we read, "Behold the day of the Lord cometh," then to the end of verse 3 we get a description of the awful troubles that wind up the Great Tribulation, and in verse 4 we read, "And His feet shall stand *in that day* upon the Mount of Olives," etc., and then in verses 6 and 8, etc., we find that *in that same day* the millennial blessing shall be fully established. Here then we find that "the day of the Lord" is a period that embraces the Great Tribulation, His coming, and His Kingdom.

"The day of Christ" is a term, we believe, which gives more especially the blessings of the period before us—the millennial aspect.

Seeing this we are now in a better position to understand what is said in 2 Thess.

About the day and the coming in chapter i., we have (as we saw in our previous chapter) the Lord's coming in judgment upon the ungodly and to establish His Kingdom, and we find two things are said especially about the saints of the present dispensation; "first rest with us" says the Apostle "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed," etc., that is, at that time the saints will be at rest.

Secondly, He will then come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe "*in that day.*" Thus leaving out the parenthetical clause which refers to our belief of the gospel as the ground of such blessing, we find He will be glorified and admired in His saints *in that day, i.e.,* in the glorious day that shall be ushered in by His thus coming.

Now then, from what follows in chapter ii., is

it not certain that Satan's object was to annul the effect of the glorious future which had been set before them by the Apostle in the first Epistle by concentrating their attention on the present? And the means the enemy took to this end were very plausible and subtle. He begins his spiritualising system. He would persuade them "that the day of Christ *was present*; you are in the day of Christ already, it is the present gospel period."

This seems to have been the method by which the wily foe sought to turn those Thessalonian saints from their attitude of "waiting for the Son of God from heaven," and to get them taken up with the present. Satan has always sought, and is still seeking, to get the eyes of the Lord's people off the future and fixed on the present.

However, the word in this second verse should be "as that the day of Christ has come, has set in, or is present." And it appears that false teachers had not only been putting this before them as their own teaching, but had been sending letters as from the apostles themselves.

For further proof of the marked distinction between the coming of the Lord and the "day of Christ" we would ask what sense there would be in beseeching them by the coming of the Lord not to be soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, as that the coming of Christ is present? But we believe such distinction must be apparent to all unprejudiced minds. Now then, the Apostle wishes to fully convince them that the day of Christ is not present, so he says, "Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him,

that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is present." As the Apostle thus beseeches them by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him (compare 1 Thess. iv. 15, etc.), it is certain that this (the Lord's coming and our gathering together unto Him) is before the day of Christ, which, as we have said, is ushered in by His coming to establish His Kingdom, otherwise there would be no force in the argument. His coming to gather His people to Himself is before the day of Christ; this much, at least, is proven by these two verses. In verse 3 another reason is given: "That day shall not come except there come a falling away (an apostacy) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Thus we see the period of Antichrist takes place not before the coming of the Lord to gather His people to Himself, but before the "day of Christ." Then we are told that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work," but that there is a hindering power, a restraining influence present, which will not allow the full development and manifestation of the evil. And the Apostle speaks of this as known to the Thessalonians, "Ye know what withholdeth that He might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth (hindereth) will let, until he be taken out of the way."

This much, then, is perfectly certain, namely, that there is a power present that acts as a restraint on, and hinders the full development of evil, as it will be manifested in the "man of sin," and

that such power is to be taken out of the way before the revelation of Antichrist. What, then, is this that stands in the way of the appearing of Antichrist in his true character? And what is the event that is going to take it out of the way? If it is not the Holy Ghost in the Church of God—which is His temple—what is it? Is not the presence and testimony of the Church of God on this earth, in the power of the Holy Ghost, a restraint on the working of evil to its full development, notwithstanding her humiliating failure? Yes, we say, if there is such a hindering power on the earth, and we are definitely told there is, is it not the Church as indwelt by the Holy Ghost? Is it not *a fact* that she is such a hindrance to such development of evil? Then if she, as possessed of the Spirit of God, is that which withholdeth, we are positively told that she is to be taken out of the way before that wicked one is revealed. And we are no longer at a loss to understand how the Thessalonians could know what withholdeth, for the Apostle had clearly put before them in his first epistle the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him in the air. This is what they were set looking and waiting for.

This is also in the most perfect harmony with all that has been before us in the previous part of this work.

The points here then are, (1), that before the *day* of Christ can come, the coming of Christ and the gathering of His people to Himself, and the manifestation of Antichrist must take place; (2), and before Antichrist is revealed, a hindering power now present on the earth must be removed,

which, as it clearly seems to us, is the Church as possessed of the Holy Ghost; (3), hence the Church is to be caught up before the full development of Antichrist.

Can it then be called a strained interpretation to conclude from this chapter that the coming of Christ for His people is before the manifestation of Antichrist? Is it not rather the most natural interpretation?

We now turn to the address to the Church at Philadelphia, in Rev. iii. 7-13.

We cannot here go into any details as to the general teaching and application of the whole address, it is enough for our present purpose to notice that the Lord definitely tells His people here that He will "keep them out of the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world," v. 10. As is well known, the word rendered in this verse "from," is really "out of." Now this text is clear and positive. We think the difference between the two passages—Hebrews v. 7. and John xvii. 15—which have been used to controvert this point, and the text we are considering will be apparent on comparing the three.

We would ask you not to overlook the fact that in Rev. iii., it does not say "I will keep thee out of the temptation," but "I will keep thee out of the HOUR (the period) of temptation!" Is not the difference great and obvious. The text quoted from John xvii., "Keep them out of the evil," *i.e.*, do not let them go into it. It does not say keep them out of the world, but "keep them out of the evil that is in the world." While in Rev. iii. it

does not say, "keep them out of the temptation of that hour," but, "out of the hour" in which the temptation is to take place. The other text given, Heb. v. 7, seems to us farther still from being a parallel expression. There it is: "Able to save him out of death." We cannot see that this is the same as being "kept out of it." The Lord was not kept out of death, but He *was* saved—delivered—out of it. Just so we are told, not that Jacob will be kept out of the Great Tribulation, but that he will be *saved out of it*. May we repeat a little here for the sake of emphasis.

The Lord was saved out of death, but not kept out of it. The three Hebrew children were not *kept* out of the furnace, but they were saved out of it. We must say that we cannot see how "*kept out of*" could be used in either of these cases. It could not be said that the three Hebrew children were kept, but saved, out of the furnace, nor that our Lord was kept out of death. But "*saved out*" would apply to both.

In John xvii. it is not the world, but the evil that is in it, that the Lord prays they may be kept out of; that is, surely, not be allowed to go into it. We must not confound evil here with tribulation, which, we think, has sometimes been done. It is true that the passing through trial and the endurance of it, does mould and fit us for service, but we judge that evil in John xvii. means—not trial but—*sin*, and this we are to be kept out of.

We can only candidly say what appears clear to our own minds, and for this we believe no one will blame us. It seems to us, then, that to "*be kept*

in, and brought through" the Great Tribulation, and being "saved out of it," is not the same as being *kept out* of it. Albeit, is it not clear, from the passages of Scripture which treat of that time of trouble, and the Lord's people who will be in it, that the latter will be the *most* tried, perplexed, and persecuted of all others? In what sense then can it be said they will be kept out of the Tribulation? The exhortation to them is to *endure* it, and be faithful in it. Surely then, after all the testimony that has been before us, it is quite natural that this text (in Rev. iii.) should be taken as bearing directly on the question.

We do not dogmatise upon this point, nor do we wish to, indeed, upon any other, as our desire is to be taught as well as to teach; hence, we would leave the foregoing comparisons to the judgment of our readers. At the same time our own convictions are firm, though we trust our minds are not biased.

In Acts xv. 13, after Peter had declared God's purpose to gather out a people from all nations—to visit the Gentiles, to take out a people for His name, which is the peculiar purpose of the present dispensation,—James answered, saying: "*After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof and will set it up.*" Is not this in full harmony with, and confirmative of, all that we have said about the distinct character of the present dispensation? And does not the text clearly show that the calling out this people for His name, from among the Gentiles, is to be an *accomplished fact* before God resumes, in pro-

phetical order, and in view of their restoration, His ways with Israel as a nation on the earth.

For the Scripture before us says, "*After* this I will return again," etc. That is, the redemption of Israel on the earth, with all the prophetic and momentous events that are introductory to it, will be *after* a people for His name—the Church—is called from the world. The Great Tribulation is part of the means by which the redemption of Israel—the "building again the tabernacle of Jacob"—is accomplished, for, as we have seen, it is by the Great Tribulation that they are refined, their dross is purged away, and they are led to real repentance and earnest prayer for the deliverance with which God at that time will be about to visit them. Does not this justly lead to the conclusion that the rapture of the Church will have taken place at that time of special dealing with Israel and the nations in relation to them? For we are told in Eph. iv. that the present administration is to go on, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This of course teaches that when the object of the dispensation is accomplished, when the full stature of the body of Christ, according to the purpose of God is reached; when all (*i.e.* all the members as known to God) are brought into this unity of which, as we have seen, Israel as a nation has no part (for the Church is spoken of as *one new man*), then the dispensation is brought to an end to make way for the building again of the tabernacle of David.

God will still work, and work mightily, even in

that day of His "vengeance and fury poured out," but it will be in a different order and character of things, and with a different object.

We would here refer our readers again to the chapter dealing with the distinction between the Jewish remnant and the Church in which we seek to show that the two things cannot go on together.

There is one more passage we would just refer to under this heading, but we must leave our reader to ponder the remarkable and blessed portion, as we should exceed the limits of this little work if we would allow ourselves to enter fully into it.

We refer to the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, Rev. xix. 7-11. What we particularly wish our reader to observe is, that the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven before the Lord comes forth to judge the earth and establish His Kingdom.

Now, taking for granted that the Church is the bride—which we think is made certain in Eph. v. 22, to end—this passage clearly shows that the rapture of the Church is an event preliminary to the Lord's coming to establish His Kingdom; for the Bride is seen to be publicly owned in heaven as the Lamb's wife, before He comes forth as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

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One passage that is considered to be against pre-tribulation rapture is, "Sit Thou on my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." It is said that "until" implies that He will not leave that place to come for His Church till after His enemies are thus made His footstool.

Now, that this Psalm refers to the Great Tribulation, there can be no doubt—to the time when His enemies will be made His footstool. But is this really out of harmony with the coming of the Lord for His Church at that time—the end of this age—as being a preliminary event to make way for the judgment of His enemies on that day of vengeance which follows this day of grace? What the passage seems so beautifully to teach is that the Lord who is rejected by His people is *exalted to God's right hand*—the place of power and majesty—until the time comes for judgment to be executed upon those who rejected Him, indeed, all His enemies. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."

But is the Lord's descent into the air to catch up

His Church to Himself in that glory when the time for such judgment has arrived, at all discordant with such a truth ?

We must say that we fail to see that it is, any more than the fact that so many Scriptures speak of *Christ Himself* as judging and crushing His enemies clashes with the fact that in the verse quoted from Psalm cx. God is spoken of as making Christ's enemies His footstool ; though Christ Himself will arise to do it. Indeed, in the latter part of the self-same Psalm, Christ is seen as doing Himself what in the first verse God said He would do. God decreed that judgment should be executed on all the enemies of Christ, and Christ Himself executed that judgment, verses 5-7 ; Rev. xix., from verse 11, and many other Scriptures.

To this is added a verse in Acts iii. There it says, speaking of Christ, "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things," which word (restitution) is rightly said to mean the Millennium. But does this mean that Christ will not descend into the air till that blessed period has fairly set in ? This cannot be the meaning, for He comes forth Himself to bring about that time of blessing by terrible judgments. The word "until" in both these cases, it seems to us, refers to the transitional period, at the end of the present age. The Lord is to sit on the right hand of God—to remain in heaven till the time comes for His enemies to be made His footstool. "Until I have made," refers to God's purpose and decree concerning the rejected One, while actually Christ Himself is spoken of as destroying His enemies.

But, after all, does His descent into the air to

call His own necessitate His leaving the place of power, implied in the words, "Sit Thou at My right hand," or His leaving the heavens? We think not. It does not necessitate His leaving the heavens (as for the earth), for He only calls His people *there* to Himself. We must not overstrain the word until it undoubtedly brings us to the time at which judgment shall be executed.

Another Scripture used as an objection to the catching up of the Church before the Great Tribulation, is the Parable of the Wheat and Tares. It is said that the tares are gathered out or judged before the wheat is gathered into the barn. We will give a very brief outline of the parable.

Generally speaking the harvest results in the safety and blessing of the children of the kingdom—the wheat, and God's judgment upon the children of the wicked one—the tares; and then the kingdom takes another form, in which the mixed state of things indicated by the wheat and tares growing together will not be allowed; but "they (the angels) shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity."

The rapture has no place in this parable; for though it does not exclusively apply to God's earthly people—the Jews—it *does* apply exclusively to a state, or course, of things on the earth. The *dispensational character* of the Church does not appear. Of course, with subsequent revelation we can see that the children of the kingdom—the wheat—are the saved ones who compose the Church, and that the rapture of the Church, as given in other scriptures, shows the way, there-

fore, in which the wheat will be gathered. But this is not taught in the parable itself; hence it must not be imported into it for a true interpretation. The fact that in the order of the wording the judgment of the tares is described before the gathering of the wheat, does not interfere with the rapture as taught in other scriptures one bit. As we have said, the parable depicts a state of things in relation to the earth; hence we are told what is to become of the tares; the present aspect of the kingdom is to be terminated by their destruction, and their destruction brings in another form of the kingdom; it is the gathering out of His kingdom all things that offend. As to the wheat—the children of the kingdom—they are gathered safely in; this is all the parable is concerned about as to them. It is well to observe, too, that the gathering together first the tares, and “binding them in bundles to burn them,” are different processes to the burning itself. It does not say, “first *burn* the tares, then gather the wheat”; but, they are to be gathered together and bound in bundles *to be* burnt. The gathering together and the binding are certainly preparatory to the burning, and may imply a certain grouping together of the children of the wicked one around certain developments of evil which manifest them as such! This may indeed happen before the rapture; indeed, is there not something analogous to it going on around us at the present time? Howbeit, those converted after the Church is gone, will be the wheat—the children of the kingdom; though those composing the Church are looked at as the wheat *now*.

It is thought, again, that because it is said in Cor. xv. at the *last* trump, that therefore the accompanying event must be after the Great Tribulation. As we have gone somewhat fully into this passage in chapter iv. of the present work, we refer our reader to that chapter for an explanation of this passage.

Though we ought to say here, as being connected with the trumpet sound, by our dear brother, Mr. W., in his lecture, that the text, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" has both an application to Israel and to the heavenly saints; while in Hosea it refers primarily to Israel; in Cor. xv. it is applied to the Church with some added truth. That it will be true of both no one denies; that it will be applicable at the very same moment is by no means necessary or conclusive.

Not a word about Israel occurs in Cor. xv. Why then import anything about them? The last trump here is given solely in connection with the rapture.

"The end of the age." It is said that "until the harvest," and "Lo, I am with you even to the end of the age," and the age ending with Antichrist, therefore the saints cannot be caught up before His manifestation.

We must humbly, and in good feeling, confess that such a line of argument seems to us against all common and scriptural use of language.

The manifestation of Antichrist, the abomination of desolation, indeed, the Great Tribulation as a whole, as well as the coming of the Lord, are spoken of as events of the end—or end of the age. But

who can say that they all happen *precisely at the same time*? If we say certain things are to be accomplished at the end of the year, do we necessarily mean the very last twenty-four hours? Would not the last week be considered the end of the year? And would not events of the last year of a century be spoken of as happening at the end of the century? So we believe, with good reason—as we judge—from every point of view, that the “end of the age” refers us to the closing events of the present period. If we speak of the last year (indeed, sometimes the last five or ten years) as the end of a century, surely events of the last three, four, or seven years of a long age may be spoken of as “the end of the age.” Once this is admitted (and we fail to see how it can justly be denied) many objections are met.

As to Matt. xxiv., and 1 Thess. ii., our previous expositions meet all objections that we have heard of which are based upon them. Is it not obvious from what we have seen that the disciples in Matt. xxiv. occupied the place of the Jewish remnant; and though Jesus instructs His disciples as to the change of dispensation—mainly in parables—about to take place, and the present form of the kingdom, yet He also gave to them some plain and positive predictions about Jerusalem and the Jews, both concerning their troubles at the beginning of the present period, and in the time of the Great Tribulation at the end, and subsequent redemption, looking at them as representing the believing remnant.

The difference between the coming of the Lord and the day of Christ—or of the Lord—as spoken

of in 1 Thess. v., and 2 Thess. i. 2, we also think is obvious, which difference removes the difficulties that are brought forward from these Epistles.

We have covered a lot of ground, and have overlooked in our brief glances much detail, perhaps some important points on both sides of the question; still, we believe that those of our readers who have accompanied us to these different standpoints, and therefrom viewed the great truth before us with an unbiased mind, will see at least that those who believe that our blessed Lord is coming for His people before that time spoken of as the "day of vengeance," have some good grounds for their belief; and if they find themselves sufficiently interested as to seek the Lord's help in further study of the subject from His own blessed word, we believe they will ultimately come to the conclusion that such have a *solid* foundation for believing that their Lord may come to receive them at any moment.

May the Lord grant that the purifying power of this blessed hope may be known in our souls, and whatever has been of Himself for the clearing of our understanding from any mist that may have darkened, in any degree, our view of this blessed truth, may He bless to every reader!