The Redeemer's Return

A.W. Pink

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Foreword

This book is designed mainly for those who are beginners in the study of prophetic and dispensational truth, though should it fall into the hands of those who are “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” and who have, perhaps for years, been giving earnest heed to the “more sure Word of prophecy,” we trust that it will afford meat in due season and stimulate praise to God for the marvelous and blessed prospect which His Word sets before us.

Many books have already appeared before the public presenting in clear and Scriptural language the various aspects of the subject of our Lord’s Return, and we hesitated long before we decided to add one more to the number. The different chapters in this volume have been given by the writer in sermon and lecture form to numerous audiences both in this country and in England, and it is only the repeated requests of many of those who have heard these addresses which has caused us to now set them down in writing; so that they may be preserved in a more permanent form and obtain a still wider hearing. They are sent forth with the prayer that the God of all grace will condescend to use them in blessing to His dear people and in the conversion of lost sinners even more widely than in their oral delivery.

While it is true that many books which treat of the Redeemer’s Return have been issued and widely circulated, yet, there are still great numbers of the Lord’s people who know next to nothing about this precious theme. Notwithstanding the fact that the Second Coming of Christ occupies a prominent place in the Holy Scriptures, notwithstanding the fact that this subject is a most practical one having, as it does, some bearing on every phase of our present and future life, and notwithstanding that it is calculated to awaken a deep interest in “things to come” and lead to definite heart-searching nevertheless, the vast majority of our pulpits entirely ignore the subject and in consequence great numbers of our church-members are in almost total ignorance concerning those things which God’s Word declares will shortly come to pass. It is with the earnest desire to reach a few of these that this book has been prepared and is now sent forth.

We wish it to be clearly understood that there is nothing in these pages except that which we have ourselves first received. We lay no claim at all to originality. We have read diligently many works on prophetic themes and have sought to “prove all things” and to “hold fast that which is good.” It is impossible for us now to do more than make this general acknowledgment of our indebtedness to other students of the Word. We have gleaned in many fields, gathering a fragrant flower here and there, and all that we now attempt is to arrange these in simple form, leaving our readers to admire the products of the labors of others into which we have entered.

Introduction

The Redeemer's Return! Here is a theme which in this day is regarded by many well-meaning people as an ideal of visionaries or as the pet hobby of certain cranks. So grievously has the study of Prophecy been ignored, so little place is given in the modern pulpit to the exposition of eschatology, and so generally is the daily reading of the Bible neglected by those in the pew, that it is an easy matter to persuade the average church-goer that the subject of the Second Coming of Christ is impractical and one that had better be left alone. Moreover, this subject has suffered so grievously at the hands of those who are the enemies of the Cross, that many Christians have been prejudiced against it. Satan has not been slow to avail himself of the wild and unscriptural teaching of such men as Irving and Joseph Smith, and more recently, Dowie and Pastor (?) Russell; nay, he has employed them to cast reproach on those who do seek to search and interpret the Prophetic Scriptures. Yet, notwithstanding, it is the imperative duty of every believer to seriously and prayerfully examine the Scriptures for himself and see what the Word of God has to say about Coming Events. In that Word we are plainly warned that in the "last days" (of this age) there should arise those who ridicule and mock at the very doctrine of which we are now speaking (see 2 Pet. 3:3, 4). Therefore we need not be surprised if we hear and read of those who seek to cast reproach upon this blessed theme; instead, as the Dispensation draws to a close, we should expect just what we now hear and see on every side.

The Redeemer's Return! Is there anything that can be compared with this momentous and stupendous prospect? Excepting the Cross of Calvary, the greatest event of all in the past history of the world was the Advent of God's Son to our earth. The Divine Incarnation was the theme of Old Testament prophecy. The very first promise ever given to fallen man was that the woman's Seed should come and bruise the Serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). When the Divine revelation was committed to writing, numerous passages recorded the promised descent of God's Son to this earth. The prophets of Israel made known the fact that the Coming One was to be of the stock of Abraham and a lineal descendant of David, and thus for fifteen centuries the Hope of Israel was the Messianic Hope. And, when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son born of a woman.

It is impossible for us to fully estimate the tremendous importance of the first Advent of Christ to this earth, The Divine Incarnation is without a parallel in the annals of the human race. Heaven itself was stirred at the miraculous birth of the God-Man. Unto the angels was entrusted the honorous commission of announcing the birth of the Saviour. Heathendom was affected, the good news being conveyed to Chaldea by means of a mysterious "star" which heralded the birth of the King of the Jews. The Coming of Christ to this world changed its chronology, for all civilized time is now by common consent dated from the Bethlehem manger. As the result of the first Advent a new era was inaugurated, a new prospect was set before the sons of men, the door of mercy was flung wide open, and command was given that the glad tidings should be made known to every creature.

But wondrous and blessed as was the first Advent of our Lord in many respects, His Second Coming will be even more momentous. At His first appearing He was here in weakness and humiliation, but at His second He shall come in power and glory. When He was here before He was "despised and rejected of men," but when He comes back again every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess His Lordship. When He was here before He paid tribute to Caesar, but when He returns He shall reign as King of Kings and Lord of lords. When He was here before His personal ministry was confined to the land of Palestine, but when He returns "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"

(Hab. 2:14). Who can comprehend or enumerate the blessings which shall attend the Return of our Redeemer! Then will it be that the "dead in Christ" shall be raised from their graves and the living saints "changed," so that every believer will then be "conformed to the image of God's Son." Then it will be that the Lord's servants will be rewarded for their labors and those that were despised and hated by the world shall be recognized and honored by the Christ of God. Then it will be that Israel shall repent of their sins, receive Christ as their Messiah and Saviour, and be restored to the Holy Land. Then will the promise made to the patriarchs be literally and completely fulfilled. Then it will be that that old Serpent the Devil shall be removed from these scenes where he has wrought such havoc and produced such misery, to be chained for a thousand years in the Bottomless Pit. Then it will be that a groaning Creation shall be delivered from its present bondage, when the Curse which now rests upon all Nature shall be removed, and when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be made glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose (Is. 35:1). And, best of all, then it shall be that Christ Himself shall enter into His blood-brought inheritance, when He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Therefore, ought not such a subject, which presents such a glorious prospect, gladden our hearts and secure our most diligent attention!

God does not desire His dear people to remain in ignorance of His future purposes concerning them, concerning His Son, and concerning this earth. Said the apostle as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, "We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19). If then we give diligent heed to the Prophetic Word, if we will prayerfully study that which God has been pleased to reveal unto us concerning things to come, and if we will believe in our hearts all that the prophets have spoken, then shall we be like the Thessalonians of whom it could be said—"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:1-6).

The Redeemer's Return! This was the great hope of the early Christians. In the first century of the Christian era it was the normal and regular thing to find that the expectation of the returning Saviour filled the vision and hearts of His followers. The apostles themselves taught their converts to look for the appearing of Christ. Writing to the Thessalonian saints the apostle Paul reminded them how they had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). Writing to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, the apostle James bade them be patient and stablish their hearts, basing his exhortation on the fact that "The Coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5:8). Writing to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia "who were in heaviness through manifold temptations," the apostle Peter expressed the wish that the trial of their faith "might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"(1 Pet. 1:7). Writing to his "little children" (a term of endearment) the apostle John lovingly exhorted them to abide in Christ so that when He should appear they might have confidence and "not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28). Writing of the apostasy which was to come, the apostle Jude quoted the prophecy of Enoch, who declared, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 1:14, 15). Thus we find that it was the uniform practice of the apostles to hold up a returning Saviour before the children of God.

Right at the close of the first century A. D. when the time had come for the Sacred Canon to

be completed, our Lord Himself sent His angel to communicate a special message to each of the seven Churches which were in Asia, and in five of them, namely, in the Epistles addressed to the Churches in Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia (see Rev. 2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11) Christ makes distinct reference to His imminent appearing, while His last words to His loved disciple were, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

We have thus shown that this Age began with a ringing testimony to the truth of our Lord's Return. Each of the apostles, of whose writings we have any inspired record, taught their converts to look for their Saviour's appearing. Alas! that this testimony was not maintained. Alas! that this Blessed Hope should ever have become dim. Alas! that it should, for more than a thousand years, have been almost totally lost to the Lord's people. Yet so it was. The immediate successors of the apostles turned their attention to other things: as it was with the Pharisees in the days of our Lord, so these tithed anise and mint but "omitted the weightier matters." Instead of expounding the Prophetic Scriptures and setting before the Church its one great Hope, the early "Church Fathers," for the most part, spent their time in wrangling among themselves. Even before the apostles themselves had left the earth, false teachers crept in and began to devour the flock, and within three centuries the whole professing Church had become Paganized. Then followed the Dark Ages—aptly named, for the lamp of Prophecy had ceased to shine and the prospect of the speedy return of the Morning Star had completely disappeared. As our Lord Himself had foretold, the virgins all slumbered and slept: no longer were His people looking for the Coming of the Bridegroom. 1

We need not remind our readers it was during this period known as the Dark Ages that the Roman Catholic Church sprang into prominence and the power, holding sway over all Europe and binding burdens on the souls of men which were grievous to be borne. The Bible was withheld from the laity and the vain traditions of men were substituted for the living Oracles of God. Instead of proclaiming salvation by the finished work of Christ, the multitudes were taught that heaven could only be obtained by penance, legal works, priestly mediation, and purgatorial fires. Instead of teaching her people that the hope of the saints was the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Rome taught that the hope of humanity lay in the subjugation of the entire world to the imperial rule of the Pope. Instead of exhorting believers to "look up" (Luke 21:28), the Roman Pontiff sought to dazzle the eyes of his devotees with the gorgeous ceremonialism of an earthly ritual.

After a thousand years of spiritual darkness the Sun of Righteousness shone forth over Europe with healing in His beams. During the sixteenth century God raised up a number of mighty men who, by the power of His Spirit, were delivered from the iron shackles of the Papacy and made to rejoice in the freedom into which, the Lord Jesus brings His people. Under God, these men brought about what is known as the great Reformation. During this Reformation the Holy Scriptures were restored to the people and given to them in their own native tongues. The glorious doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, was sounded forth throughout Germany, Switzerland, Italy and the British Isles, and multitudes were "added unto the Lord." Many precious truths, which for long centuries had lain buried beneath the rubbish heap of human traditions, were recovered and given out to the masses. But the Reformation, glorious as it was, witnessed only a partial recovery of long lost truths. The Hope of the Church was not yet restored! The prospect of a soon returning Redeemer was not yet set before God's people again. Three more centuries passed by before the third part of our Lord's prophecy in the Parable of the Virgins received its fulfillment. It was not until the nineteenth century that the midnight cry arose "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. 25:6). Then it was that God raised up another band of witnesses, sent forth by Him to herald the approach of His Son. The result has been that an ever increasing number of the saints have given studious attention to the prophetic portions of the Word, until, to-day, in every section of Christendom,

there are companies of believers who are eagerly waiting for the Shout of the Lord which shall call them away from this earth to be for ever with Him. It is our humble desire to unite with these witnesses of God in testifying that the Coming of the Lord “draweth nigh.” The Signs of the times speak plainly to those who have ears to hear, and singly and collectively bear witness to the fact that this Dispensation of Grace is now almost ended. The prophecies of the New Testament show clearly that we are living in the “last days” of this Age, and by the help of the Spirit of Truth we would herein call attention to those Scriptures which make known to us the stupendous events which shall surely and shortly come to pass.

Chapter One

The Need of the Redeemer's Return

Is there any real need for Christ to return? So far as God's children are concerned only one answer is possible to this question. There is. Christians of every shade of religious belief are agreed that there is an imperative need for our Lord to come back again. As to the precise character of that need, as to the particular urgency of that need, opinions may vary, but concerning the need itself this is universally admitted. Even post-millennarians teach that Christ must come back at the end of time to judge the wicked and reward the righteous. But we hope to show that the need for His return is much deeper and much wider than the reason put forth by the post-millennarians.

Suppose Christ never returns—then what? Has this alternative been weighed as it deserves? The present order of things cannot continue indefinitely; such a supposition is unthinkable. No one is satisfied with present conditions. Even those who despise the teachings of God's Word, hope for a better day, a Golden Age, an era of blessedness, such as this earth has never yet witnessed. And pre-millennarians believe that this Golden Age can be ushered in by nothing short of the personal return of Christ Himself. Here then, in general, is the reason why we believe the Redeemer must come back again. We say "in general," for in the remainder of this chapter we shall seek to show there is at least a tenfold necessity for our Lord's Second Advent.

I. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE DECLARATIONS OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY.

It is very apparent to any one who has read thoughtfully through the Old Testament that the First Advent of our Lord did not exhaust the burden and scope of the numerous predictions which had been made concerning Him. Many of the things foretold of Israel's Messiah were not accomplished during the days when He tabernacled among men. Many of the promises found in God's Word connected with the Person of Christ, still await their ratification. While it is true that the First Advent of the Lord Jesus literally and remarkable fulfilled many of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him, yet, it is also true that many others were not then fulfilled. 2 To several of these we shall now call our readers attention.

"And I will put enmity between thee (the "serpent") and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). There is much in this remarkable verse which we cannot now consider in detail, yet we will endeavor to present an outline of its contents. This is not a single prophecy but a compound one and at least seven separate predictions are included in it:—

First, the woman is to have a seed: as we know, this pointed forward to our Lord's humanity. Second, He was to be peculiarly the woman's "seed," not the man's, hence we read, "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4, Greek). Third, the woman's "Seed" was to bruise the Serpent: in other words, Satan was to be His particular antagonist. Fourth, He was to bruise the Serpent's head. Fifth, He Himself was to be bruised in the "heel" by the Serpent; and hence it is written, He was "bruised for our iniquities" (Is. 53:5). Sixth, there was to be "enmity" between the Serpent and the one who gave birth to the "Seed," namely Israel (cf. Rev. 12:1-6). And then, after making mention of the enmity between the Serpent and the woman, we read, Seventh, "And between thy seed—the Serpent's "seed," i.e., the Son of Perdition—and her "Seed." In other words, this agelong "enmity" was to head up in a conflict between the Antichrist and the true Christ. For our present purpose it is sufficient to single out the fourth and fifth of the above items, which, in their historical order, have been reversed.

"Thou shalt bruise His heel." That old Serpent the Devil was to be permitted to attack and wound the only vulnerable part of our Lord's person—His humanity, here intimated by the word "heel." How this portion of the prophecy was fulfilled our readers will know. No sooner was the Lord Jesus born in Bethlehem of Judaea than the "Dragon" sought to encompass His destruction (Rev. 12:4). Immediately following His baptism, which was the inauguration of His public ministry, He was tempted or "tried" by the Devil for forty days (Mark 1:13). On the eve of His crucifixion our Lord expressly declared, "This is your hour, and the Power of Darkness: (Luke 22:53). Thus was Satan allowed to bruise the "heel" of the woman's Seed.

But we also read, "It shall bruise thy head," that is, Christ shall bruise Satan's "head." The head is the seat and source of power, and in the Scripture we are now considering is placed in sharp antithesis with the "heel" of the woman's Seed. Stripped of its prophetic symbolism, it can only mean that Christ is to depose Satan and reduce him to a state of impotency. This interpretation is fully confirmed in Rev. 20 where we learn that a day is coming when the Devil shall be bound and cast into the Bottomless Pit to remain there securely confined throughout the Millennial Era. What we now desire to emphasize particularly is, that, this part of the Edenic prophecy was not fulfilled when our Lord was upon earth before, and has not yet been fulfilled. Therefore, if this prediction is be realized our Lord must return to this earth and deprive the Devil of his power, for He alone is competent for such a task.

Again; we read in Is. 9:6, 7, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the

government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." Here again we meet with a prophecy which has already received a partial fulfillment, but which has not yet been completely realized. Unto Israel a Child was "born," unto Israel a Son was "given;" but, during the days of His First Advent the "government" for He is not yet seated upon His own"throne: (see Rev. 3:21). Observe particularly that, above, it is repeated "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." His "government" and "peace" are inseparably connected. The latter part of this prophecy therefore looks forward to the time of His Second Advent, for "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matt. 25:31). Then will it be that He shall inaugurate a Reign of Peace, for then it shall be (and not till then) that "He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3). Thus we see that the declarations of the Prophetic Word require and necessitate the personal return of Christ to this earth, for only thus and only then will they be literally and completely fulfilled. Many other Old Testament predictions could be cited to the same effect, but one more must suffice.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, the Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, the Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the North country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. 23:5-8). In the first place, observe, here, that unto David (Israel) God promised to raise up a King who should reign and prosper. Without a doubt this prophecy refers to our Lord Jesus Christ who was born "King of the Jews" (Matt. 2:2), for it was uttered shortly after the Jews were carried down into Babylon, since which they have had no human King. It needs no argument to prove that the terms of this prophecy were certainly not fulfilled at the time of our Lord's First Advent, for then, the Jews would not own Him, but demanded His death, and when Pilate inquired of them, "Shall I crucify your King?" (John 19:15), the leaders of the nation answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Furthermore, this prophecy was not fulfilled when our Lord took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, for note, it says that Israel's King shall "execute judgment and justice in the earth," not "from the heavens." Again; we observe that it declares, "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel (the ten tribes) shall dwell safely" which certainly did not come to pass during the days of our Lord's humiliation. No; this prophecy, like scores of other Messianic predictions recorded in the Old Testament, looks forward to the time of our Lord's Second Advent to the earth, which Advent is imperative if the terms of this prophecy are to be realized.

II. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY HIS OWN AFFIRMATIONS.

During the course of His public ministry our Lord made frequent reference to His Second Coming. When we consider how few of His discourses have been transmitted to us and how brief is the inspired record of His teachings as found in the New Testament Scriptures, we are deeply impressed with the importance of our present inquiry as we note how much there is in the Gospel narratives which relates to our Redeemer's Return. Not only do we find many incidental references, but most of His "parables" treat of those things which have to do with His Second Advent, and, furthermore, several whole chapters in the Gospels are devoted to a fuller setting forth of the same great event. Unto our Lord's own teaching, then, upon His Second Coming we turn our attention. We cannot now review all that He said upon the subject, but must content ourselves with singling out two or three of His utterances thereon.

In Matt. 24 and 25 we have two whole chapters occupied with this theme, and in them we find that again and again our Lord made mention of His Return—"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (24:27), which means that our Lord's Return to this earth will be visible, public, and attended with awe-inspiring glory. The same ideas are presented in the 30th verse of the same chapter —"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Further down in the chapter, our Lord bids His people make preparation for His appearing because He may return at any moment. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (vs. 44). In the next chapter, in the Parable of the Virgins, the subject of the Bridegroom's Coming is again brought before us, while the closing verses furnish us with a detailed description of His judgment of the living nations which introduces the setting up of His Millennial Kingdom—"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31, 32).

In the nineteenth of Luke we have the Parable of the Nobleman which is very plain and pointed: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And He called His ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated Him, and sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when He was returned, having received the kingdom, then He commanded these servants to be called unto Him, to whom He had given the money, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading" (Luke 19:12-15). The "Nobleman" is the Lord Jesus. The "journey into the far country" was His Ascension to heaven. The "Kingdom" which He went to "receive" is His Millennial Kingdom for which He taught His disciples to pray. The "return" is His Second Advent to this earth. The "servants" are believers. The "money" (marg. "silver," which in Scripture symbolizes redemption) seems to typify the Gospel, which has been committed into our hands to proclaim to a lost world. The "occupying till He comes" is the faithful giving out of the Gospel and the daily witnessing for Him during the time of His absence. The "message" sent by "His citizens" refers to the continued rejection of Christ and His Gospel by the Jews during the days of the apostles and particularly under the ministry of Stephen. The rewarding of the servants at the time of His Return, is the allotting to them of places of honor in His Millennial Kingdom. That to which we would specially call attention is the fact that our Lord here expressly declares He will "return," come back again to this earth.

Perhaps the most explicit of all the statements which the Lord Jesus made upon our present

theme is that recorded in the opening verses of John 14. Our Lord was alone with His disciples. He was about to be separated from them. For three years they had companied with Him, but now the cross with all its suffering and shame lay athwart His path. The realization of His approaching death had filled His followers with fear and anguish. Their hearts were heavy and sad. Turning to them in their grief, the Master speaks words of solace and cheer—"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). These words of our Lord can have only one possible meaning: He was going away, but He would return again, return in person to receive His own unto Himself. Such was His positive and unconditional promise. Thus we see that the fulfillment of His promises, the keeping of His Word, necessitates the personal Return of our blessed Redeemer.

The testimony of our Lord given while He was here upon earth was confirmed, and rendered even more unequivocal, if that were possible, by His post-ascension utterances. Fifty years after He had returned to heaven the Lord Jesus sent His angel to the beloved John on the Isle of Patmos to give unto him "The Revelation" and in it we hear our Lord saying, no less than six times, "Behold, I come quickly." This is His last promise, His final word to His people now on earth. He is coming back again. He Himself has said so. He said so repeatedly during the days of His earthly ministry. He said so in language about which there was no ambiguity whatsoever. He said so both to His friends and to His enemies. He said so again fifty years after His ascension to heaven. And He cannot lie. He is Himself the "Truth"—the Truth incarnate. He is "The Faithful and True Witness," therefore He must keep His Word, fulfill His promises, and Return in person.

III. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE RATIFICATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

While our Lord was here upon earth and on the eve of His crucifixion, He promised to send His disciples another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth. He further promised the apostles that, when the Spirit came to them, He would guide them "into all truth." Therefore, it is to the Divinely inspired writings of these apostles we must turn if we would learn all that God has been pleased to reveal concerning our present inquiry.

As we read the Epistles of the New Testament it is highly important for us to keep in mind the fact that we have in them not the suppositions and speculations of their human writers but reliable and authoritative information communicated by the Holy Spirit Himself, for "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). As we turn to the Epistles we find that each writer made some contribution to our present theme: Peter and Paul, James, John, and Jude all referred to the prospect and certainty of the Return of our Redeemer.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian saints, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:4-8). To the Philippian saints he wrote, "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21). To the Colossians he wrote, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). To the Thessalonians he wrote, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1 Thess. 2:19). To the Hebrews he wrote, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (9:28).

The apostle James wrote, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (5:7, 8).

The apostle Peter wrote, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:4).

The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3). And again, "For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh" (2 John 7, R. V.).

The apostle Jude wrote, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (vs. 21).

Here then is an argument simple but conclusive. Each Epistle writer of the New Testament makes mention of the Redeemer's Return. These men were not hallucinated. They were not giving expression to impracticable ideals which would never be realized. Their writings were Divinely inspired. These holy men were "moved by the Holy Spirit" and recorded truth "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). The very

fact, then, that the Holy Spirit of God has, through the apostles, testified again and again, ratifying the declarations of Old Testament prophecy and affirmations of Christ Himself, necessitates and demands the personal Return of our Lord.

IV. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE HUMILIATION OF THE CROSS.

The degradation which the Lord Jesus endured when He was here upon earth before, requires that He shall come back again in power and glory in order to vindicate Himself. Is it reasonable to suppose that the last view which this world shall have of our blessed Lord before He takes His seat upon the Great White Throne to judge the wicked dead, shall be that of the "lowly Nazarene"? Surely not. Need we remind our readers of the depths of humiliation into which our Redeemer descended? Born in a manger, with the beasts of the field for His first companions, and a bed of straw for His cradle! Sharing the home of humble Jewish peasants and spending His youth and early manhood at the carpenter's bench! During His public ministry, so poor and so lightly esteemed that the common courtesies of hospitality were denied Him —"He had not where to lay His head!" Despised and rejected of men; the butt of Pharisaic contempt and the center of Jewish ridicule! His life seemingly ending in defeat as He hung helpless upon the cross, enduring the shame of a criminal's execution and taunted by his heartless enemies! Is this the only sight which the earth is to have of the Lord of Glory? Is the Son of God to retire from this world in apparent defeat without any subsequent opportunity for vindicating Himself? Surely not. Is it not evident then that He who was here before in humiliation must yet come back to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe? Does not the very fitness of things, do not the claims of equity and righteousness, insist, that He who was the willing Victim shall yet return as the triumphant Victor? Does not the Cross of Calvary necessitate that our Lord shall yet come back to our earth in order to substantiate His claims and ratify His promises?

"For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet. I may tell all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture" (Ps. 22:16–18). Such was the picture that was painted by prophecy. But this scene was not to be the finale. In this very same Psalm we read, "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the Governor among the nations"(vss. 27, 28).

"And they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled" (Matt. 26:57). See our blessed Lord standing there before the Jewish Sanhedrim, arraigned before His own creatures! Mark Him as He offers no defense in response to the false witnesses that testified against Him, and then ask, Is this to be the last thing? Is there to be no sequel to this? We do not have to seek far for an answer, for on this very occasion the Redeemer declared, "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"(Matt. 26:64). And again, it is written, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." Yes, the Crucified Saviour is coming back again, coming back to vindicate Himself in a world where He once endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and, coming back to rule and reign as He first appeared in order to suffer and die.

V. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE PRESENT EXALTATION OF SATAN.

One of the greatest mysteries in all God's creation is the Devil. For any reliable information concerning him we are shut up to the Holy Scriptures. It is in God's Word alone that we can learn anything about his origin, his personality, his fall, his sphere of operations, and his approaching doom. One thing which is there taught us about the great Adversary of God and man, and which observation and experience fully confirms, is, that he is a being possessing mighty power. It would appear, from a study of the Bible, that Satan is the most powerful creature(not "Being") in all the Universe. He has access to the Heaven of heavens and appears before God day and night to accuse His saints (Rev. 12:10). In Old Testament prophecy he is denominated "The anointed Cherub" (Ezek. 28:14) and from other Scriptures we learn that the "cherubim" are the highest order among the celestial hierarchies. Satan is represented as being at the head of an organized kingdom of evil, with hosts of wicked spirits ever ready to perform the bidding of their mighty chief. He is likened to a "roaring lion"—the King of the beasts—going about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). When our Lord was here upon earth, Satan had the power to carry Him to a pinnacle of the Temple and to "shew unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time"(Luke 4:5). From the Epistle of Jude we learn that, "Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1:9). Sufficient has been said to show that Satan is a creature wielding tremendous power.

But not only does God's Word enlighten us upon the great power which our Enemy possesses, it also informs us about the sphere in which he works and makes known the location of his kingdom. In the very first mention in Scripture of that old Serpent, the Devil, he is seen in Eden having unbarred access to our first parents. In the next reference, we read of him coming before the Lord, as one who came "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 1:7). This earth of ours is the scene of his present activities. Milton's conception of Satan now seated upon a throne in Hell is altogether lacking in Scriptural verification. The New Testament is in perfect agreement with the Old. In his conflict with our Lord, the Devil declared that all the kingdoms of the world had been delivered unto him (Luke 4:6) and Christ never repudiated or even challenged his claim, nay, He three times acknowledged that Satan is "The Prince of this world" (John 12:31, etc.). In 2 Cor. 4:4 he is termed the "god of this age" (Greek), that is, the director of its false religions and the object worshipped by their devotees—compare 1 Cor. 10:20. While in 1 John 5:19, R. V. we are told, "The whole world lieth in the Evil One."

We have thus seen that Satan is an exalted creature possessing and wielding prodigious power and that this world of ours is his present kingdom. For six thousand years he has been the avowed enemy of God and man. But are things going to continue thus throughout all time? Is Satan to be allowed "free rein" for ever? Surely there will yet be an end made to his power and dominion. But what and who is going to depose him? Humanity is helpless before him. Man is unable to chain him. The Church cannot dethrone him, or it would have done so long ago. Legislation is impotent, for human governments cannot vote him out of the world. Who then shall overthrow the Kingdom of Darkness? There is only one answer possible. There is only One sufficient for such a task, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the very fact of Satan's present exaltation and man's utter inability to overthrow him, demands and necessitates the personal Return of our Redeemer to vanquish the Devil and imprison him in the Bottomless Pit.

VI. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE PRESENT DISORGANIZATION OF ISRAEL.

Israel—the mystery and miracle of history! Israel—about whom more than half the Bible is concerned! Israel—to whom God gave the Land of Palestine. Israel—concerning whom it is written, "And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all His commandments. And to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God as He hath spoken" (Deut. 26:18, 19). Israel—from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came!

Of old, Israel was honored of God as was no other nation. To them were entrusted the Holy Oracles, to them was given the Holy Law, to them came the Holy One. But look at Israel to-day and what do we see? Ten of their Tribes "lost;" and those who compose the remaining two, more despised and hated than any other people upon earth. Instead of being a blessing to all people, Israel seems to be a curse. Instead of enjoying the inheritance of the Promised Land they are homeless wanderers, while Jerusalem is trodden down by the Gentiles. Instead of rejoicing in God their Saviour Israel knows Him not, a "veil" being over their hearts.

But God's purposes in connection with Israel have not yet been fully realized. A wonderful history lies behind them and a wonderful history stretches before them. True, their sorrow is not yet ended. True, a dark valley yet lies before them. True, they must yet pass through the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). True, God has not yet fully avenged the Crucifixion of His beloved Son. But, ere long He will have done so, and then shall they be brought back again into favor with Him. Many are the promises which speak of Israel's restoration. In Is. 14:1, 2 we read, "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captive, whose captives they were: and they shall rule over their oppressors." Again, in Jer. 16:14-16 we are told, "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all lands whither He had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

But, How are the above promises to be realized? When shall these prophecies be fulfilled? The answer is, At the Second Advent of Christ. He declared, "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39). And a day is coming when Israel will say this. As it is written, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zech. 12:10, 11). Then, and thus, shall Israel repent for their awful sin of rejecting and crucifying their own Messiah.

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this, I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David (Israel), which is fallen down: and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15:14-16). And again, we read in Rom. 11:26, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). It is to be observed that in these two

Scriptures Israel's restoration is linked to the Return of their Messiah. Here then is a further necessity for the Second Advent of Christ—the present humiliation and disorganization of Israel and the promises of God to restore and rehabilitate them, requires that our Lord shall come back again to this earth.

VII. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE PRESENT DEGRADATION AND DESOLATION OF THE WORLD.

Here is a reason which ought to carry conviction to every mind. If there is anything which imperatively needs our Redeemer to Return it is surely this poor sin-cursed world of ours! Look at it and what do we see? A world everywhere racked with suffering and out of joint. A world convulsed with misery entailed by the Fall. A world now in its very death-throes, with hope almost completely gone. Everything that man could devise to better conditions and make this world a happier place has been tested and proven a failure. Every possible form of human government has been tried, each new one being as unsuccessful as the previous ones. Theocracy, democracy, and mobocracy (the French Revolution, and Russia today) have each been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Legislation, education and civilization have all been built upon, only to find in the day of testing that they were merely foundations of sand. Look where you will, on land or sea, in the air or beneath the waters, and you will witness sin and death holding high carnival. The world is dying for want of a competent Ruler.

On all sides iniquity is abounding more and more. Crime is increasing, morality is decreasing; godlessness and lawlessness are growing apace; while over all, hangs the dreadful pall of the world-war. In the physical world, despite all our enlightenment, modern discoveries and the organized activities of medical science, disease is carrying off an ever increasing multitude year by year. The educational world is mainly under the control of infidels and agnostics, under whose leadership the rising generation is taught that the faith once for all delivered to the saints is an idle superstition, or at best a religious garment which we have now outgrown. In the economic world, greed and dishonesty are rapidly eating out the very vitals of commercial stability, while the fight between capital and labor threatens a revolution such as this world has not witnessed since the days when the streets of Paris ran with blood. In the political realm there is so much chicanery, and "graft" and "party" principles are so selfishly pursued, that the self-respecting man is becoming loath to get mixed up with such filth and rottenness. Each "party" is as corrupt as the other, and the believer in Christ who is subject to God's Word will not hesitate to separate himself from that which offers his Lord no place and has no concern for His glory. In the moral realm, decay and putrefaction are witnessed upon all sides. Temperance Reform Societies, Purity-campaigns and Civic-righteousness Leagues are powerless to stem the tide of evil. The Drink-Bill of every civilized (?) nation is growing heavier every year. Immorality, both among the masses and those in high places, prevails to such a fearful extent, that our large cities are modern Sodoms and Gomorrahs. In the religious world, we gaze upon an apostate Christendom. Our Theological Seminaries, with very rare exceptions, are teaching Darwinism and Higher Criticism, while our pulpits are busily occupied with "echoing" these God-dishonoring and Scripture-denying heresies, and on all sides the Gospel is supplanted by political harangues or moral essays. The majority of our churches are more than half empty, while the mid-week prayer meeting is almost entirely a thing of the past. The few faithful servants of God that are left on earth are boycotted, maligned and persecuted. The Lord's Day has become a day of pleasure-seeking and now, Sabbath-desecration, in the form of seven days a week work on the farms and in the munition factories, has been legalized by every nation that is now at war. And, as we have said, over all hangs the dreadful pall of this World War! Literally millions of men in the prime of their manhood have already been slaughtered, while millions more have been maimed for life in the vain effort to destroy militarism and establish a lasting peace. Innumerable homes have been plunged into grief, and there is no guarantee or even prospect but what millions more will suffer a like fate.

To-day the world stands helpless before the inrushing tide of evil which threatens to

decimate almost half of the human race, and in its impotency a grief-stricken humanity is everywhere lifting up piteous hands to Heaven as it cries for a Deliverer. True, the cry may not always be articulated, yet it is audible nevertheless. True, the world, as a whole, is blind to its spiritual wretchedness and apostate condition. True, the canal mind is still enmity against God, yet, intelligent men realize that the present order of things is a complete failure and are ready and longing for a New Order. The world cries for deliverance, what shall be Heaven's response? Again we say that only one answer is possible. While the Holy Scriptures reveal the fact that the severest of God's judgments have not yet been poured upon this world, which has for so long lived in pleasure and wantonness; while the Holy Scriptures reveal the fact that the darkest hour of the night of earth's sufferings and sorrows has not yet arrived; yet, they also teach, that at the close of this night, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"(Isa. 35:4–10). That will be Heaven's response to earth's agonized cry! Therefore we say that the present degradation and desolation of the world necessitates our Redeemer's Return to take the government upon His shoulder and to rule and reign in righteousness, for then, and not till then, will every world problem find its final solution.

VIII. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE LAMENTATION OF ALL CREATION.

The effects of the Fall have been far-reaching—"By one man sin entered the world"(Rom. 5:12). Not only was the entire human family involved but the whole "Kosmos" was affected. When Adam and Eve sinned, God not only pronounced sentence upon them and the Serpent but He cursed the ground as well—"And unto Adam He said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. 3:17, 18). These words suggest a solemn and far-reaching line of thought—Sin not only brings punishment to the actual transgressor but it also involves others in its terrible consequences. The punishment which was meted out to the antediluvians was not limited to the human family, it fell upon the lower orders of creation as well—all were swept away by the flood! The judgments which God sent upon the haughty Pharaoh extended to the fishes in the rivers and the cattle in the fields as well as to all his subjects! When the Angel of Death passed through the land of the Nile, he slew all the first-born of beasts as well as the first-born of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:12). When Jehovah's wrath visited the land of Palestine in the days of Israel's apostasy it descended upon the animal kingdom as well as the human, for we read, "How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate" (Joel 1:18). And again, "How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end" (Jer. 12:4).

To what extent the entire universe has suffered the evil consequences of sin it is impossible to say, but certain it is that they are not limited to our earth. Adam was not the first offender, for before his fall Satan also had apostatized from his Maker. What other worlds were affected by Satan's fall Scripture does not inform us, yet we may infer from those principles which are revealed in God's Word that the awful consequences of Satan's rebellion were far-reaching in their scope. Astronomical observation reveals the fact that there are numbers of far-distant worlds upon which no life exists, while Scripture speaks of "wandering stars." The moon is a ruined planet where Death holds absolute sway and death is the wages of sin. If then Adam's transgression brought down upon the earth which he inhabited a curse from God, may we not soberly conclude that the fall of the highest of all God's creatures brought down a Divine curse upon those worlds over which he may have exercised a delegated rulership? Be this as it may, Scripture does reveal the fact that the consequences of sin have reached far beyond the four corners of our earth. We read "The heavens are not clean in His sight" (Job 15:15), and again, in Rom. 8:22 we are told, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

In the last mentioned Scripture we learn that the whole creation is in pain and misery. Surely this is abnormal. Surely things were not like this at the beginning, nor were they;' and surely things will not continue thus forever, nor will they. We quote now the entire passage in which the above statement is found—"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the Sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:18-21, R. V.). The order of thought here appears to be as follows:- The whole of God's creation, which is directly concerned and connected with our earth, (The "whole

creation" cannnot be taken absolutely for the unfallen angels must be excluded) suffered the consequences of Adam's sin, being brought under the bondage of corruption as the direct result. But this "bondage" is not to last for ever. A hope is set before creation: a promise has been given that it shall be "delivered" and in expectation of the fulfillment of this promise and the realization of this hope creation now "waits." The "hope" of creation is linked with "the manifestation of the sons of God" and "the liberty of their glory." The sons of God will be manifested or revealed with their Redeemer at the time of His Return for it is written "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory"(Col. 3:4). It is at the Second Coming of Christ, His return in "glory" that His people shall enter into the liberty of their glory. Then will it be that creation shall be delivered from its present bondage of corruption. Thus we learn that though the whole creation has suffered in consequence of sin, yet shall it soon share in the glorious benefits of the Death of Christ who came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. How clear then is the need of our Redeemer's Return! None but creation's Creator (John 1:3) can emancipate it from its sufferings. Hence we say that the present lamentations of Creation necessitate and demand the personal Return of our Lord.

IX. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE SUPPLICATIONS OF THE CHURCH.

While our Lord was here upon earth He gave His disciples a pattern prayer saying, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven Hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:9, 10). The Redeemer taught His saints to look forward to the future, to be occupied with God's interests and purposes, and to pray for the coming of His Kingdom, i.e., the Millennial Kingdom. Thus we learn that our hope has to do, not with the present kingdoms of this world, but with the coming Kingdom of God, which hope will be realized at the return of the Redeemer Himself. It is clear from a number of Scriptures that the coming of God's Kingdom synchronizes with the Return of Christ (see Luke 19:12; Rev. 11:15, etc.). The Hope of the Church centers in Christ and has to do with the future rather than with the present, for "hope" always looks forward. Therefore it is that the prayers of the Church must conform to and correspond with its hope.

The last promise ever made by our Lord, made some fifty or sixty years after His ascension, given to the beloved John on the Isle of Patmos but recorded for the encouragement and joy of all His people throughout the Christian dispensation, was "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20). The response to this promise is the prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." As this dispensation draws to its close and as the Return of Christ is daily coming nearer, the Holy Spirit is causing many to make this prayer their own. As the result of the recovery of the "Blessed Hope" which throughout the Dark Ages was lost to the Church, and as the result of the proclamation which is now being sounded forth far and wide, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him," companies of God's saints all over the earth are now daily crying, "Even so Come Lord Jesus." And our God is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God! He who has taught so many of its members to long and pray for the Return of their Saviour must satisfy that longing and answer that prayer. Therefore we say that the expectations and supplications of the Church of God which He purchased with His own Blood necessitate the personal Return of our Redeemer.

X. THE REDEEMER'S RETURN IS NECESSITATED BY THE EXPECTATION OF THE DEAD IN CHRIST.

This argument may be summarized thus:—The Intermediate state into which the souls of the redeemed pass at death is not the perfect state, it is but an "unclothed" (2 Cor. 5:1-3) condition. Like their brethren who are still upon earth, those now in Paradise are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). A countless multitude of those who fell asleep in Jesus are yet in the disembodied state, and in that state they are "waiting," waiting for the time when this corruptible shall put on incorruption and when this mortal shall put on immortality. Those, who while on earth, looked and longed for the Return of their Redeemer, and who are still waiting that blest event shall not wait thus forever, as it is written, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

In the last book of the Bible, where the veil that separates between the present and the future and between this world and the next is pulled aside, we find a Scripture that bears closely upon the point now under consideration. We refer to Rev. 6:9, 10—"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the alter the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" This passage, stript of its symbolism, signifies that martyred believers now in the Intermediate state are waiting with eager expectation the time when God shall avenge their death, which time is reached immediately before our Lord returns to this earth. That which we wish to specially emphasize is the fact that souls now in Paradise are here represented as crying "How long?" Thus we learn that those "present with the Lord," as well as believers still "in the body," are eagerly expecting and waiting for the time of their Redeemer's Return. The answer made to these disembodied "souls" is very striking—"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:11).

The "dead in Christ" are waiting in hope, waiting for the fulfillment of that promise, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:42-44). Is their hope nothing more than an idle dream? Are they to wait thus for ever? No, blessed be God. His Word, declares that at the time of our Redeemer's Return, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him"(1 Thess. 4:14). Therefore we say that the present unclothed condition of the dead in Christ with their expectation of the Resurrection morn requires and necessitates the personal Return of our Lord.

To sum up. At least ten reasons require that Christ shall come back again -- the declarations of Old Testament prophecy; the affirmations of our Lord Himself; the ratification of the Holy Spirit through the writers of the New Testament Epistles; the humiliation of the Cross, requiring a corresponding vindication of Christ in power and glory; the present disorganization of Israel; the exaltation of Satan and the powerlessness of man to depose him; the degradation and desolation of the world; the lamentations of a Creation waiting to be delivered from its bondage of corruption; the supplications of the Church crying "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" and the expectation of the dead in Christ waiting for their glorification, singly and collectively necessitate and demand the personal Return of our Redeemer.

Chapter Two

The Hope of the Redeemer's Return

In 1 Cor. 13:13 we learn there are three cardinal Christian graces namely, faith, hope, and love. Concerning the first and third of these, believers, generally, are well informed, but regarding the second, many of the Lord's people have the vaguest conceptions. When Christians are questioned upon the subject of Faith they are, for the most part, able to answer promptly and intelligently; but interrogate the average church-member about the believer's Hope, and his replies are indistinct and uncertain. Let Christian Love come up for discussion and we all feel that we are upon solid ground, but when asked to pursue the theme of Christian Hope many step cautiously and hesitatingly.

That there is the greatest confusion of thought and belief among Christians concerning their Hope may readily be proven by questioning a number regarding the nature of their hope. Ask the average church-goer what his hope is, and he will say, Salvation—he hopes to be saved when he comes to die. Ask another and he will tell you that Death is his hope, for it is then that he will be released from all the sufferings of the flesh. Ask a third and he would say that Heaven was his hope. Perhaps this last reply would better express the common and popular belief than either of the others. But to say that our hope is future happiness, is to say no more than any heathen would say. There are several Scriptures which distinguish between Heaven and the believer's Hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3-4). Here the "living hope" unto which we have been begotten is separated in thought from the "inheritance" which is "reserved in heaven" for us. Though closely connected, Heaven and the believer's Hope are certainly not synonymous as is clear from Col. 1:5 where they are again distinguished—"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel." Heaven is not here said to be the believer's hope, for the hope is "laid up" for him "in heaven." What then is our Hope?

It is strange that there should be such ignorance and confusion upon this subject for Hope is made almost as prominent in the New Testament as is either Faith or Love. The Church epistles have much to say upon the subject. In the epistle to the Romans when setting forth the consequences or results of justification, the apostle wrote, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (5:1). And again in 8:24, 25—"For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (R. V.). To the Corinthians Paul wrote, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). To the Galatians he wrote, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (5:5). For the Ephesians he prayed that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened, and that they might know "what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18), and in setting forth the sevenfold Unity of the Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (4:4-6), and there can no more be two different hopes than there can be two Lords, or two faiths.

To the Thessalonian saints the apostle Paul wrote, "Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope"(1 Thess. 4:13), and again, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our

Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace"(2 Thess. 2:16). Unto Titus he wrote, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13). And unto the Hebrews he said, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. ** That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (6:11, 18, 19).

The apostle Peter found cause for rejoicing in that God had "according to His abundant mercy, begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3); and again, he exhorted his readers to "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2, 3). Thus we see that the New Testament abounds in passages which speak of the believer's hope."

In all ages God's people have had a hope set before them, and that hope has always centered in Christ. In Eden God gave to Adam the promise that the woman's Seed should come and bruise the Serpent's head and the anticipation of the fulfillment of this promise constituted the hope of the saints in those far-off days. Said Jacob, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. 49:18). The Hope that God set before Abram was that his "Seed" should be a blessing unto all nations, which hope, as we learn from Gal. 3:16, had particular reference to Christ. The Hope which God set before Moses was expressed as follows, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him" (Deut. 18:18). For the fulfillment of this prophecy see John 12:49; 14:10, etc. The Hope which God set before David was stated as follows, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His Kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. 7:12, 13). And later, through His prophets, God again and again set before Israel the Hope of the appearing of their Messiah. This leads us to inquire now into—

I. The Character of Our Hope

As there is so much confusion and uncertainty respecting this branch of our subject, and in order to clear away the rubbish which human devisings have gathered around it, we will deal first with the negative side of the character of our Hope.

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1. Our Hope is not the Conversion of the World.

We pray that these pages may be read by many who will be startled by the above statement. A world which shall eventually be saved by the preaching of the Gospel has been the expectation of almost all Christendom. That the Gospel shall yet triumph over the world, the flesh, and the Devil is the belief of the great majority of those who profess to be the Lord's people. In the seminaries, in the pulpits, in the Christian literature of the day, and in the great missionary gatherings where placards bearing the words "The world for Christ" are prominently displayed, has this theory been zealously heralded. It is supposed that anything short of a converted "world" is a concept dishonoring and derogatory to the Gospel. We are told the Gospel cannot fail because it is the power of God, and though the Church has failed, yet, a day is surely coming when this captivating ideal shall be realized. To believe other than this, is to be dubbed a "pessimist," yea, it is to be looked upon as a hinderer and traitor to the cause of Christ. But what are the plain facts?

The Lord Jesus Christ preached the Gospel, preached it faithfully, lovingly, zealously and untiringly. But with what results? Was the world "converted" under His preaching? Should it be said this question is not a fair one because He preached only locally, we accept the correction, but ask further, Was Palestine converted under His preaching? We have only to glance at the four Gospels to find an answer. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord declared that the "many" were on the broad road that leadeth to destruction and that only a "few" were on the narrow path that leadeth unto life. In the Parable of the Sower He announced that out of four castings of the good seed from His hand three of them fell upon unfruitful ground. Again, we are told, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:10, 11). No; the Gospel as preached by the Son of God Himself held out no promise of a world converted by the proclamation of it, for after three and a half years' ministry such as this world has never witnessed before or since, there was but a handful who responded to the gracious appeals of the Gospel from His lips—there were but one hundred and twenty all told that waited in the upper room for the coming of the Holy Spirit which He had promised to send to His followers (Acts 1:15).

How was it in the days of the apostles? During the first generation of the Church's history, wonderful things happened which were well calculated to convert the world if anything could. Eleven men who had been trained by our Lord Himself were now sent forth to herald the glad tidings of salvation. The Holy Spirit was poured forth upon them, and in addition to the Eleven, Saul of Tarsus was miraculously saved and sent forth as the apostle to the Gentiles. But what success attended their efforts? How were they received by the world? Again we have but to turn to the New Testament Scriptures to find our answer. Like their Master, they, too, were despised and rejected of men. The apostles were everywhere spoken against and regarded as the offscouring of the earth. Some of them were cast into prison, others were slain by the sword. One suffered death by crucifixion and the last of the little band was banished to the Isle of Patmos. True it is that their labors were not entirely in vain. True it is that God honored His own Word and numbers were saved, and here and there churches were organized. But the multitudes, the great masses, both of Jews and Gentiles, remained unmoved and unconverted. The actual conditions, in the days of the apostles then, gave no promise of a world converted by the Gospel.

How is it in our own day? "Ah!" it will be said "times have changed since then: Christ and His apostles lived in the days of Paganism and barbarism, but under the enlightenment of our modern civilization this twentieth century is far otherwise." Yes, but all is not gold that glitters. We do not deny, we praise God for the fact, that to-day there are far more Christians upon earth

than there were in the first century. But there are far more sinners too! What we are discussing now is the Conversion of the world. Has the growth of the Church of God kept pace with the increase of the earth's population? We trow not. To-day there are probably 1,000,000,000 souls on earth who have never even heard the name of Christ! How then can we talk about a converted world when upwards of two-thirds of humanity is destitute of the Gospel? Moreover, what of Christendom itself? How much of that which bears the name of Christ is truly Christian? What proportion of those who term themselves the children of God, are really entitled to that name? More than half of professing Christendom is found within the pales of the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches! And what of Protestantism itself? What of the evangelical churches filled with their worldly, pleasure-loving, theater-going, Sabbath-desecrating, prayer-meeting-neglecting members? No; my reader, be not deceived with appearances or high-sounding phrases. God's flock is only a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). There is but a 'remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5).

Has the Gospel failed? Have God's purposes been defeated? Certainly not. The Gospel was never designed to convert the world. God never purposed to regenerate all humanity in this dispensation, any more than He did under the Mosaic Economy, when He suffered the nations to walk in their own ways. God's purpose for this Age is clearly defined in Acts 15:14—"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name." In full harmony with this, the apostle Paul declared, "I am made all things to all men, that I might be all means save some"(1 Cor. 9:22). Clearly then, the Hope of the Church is not the Conversion of the World.

Having dwelt at some length upon the general, let us now come to the particular—

2. Our Hope is not the Salvation of the Soul.

In the New Testament the word "Salvation" has a threefold scope—past, present and future, which, respectively, has reference to our deliverance from the penalty, the power, and the presence of sin. When we say, above, that our Hope is not the Salvation of the soul, we mean that it is not our deliverance from the wrath to come which is the prospect God sets before His people. To certain of our readers it may appear almost a wearisome waste of time for us to discuss these points, but for the sake of the class for which this work is specially designed we would ask them to bear with us in patience. In these days when the Bible is so grievously neglected both in the pulpit and in the pew, we cannot afford to take anything for granted. Multitudes of those in our churches are ignorant of the most elementary truths of the Christian faith. Experience shows that comparatively few people are clear about even the A, B, C, of the Gospel. Talk to the average church-member, and only too often it will be found that he has nothing more than a vague and uncertain hope about his personal salvation. He is "trying to live up to the light that he has," he is "doing his best," and he hopes that, somehow, everything will come out right in the end. He does not dare to say I know I have passed from death unto life, but he hopes to go to Heaven at the last.

Nowhere does Scripture present the Salvation of the soul as the believer's hope. Salvation from the guilt, the penalty, the wages, of sin is something for which believers thank God even now. Said our Lord to His disciples, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). The present-tense aspect of our salvation is presented in many Scriptures—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life" (John 5:24). How simple and definite this is! Eternal life is something which every believer in Christ already possesses, and for him there is no possibility of future condemnation in the sense of having to endure God's wrath. Again we read, "Beloved now are we the sons of God" (1 John 3:2). We do not have to obey God's commandments, walk worthy, and serve the Lord, in order to become God's children, we are to do these things because we are, already, members of the household of faith. The salvation or redemption of our bodies is future, for it will not be until our Saviour's return that he "shall" change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). But the salvation of the soul, deliverance from the wrath to come, is an accomplished fact for every sinner, that has received the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour. All such have been "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). All such have been "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). all such have been "perfected for ever" (Heb. 10:14). So far as their standing before God is concerned.

As another has said, "Salvation is not away off yonder at the gates of Heaven; salvation is at the cross. The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared, and it brings salvation all the way down to where the sinner is—right there. You know our Lord's own picture of it. It is the illustration to which my mind recurs most instantly—that illustration of the good Samaritan. You know how beautifully that shadows out this blessed truth; that just as the good Samaritan went down the Jericho road and ministered to the wretch who lay there half dead, pouring oil into his wounds right there where he lay, just so the grace of God, that brings salvation, has come to the sinner in the place where he lies in his sins. No matter how great a sinner he may be, if he can be persuaded to turn the eye of faith toward the cross, there salvation comes" (Dr. C. I. Scofield). Again—

3. Our Hope is not Death.

Of all the extravagant and absurd interpretations of Scripture which have found a place among sober expositors is the belief that Death is the Hope which God has set before the believer. How it ever came to find acceptance it is difficult to say. It is true that there are a number of passages which speak of the Lord returning suddenly and unexpectedly, but to make the words "At such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" and "Behold I come as a thief in the night" mean that death may steal in upon the believer without warning is to reduce the Word of God to meaningless jargon and is to make sane exposition impossible. Scripture says what it means, and means what it says. True there are Parables in the Bible; true there are some passages which are highly symbolical; but where this is the case the context usually gives clear intimation to that effect, and where it does not, the plain and literal force should always be given to the language of Holy Writ. In Scripture "death" means death, and the coming again of the Son of man means His coming, and the two expressions are not synonymous. As we have said, the Return of Christ and death (sometimes) each, alike, come suddenly and unexpectedly, but there all analogy between them ends.

It is passing strange that Bible teachers should have confounded Death with the Second Coming of Christ. The former is spoken of as an "Enemy" (1 Cor. 15:26), whereas the latter is termed "that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), and surely these two terms cannot refer to the same thing. At the Return of our Lord we shall be made like Him (1 John 3:2), but believers are not made like Him at death, for death introduces them into a disembodied state. That "death" is not the believer's Hope is clear from many Scriptures. In 1 Pet. 1:3 the apostle returns thanks because we have been begotten again "unto a living hope." The saint of God has a living hope in a dying scene: a glorious prospect beyond this vale of tears. In 2 Tim. 4:8 the apostle Paul reminds us that there is laid up a crown of righteousness unto all them that love Christ's "appearing," which is further proof that death is not the Second Coming of Christ, for who is there that "loves" death? Death is my going to Christ, but His Return is Christ coming to me. Death is a cause of sadness and sorrow, but the Return of the Lord is a cause of joy and comfort—"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18, see context). Death lays the body in the dust, but at the Return of our Redeemer His people arise from the dust—"the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:17). Death is the "wages of sin," which means that death is the penalty of sin, but so completely has that penalty been borne by our Saviour that we read, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Death was certainly not the hope of the early Christians as is clear from 1 Thess. 1:9, 10 where we read, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" - these Thessalonian saints were looking for Christ not death. Finally; death cannot be our Hope, for death will not be the portion of all believers as is clear from the language of 1 Cor. 15:51, "We shall not all sleep." What then is our Hope? We answer—

4. Our Hope is the personal Return of our Redeemer.

"Jesus Christ our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1). Jesus Christ is the believer's "all in all" (Col. 3:11). He is "our peace" (Eph. 2:14). He is "our life" (Col. 3:14). He is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). And, we repeat, He is "our Hope." But hope always looks forward. Hope has to do with the future. "We are saved in hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24, 25). This means that what we hope for is that which we do not yet posses. 3 As another has said, "Man was not made for the present, and the present was not intended to satisfy man. ** It is for the future, not the present, that man exists" (W. Trotter).

The Hope of the believer is clearly set forth in Titus 2:13—"Looking for that blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (R. V.). Our Hope is the personal Return of Christ when He shall come back again to receive us unto Himself. Our Hope is to be taken out of this scene of sin and suffering and sorrow to be where Christ is(John 14:1-3). Our Hope is to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and be for ever "with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Our Hope is to be "made like" Him, and this hope will be realized when "we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). This is the "one hope" of our calling" (Eph. 4:4). This is the only Hope for everything else has failed.

The hope of Philosophy has failed. Philosophy was the beau-ideal of the ancients. When Greece and Rome were the leading nations of the earth, the goal of every ambitious young man's desire was to become a philosopher. Philosophers were respected and honored by all. Philosophy set out to solve the "riddle of the universe" and to explain the rationale of all creation. It was expected that philosophy would find a solution to every problem and devise a remedy for every ill. But what were its fruits? "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21). When the apostle Paul came to Athens—one of the principal centers of philosophic culture —he found an altar erected to "The Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). The only place the word "philosophy" is found in the Scriptures is in Col. 2:8, where we read "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Philosophy proved a willo'-the-wisp. Never was philosophy so thoroughly systematized and so ably expounded as it was in the days of Socrates, and never was society more corrupt. The ruins of ancient Greece bear witness to the failure and inadequacy of philosophy.

The hope of Legislation has failed. It was the dream of the celebrated Plato that he could establish an ideal Republic by compiling and enforcing a perfect code of laws. But a perfect Code of Law was compiled a thousand years before Plato was born. God Himself gave to Israel a Code of Law on Mount Sinai—with what results? No sooner was that Law given than it was broken. The children of Israel declared, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Ex. 24:7), but their words were an empty boast. The truth is that imperfect creatures cannot keep a perfect law, nor can imperfect men be induced to administer and enforce it. There is not a land in all the world where all the statutes of the State, or nearly all, are rigidly enforced. What then is the use of electing worthy and able legislators and for them to enact righteous laws if their successors refuse to enforce them? The present universal failure to do this testifies to the impotency of Law while it is left in human hands.

The hope of human Government has failed. The Roman Empire experimented for many centuries and tried no less than seven different forms of government, but each in turn failed to accomplish the desired effects, and the last state of that Empire was worse than the first. Everything from absolute monarchy to absolute Socialism has already been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Revolting at tyrannical yokes imposed upon their subjects by the

European rulers, our forefathers in this country sought to establish a free Republic, a democratic form of government, a government managed by the people and for the people. What have been its fruits? Are economic conditions in the United States better than those in England or Italy? Are relations between Capital and Labour more amicable and satisfactory? Is there less political corruption in high places, and fairer representation of the oppressed? Is there more contentment and satisfaction among the masses? We fear not. When we witness the methods employed in the average political campaign, when we read through the reports of the police courts, when we behold the strikes and lock-outs in every part of the country, when we peer beneath the surface and gaze upon the moral state of the masses, and when we hear the angry cries of the poor laborer and his half-starved family, we discover that the only hope for America as well as Europe is that our Lord shall come back again and take the government upon His shoulder.

The hope of Civilization has failed. How much all of us have heard of "the march and progress of Civilization" during the past two generations! What an Utopia it was going to create! The masses were to be educated and reformed, injustices were to cease, war was to be abolished, and all mankind welded into one great Brotherhood living together in peace and good will. Civilization was to be the agency for ushering in the long-looked-for Millennium. Any one who dared to challenge the claims made on behalf of the enlightenment of our twentieth century, or called into question the transformation which the upward march of Civilization was supposed to be effecting, was regarded as an "old fogey" who was not abreast of the times, or, as a "pessimist" whose vision was blinded by prejudice. Was not "Evolution" an established fact of science and did not the fundamental principle of Evolution—progress and advancement from the lower to the higher—apply to nations and the human race as a whole, if so, we should soon discover that we had outgrown all the barbarities of the past. War was now no longer to be thought of, for those cultured nations within the magic pale of civilization would henceforth settle their differences amicably by means of arbitration. It was true that the great Powers continued building enormous armies and navies, but these, we were told, would merely be used to enforce Peace. But oh! what a madman's dream it has all proven. The Hope of Civilization, like every other hope which has not been founded upon the sure and certain Word of God, has also proved to be nothing more than an entrancing mirage, a tragic delusion. The great World War, with all its unmentionable horrors, its inhumanities, its barbaric ruthlessness, has rudely wakened a lethargic humanity to the utter insufficiency of all merely human expediencies, and has demonstrated as clearly as anything has ever been demonstrated that "Civilization" is nothing more than a high-sounding but empty title.

We repeat again, the ONLY hope of the Church is the personal Return of the Redeemer to remove His people from these scenes of misery and bloodshed to be for ever with Himself; and the ONLY hope for this poor sin-cursed and Satan-dominated world is the Second Advent of the Son of Man to rule and reign over the earth in righteousness and peace. This is the world's LAST hope, for every other hope has failed it! We turn now to consider—

II. THE AUTHORIZATION OF OUR HOPE.

The insufficiency and failure of the various hopes of the world reviewed above, serve only to furnish a background upon which, by way of contrast, may shine forth more prominently and gloriously the certainty and sufficiency of our hope. Every hope of man which originates in his own mind and heart is doomed to end in disappointment. If men refuse the light which is furnished by Divine revelation then they must expect to remain in darkness, and, as our Lord said, “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). The value of a hope lies in the authorization of it, what then are the grounds for our hope?

What warrant have we for expecting the Return of the Redeemer? After all that has been said in the previous pages and in view of the various Scriptures therein cited, a lengthy reply to this question is not necessary. In brief, it may be said, the inspired and infallible Word of Him who cannot lie is our warrant and authorization for looking for that Blessed Hope. But, briefly, to particularize.

1. We have the Promise of the Lord Jesus Himself.

We have already quoted from John 14 in other connections but we now refer to it again. On the eve of His crucifixion our Saviour turned to His disciples and said, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2, 3). Here is an assertion about which there is no ambiguity whatever. Here is a promise that is positive and unequivocal. Here is a word of comfort from the lips of Truth incarnate. The Lord who has gone away from this earth to prepare a place for His people is coming back again for them, coming back in person, coming to receive them to Himself that they may be with Him for evermore.

2. We have the word of God's messengers at the time of His Son's Ascension.

These words are recorded in the first chapter of the Acts which presents a scene of unusual interest and importance. Our Lord's sojourn upon earth was now to terminate. The time of His departure was at hand. The great purpose of the Divine incarnation had been accomplished. The cross and the empty sepulcher lay behind, and now the Saviour of sinners was to be exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Together with a few of His disciples He went as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them, and while in the act of blessing them He was "parted from them, and went up into heaven" (Luke 24:50, 51). And a cloud received Him out of their sight, and then we are told, "While they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, two men stood by them in white apparel: which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10, 11). Here again is a statement that is clear and simple. Here again is a promise that is plain and positive. The Lord Jesus has gone up into heaven, but He is not to remain there for ever. The "same Jesus" which ascended is to descend: the "same Jesus" which was seen returning to this earth. The absent One is coming back, coming back in person in "like manner" as He went away.

3. We have the inspired testimony of the apostles.

We have already shown in a previous chapter that each of the apostles bore witness to the Second Coming of Christ. Their testimony is clear, full, and uniform. At this point we shall select but a single passage, a familiar one, from the epistles of the apostle Paul. In 1 Thess. 4:13-18 we read, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 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 (i.e., "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 above passage is the most comprehensive statement upon the Redeemer's Return which is to be found in the apostolic writings. The importance of the communication contained therein is intimated by the prefatory clause—"This we say unto you by the word of the Lord," an expression which is always reserved for those passages of Divine revelation which are of peculiar importance or solemnity. Here again we learn that Christ is going to return in person —"The Lord Himself." Here again we have a positive promise—"The Lord Himself shall descend." And here again, the Second Coming of Christ is presented as the "blessed hope" of the Church —"comfort one another with these words." We reserve further comment upon this passage for a later chapter.

4. Finally, we have the Promise of the Lord given from the Throne.

We have previously pointed out that, some fifty or sixty years after His ascension to the right hand of God, Christ sent His angel to the beloved John on the Isle of Patmos saying, “Surely I come quickly” Rev. 22:20). This was our Lord’s last promise to His people, as though to intimate that He would have them continually occupied with His imminent Return. Perhaps this will be the best place to meet an objection that is frequently made by those who seek to find flaws in the Word of God. It is said that the Lord Jesus here made a mistake. He declared that He was coming quickly and more than eighteen centuries have passed since then and yet He has not returned!

The explanation of this supposed difficulty is very simple. When the Lord Jesus said, “Surely I come quickly,” He spoke from Heaven, and Heaven’s measurement of time is very different from earth’s. Never once while He was here upon earth did the Saviour say or even hint that He would return “quickly.” On the contrary He gave plain intimation that after His departure a lengthy interval would have to pass ere He came back again. In the Parable of the Nobleman He spoke of Himself as One taking a journey into “a far country” (Luke 19:12). On another occasion He represented an evil servant saying, during the time of His absence, “My Lord delayeth His coming” (Matt. 24:28). While in the Parable of the Talents He openly declared that “After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them” (Matt. 25:19). What we would here press upon the attention of our readers is, that, each of these utterances were made by our Lord during the time when He was still upon earth and therefore they must be considered from earth’s viewpoint; but when the Lord Jesus said “Surely I come quickly” He spoke from Heaven and concerning Heaven’s measurement of time we need to bear in mind that word “Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8). In the light of the last quoted Scripture it is easy to understand Rev. 22:20—if our Lord returns before the present century terminates He will have been away but two days!

“Surely I come quickly.” These are the words of our ascended Lord. This is His promise, sent from the very Throne of Heaven. This is His final word to His people before they hear his “shout” calling them to be with Himself. This, then, is the warrant, the ground, the authorization of our Hope. Let us now consider—

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF OUR HOPE.

It is both interesting and profitable to notice the several adjectives which are used in connection with the believer's Hope. In 2 Thess. 2:16 it is termed a "good hope." In Heb. 6:19 it is described as a hope "both sure and steadfast." In 1 Pet. 1:3 it is denominated "a living hope." In Eph. 4:4 it is styled the "one hope" of our calling. While in Titus 2:13 it is spoken of as blessed hope." The blessedness of our Hope is that which is now particularly to engage our attention. In what respects is our hope a "blessed" one? We answer—

1. Because of its bearing upon Israel.

Israel's future blessings wait for the Return of their Messiah. When He was here before He was despised and rejected by His brethren according to the flesh, but when He comes back again to this earth they shall welcome and worship Him. That prophecy of Zechariah's which received a partial fulfillment when He was here before, is yet to receive a further and complete fulfillment, in the days of His Second Advent. This is clear from the words which immediately follow these which had reference to His entry into Jerusalem a few days before His crucifixion —"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9:9, 10). And note further the closing verses of the same chapter—"And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids" (vss. 16, 17). The real "Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem" is yet future. Our Lord is to enter the royal city again and at the time of His return He shall enter it as King in fact and in full manifestation of that fact. Then it is that Zion's King shall come to her "having salvation," and then it is that Israel shall marvel at His grace and at His excellency; and then it will be that the daughter of Jerusalem shall be exalted and be once more owned and blessed by Jehovah. It is on the return of Christ to this earth that Israel shall enter into the enjoyment of that inheritance which was given unto their fathers, and under the reign of their Messiah shall become a blessing to all nations. Again; the Redeemer's Return is a blessed Hope.

2. Because of its bearing upon the Gentiles.

This aspect of our subject has not received the attention which it deserves. It has been assumed by some that the present dispensation is the time when God is blessing the Gentiles and that in the Millennium the Jews will be the special objects of God's favor. It is true that in the Millennium Israel shall enter into the enjoyment of their inheritance and that at that time they shall occupy the chief position, governmentally, among the nations, but it is a mistake to suppose that the Gentiles will receive less notice from God then than they do now. During this Age God is merely taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name, and hence it is that the vast majority of them are still living amid the darkness of heathendom. But it will not always be thus. The restoration of Israel to God's favor will result in wide blessing to the Gentiles.

In the eleventh chapter of Romans, where the apostle is showing that Israel's present "blindness" is not to continue forever, he declares, "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them (Israel) be the riches of the world (i.e., the enrichment of the Gentiles by the Gospel), and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? (that is, How much more will Israel's latter-day blessing enrich the Gentiles). For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (vss. 11, 12, 15). How clear it is from these verses that, universal blessings for mankind are not to be brought about by the indefinite prolongation of this present dispensation and the preaching of the Gospel, but by the restoration of Israel, after Christendom has been cut off for its non-continuance in God's goodness. As another has said, "The end of apostate Judaism was judgment: the end of apostate Gentile Christianity will be judgment also. But just as blessing came to us when judgment fell upon the Jew, so when judgment falls upon Christendom, blessing will be restored to Israel, and Israel's restoration will bring still fuller blessing to the world than any it has had during the present dispensation; it will be as "life from the dead!" (W. Trotter).

The words of Simeon recorded in Acts 15 are in perfect agreement with the teaching of Romans 11—"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, after this, I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David (i. e., Israel), which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (vss. 14-17). It is to be noted that here again the "seeking of the Lord" by the "residue of men and all the Gentiles" is subsequent to the restoration of Israel.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament which speak of the Millennial blessedness of the Gentiles. We single out one or two without commenting extensively upon them. "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Is. 40:5). "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Ps. 98:1-3). Once more the order is the same: God's righteousness is displayed before the "heathen" and His salvation is made known to the ends of the earth following God's dealing in mercy with Israel.

One more quotation must suffice: "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and My people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh"(Joel 2:27, 28). Like all prophecy, this one receives a double fulfillment. It is to be observed that when Peter quoted

from Joel on the Day of Pentecost he did not say, “And now is fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16), because the words of Joel quoted above will not be filled until the Millennium, then and not till then, will God’s Spirit be poured out upon “all flesh”—for that glad day, the earth waits the Second Advent of our Lord. Thus we see that the Return of Christ to this earth to usher in the Millennium will be attended with gracious and wide blessing to the Gentiles, for then it will be that “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). Again, the Return of the Redeemer is a Blessed Hope.

3.Because of its bearing upon the Church.

Concerning this point we shall here merely generalize, for this precious aspect of our subject will come up for consideration again in a later chapter. In a word, we may say that, the Hope of the Church lies in the future and not in the present, is heavenly and not earthly. To His disciples our Lord said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:30). This is the present portion of the Church which is His body: this is all that the believer is to expect from the world in which he is now living. We are not to be surprised if the world “hates” us, because it first hated our Divine Master. Said the apostle “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Yea, we are assured that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The Lord’s path to the Throne was via the Cross, and we are called to “follow His steps.” The Hope of the Church then lies not in this world, but above it; not in the present, but in the future.

At first sight it may appear strange, especially to unbelievers, that the Christian should speak of his hope. In contrast to the wicked who have “no peace,” the saint has a satisfying portion. The believer has already drunk of that “living water” of which those who drink shall “never thirst.” The believer is already in possession of “eternal life,” but he has not yet entered into the full and unhindered enjoyment of it—that is still before him as the object of his hope. In one sense then, the Christian is satisfied, in another sense he is not. The believer already knows One, yea, is now indwelt by One who can satisfy him. He knows Christ, possesses Christ, enjoys Christ; but, as yet, he has not seen Christ. It is by faith (not feelings) that we know and enjoy Christ, but the more we know and enjoy Him thus, the more we long to behold Him—“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:8, 9).

“Yes, my brethren, believing in Christ, whom we have not seen, we love Him; we rejoice in Him with unspeakable joy; we receive the salvation of our soul. But to see Christ—to have the salvation which He wrought out on the cross applied to our bodies as well as to our soul—to have it perfected in our experience even as it respects our soul—to have it consummated thus in all who are follow-partakers with us of Christ—to be with Him, and with them, in our Father’s house—to behold His glory which the Father has given Him—to appear with Him in glory when He appears—to reign with Him over a ransomed and redeemed and happy creation—to fulfill our part in the universal harmony of all in heaven and all in earth, when all shall bow the knee to Jesus, when every tongue shall own Him Lord, and all voices shall join to celebrate His praise,—this, and far more than this—far more than heart can conceive or tongue explain, is what we wait for; and, above all, we wait for Him whose return shall introduce us to all this perfect blessedness—we wait for God’s Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. HE IS OUR HOPE. We know Him now by faith as our Saviour, our Lord, our life, our peace, our joy, our all. AND HE IS OUR HOPE. He is plainly said to be so in 1 Tim. 1:1—“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ OUR HOPE.” And what He is thus in so many plain words expressly declared to be in this passage, He is shown to be by the uniform, unvarying testimony of Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation (“Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects” by W. Trotter 4). Again, the Redeemer’s Return is a “Blessed Hope”—

4. Because of its bearing upon Christ Himself.

Our Lord Himself is waiting that blest moment when He shall rise from the Father's Throne, descend to the air and catch up His loved and redeemed ones to be for ever with Himself. What other meaning can possibly be given to that remarkable word recorded in Rev. 1:9—"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." And again we read, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. 10:12, 13). Yes, for well nigh two thousand years, our Lord has patiently waited for the last predestined member to be added to the Church which is His body. Nay, may we not go further, and reverently say, from all eternity the Lord Jesus has been waiting to possess that people given to Him by the Father before the foundation of the world! It was for this "joy" that was set before Him that He despised the cross and endured its shame (Heb. 12:2). It was for this "one pearl" which He esteemed of "great price"—oh! wondrous thought—that He went and sold all that He had to buy it (Matt. 13:46). It is for this blood-purchased people that He has been interceding on high since the day of His ascension. And at His Second Advent the time of waiting, the long interval of His "patience," will be ended. Then it will be that He shall come to receive us unto Himself. Then it will be that He shall present the Church to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). Then it will be that "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied"(Is. 53:11). O blessed Hope. Well may we cry "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." For Him, too, as well as for us, this is "that blessed hope."

And now, dear reader, What is your hope? What is it that is occupying your heart and filling your vision? Is it the prospect of a speedily returning Redeemer? If you are truly the Lord's then do you not yearn to see Him face to face? Do you not long to fall at His feet and say "my Lord and my God"? Surely you do, for you cannot be fully satisfied in this world. How could you be? How can you find satisfaction in a world from which your Saviour is absent? "Earth is a wilderness, not merely (no, nor chiefly) because of its trials and its hardships, its sorrows and its pangs, its disappointments and reverses, but because He is not here. Heaven would not be heaven to the saint if Jesus were not there. He, His presence (as that which introduces us to it), His coming is our hope—the hope of the Christian, the hope of the Church. May our hearts cherish it as we have never done! May its brightness so attract us that earth's fairest, loveliest, most enchanting scenes may be weariness itself to our hearts, as detaining us from the object of our hopes! May that object so animate us that earth's heaviest afflictions—the narrowest, most rugged, and most thorny portions of the narrow way—may be welcome to us, as the path that leads us onwards to the goal of our expectations the home of our heart, the Jesus whose presence makes it what it is, whose love made Him tread a narrower and a darker path than this, and whose smile of ineffable satisfaction shall crown the faith that has trusted Him, the love that has followed Him, and the patience of hope which has waited for Him, throughout this dreary journey, along this narrow way, amid the darkness and solitude of this long and dismal night" (W. Trotter).

Chapter Three

The Fact of the Redeemer's Return

It has been pointed out by another that the New Testament is concerned mainly with the presentation of three great facts: first, that the Son of God has been to the earth but has gone away; second, that the Holy Spirit has come down to this earth and is still here; third, that the Son of God is coming back again to this earth. To quote—"These are the three great subjects unfolded in the New Testament Scriptures; and we shall find that each of them has a double bearing: it has a bearing upon the world, and a bearing upon the church; upon the world as a whole, and upon each unconverted man, woman, and child in particular; upon the church as a whole, and upon each individual member thereof, in particular. It is impossible for any one to avoid the bearing of these three grand facts upon his own personal condition and future destiny" ("Papers on the Lord's Coming" by C. H. M. 5). A few words now on each of these facts.

First; the Son of God has been to this earth but has gone away. Here is a fact marvelous in its nature and far-reaching in its effects. This world has been visited by its Creator. The very feet of the Lord of Glory have trod this earth on which we now dwell. From heaven's throne there descended the Only-begotten of the Father, and for upwards of thirty years He tabernacled here among men. His appearing was not attended with regal pomp and outward splendor. His glory was veiled and His Divine prerogatives were laid aside. He who was in the form of God took upon Himself the form of a servant. He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, was made in the likeness of men. He who had received the worship of angels was born in a manger. What an infinite stoop! What amazing condescension! What matchless grace! Were it not that we have grown so familiar with the recital of these things, were it not that our cold hearts had lost their sense of wonderment, we should be overwhelmed with adoring gratitude. Were it not that we were so occupied with the things of this world and our own interests we should prostrate ourselves before God in worship and cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing"(Rev. 5:12). Here then is the first great fact presented in the New Testament—the Son of God came down to this earth.

How was He received? What welcome did He meet with? What effect did the coming of the "Mighty God" (Is. 1:6) have upon the world? What effect would we suppose it to have had? Should we expect to learn that the birth of the God-man was hailed as the most wondrous and blessed event in all history? Should we expect to find the rulers of the earth casting their scepters at His feet? Should we expect to find Him an Object of universal worship? Such expectations would but betray our ignorance of the depths of human depravity. Of sinners it is written "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28). And why? Because "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7).—such it was demonstrated to be when God was manifested in the flesh. "There was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7) sums up the whole tragic story. The Christ of God was not wanted. His ineffable holiness condemned the vile wickedness of sinners. He came here to "heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," but the world hated Him, "hated" Him "without a cause"(John 15:25). Men said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him" (Mark 12:7), and no ordinary death would suffice and appease the hatred of their wicked hearts. He must die the death of a criminal, He must be crucified- a form of punishment reserved for slaves who were guilty of the vilest crimes (Josephus). By wicked hands He was "crucified and slain" (Acts 2:20).

“Where sin abounded grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20). Marvelous are the ways of God. He maketh, even the “wrath of man” to praise Him (Ps. 76:10). Those wicked hands of men which nailed to the Cross the Lord of Glory, were but fulfilling, unknown to themselves, the eternal purposes of Jehovah. The Lord Jesus as “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). These words bring before us the Divine side of that mysterious transaction. As He hung there on the Cross the Lord Jesus suffered not only at the hands of man, but He was also smitten by the hand of God (Is. 53:4, 10) because it was then and there that He “bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). On the Cross, our blessed Saviour who knew no sin was “made sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21). It was because He hung there as the Sin-Bearer that Jehovah said, “Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered” (Zech. 13:7). Thus, the Death of Christ must be viewed from two great standpoints. From the side of the world His death was a deliberate, cold-blooded murder; from the side of God it was a satisfaction rendered unto His justice and holiness which had been outraged by sin. From the side of the world, the Cross was the climatic display of its sin and guilt; from the Divine side it was God’s provision to remove the sin and guilt of all who believe. From man’s side, the world has yet to account to God for the death of His Son. Therefore it is that God has a “controversy” with the nations. My reader, you are living in a world over which hangs the judgment of God! And the day of His vengeance draws near. God has yet to reckon with a world that is stained with the blood of His beloved Son and soon will His fearful wrath be poured out upon it. How rarely, in these days, is this side of the Cross pressed upon men’s consciences and hearts. The Death of the Lamb of God secured our salvation, but it consummated the world’s guilt.

Christ is absent. Why? Because the world rejected Him. Yet, if the world disowned Him, the heavens received Him. If men despised Him, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name. We shall consider now, though, more briefly, the second great fact.

God the Holy Spirit has come down to this earth and is still here. This, also, is an amazing and stupendous fact. God did not abandon the world to which in love He sent His Son, even though that love was requited by the crucifixion of the Holy One. How strictly just it would have been had God then and there entirely deserted this rebellious race of ours! He “spared not” the angels that sinned but “cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (2 Pet. 2:4), why then should He continue to deal in mercy with a race that had committed a crime which far surpassed in wickedness any sin of which the angels could have been guilty? Ah! God’s ways are “past finding out.” Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. The day of God’s wrath was postponed. A world guilty of murdering God’s beloved Son was granted a reprieve. In marvelous long-sufferance God gave the world an opportunity, a protracted opportunity, to repent and thus reap the benefits of the Death Divine.

The Holy Spirit has come down to this earth. Here is an amazing fact of stupendous magnitude. There is a Divine person on earth to-day. He has been here, now, for eighteen centuries unseen, unknown, and unappreciated by the world, yet here, nevertheless. Like the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit has a double bearing—a bearing upon the world, and a bearing upon the Church. His relation to the world is a solemn and an awful one. The Holy Spirit is here to convict the world of its terrible crime in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. This is clear from the language of John 16—“When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on Me. Of righteousness because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; Of judgment because the prince of this world is judge” (vss. 8-11). These verses do not refer to the work of the Holy Spirit in individual sinners, but speak of the consequences of His presence on

earth toward the world. It is true that by His gracious operations the Holy Spirit brings sinners to repentance, but this is not the subject of the above verses: there, as we have said, we have set forth the relation of the Holy Spirit toward the "world" in general. The above quotation brings before us the significance of the Spirit's presence on earth rather than defines the character of His work. In the sense that He is now here, the Holy Spirit would not be present at all if the Lord Jesus had not been cast out by the world. The Holy Spirit is here to fill the place of an absent Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the demonstration of the fact that Christ is absent. Therefore it is that His presence here "reproves the world," reproves the world "of the cause of Christ's absence, reproves the "world" of its awful crime in putting to death the Lord of Glory. He reproves the world of "sin." Furthermore; the presence here of the Holy Spirit reproves the world of "righteousness," of righteousness because Christ has gone to the Father and the world sees Him no more, nor will it see Him until He returns in judgment. The "righteousness" of which the Spirit reproves or convicts the world is the righteousness of God the Father in His exaltation to His own right hand of the One cast out by the world. Finally, the presence here of the Holy Spirit convicts the world of "judgment" because Satan, the prince of this world, is already judged, though the sentence has not yet been executed. So much then for the world-ward bearing of the fact of the Holy Spirit's presence on earth.

Like the fact of our Lord's rejection by the world, the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth also has a bearing upon the Church—a blessed bearing. God has overruled the issues of this second great fact. Though the presence here of the Holy Spirit condemns the world, it involves infinite blessing for the Church. Churchward, the Holy Spirit is here to take the place of our absent Saviour. He is here to "quicken" (John 3:6) as Christ quickened (John 5:21). He is here to "teach" (John 14:26) as Christ taught (Matt 7:29). He is here to "comfort" (John 16:7) as Christ comforted (John 14:1). In short, the Holy Spirit is here to do for God's people what Christ would have done for them had He remained on the earth. The consequences, then, of the presence here of God the Holy Spirit are unspeakably solemn as regards the world, but infinitely precious as regards the saints.

We are now prepared to consider the third great fact which is presented to our notice in the New Testament scriptures that fact which forms the subject of this chapter—the fact of the Redeemer's Return. And—

1. The Statement of this Fact.

To state in the fewest possible words the broad fact itself—the Lord Jesus is coming back again. As we have seen, He has gone away form this world. He ascended on high. But heaven is not to retain Him for ever. Scripture declares that He is to vacate His Father's throne where He is now seated, that He will descend to the air and receive His people unto Himself, and, that subsequently, He will return to the earth to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

The fact of our Lord's Return is set forth in the New Testament as clearly and as fully as either of the other two facts to which we have referred. The fact and truth of the second advent of Christ occupies a commanding position in the New Testament. In our Lord's tender farewell address to His disciples (John 14-16) the prospect and promise of His Return was the first subject to which He directed their attention (John 14:1-3). After He had left His disciples, yea, while in the very act of ascending, He sent two of His angels to tell them "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). In the first Epistle which the apostle Paul was inspired to write, namely, the "Thessalonian," he referred in every chapter to the Redeemer's Return. In his instructions to the Corinthians concerning their celebration of the Lord's Supper, he wrote, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11:26). As we have already stated in another connection, the first promise that was given to fallen man was that the woman's Seed should come and bruise the Serpent's head—a prophecy which will not receive its fulfillment until the time of our Lord's Return. The last recorded words of our blessed Saviour, found in the closing chapter of the Bible, were, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20). Thus we see that at the beginning and also at the end of the Sacred Volume, the Blessed Hope is given prominence, while between these two utterances of God Himself are literally hundreds of verses which bear directly upon this precious theme. The same Book which tells us that our Lord came to this earth and went away; the same Book which tells us that God the Spirit is now present on the earth, also declares that the Lord Jesus is coming back again, and, as another has said, "If we admit one fact we must admit all: if we deny one, we must deny all; inasmuch as all rest upon precisely the same authority. They stand or fall together."

The fact of our Lord's Return is stated in the most positive, emphatic, and unequivocal language. "I will come again" (John 14:3). He did not say, "I may come again," or "I intend to come again," but "I will come again." Moved by the Holy Spirit the apostle Paul wrote "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven" etc. (I Thess. 4:16). The apostle did not say "We shall go to the Lord," or "The Lord will send for us" but "The Lord Himself shall descent." The fact of our Lord's Return is not set forth in mysterious and obscure figures of speech, but is stated in language so plain and simple that he who runs may read and is expressed in terms of finality, beyond which there is no appeal. "For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). And again, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

2. The Interpretation of this Fact.

This third great fact which is presented to our notice in the New Testament must be interpreted on precisely the same lines and by the same canons as the other two Facts, i.e., the Scriptures which set forth the Second Advent of Christ must be received just as we receive those statements which tell us of His first advent and of the descent to earth of the Holy Spirit. Those verses which treat of the Redeemer's Return must be taken at their face value: they must be received by faith just as they read: they must be understood literally. We press this point upon our readers because there have been many teachers who have sought to spiritualize the Scriptural references to our Lord's second coming and who have treated them as though their language must be regarded as figurative and symbolical. Just as the Lord Jesus came to the earth the first time in person so will He come the second time. Our Redeemer is to return bodily and visibly. The language of Holy Writ gives as much reason for believing in a literal and personal return of Christ as it did for His First Advent. "Occupy till I come." "If I will that he tarry till I come." "Ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven." These are representative passages, and no one reading them for the first time without theological bias would ever think that they meant anything else than a literal, personal Advent. And yet the plain language of the Word has been twisted and distorted and made to teach almost anything and everything other than its obvious signification. We shall not weary our readers by examining and refuting at length every forced and fanciful interpretation which has been indulged in by various commentators, such a task is unnecessary and would be unprofitable. Those theories which have gained the most adherents may be grouped into three classes.

First; there is a class of commentators who regard the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the fulfillment of Christ's promise to return. This view is based upon our Lord's Word in John 14 where, after declaring to His disciples that He would give them "Another Comforter" who would abide with them forever," He immediately added, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (vs. 18). But to regard the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as the accomplishment of Christ's promise "I will come again" is to confuse the Persons of the Holy Trinity. A sufficient refutation of this error is found in the fact that the Epistles which were all of them written after Pentecost contain numerous references to and promises concerning the personal return of Christ.

Second; another class of commentators regard the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in A. D. 70 as the fulfillment of our Lord's promise to come back to the earth and, untenable as this theory is, strange to say, it has met with a very wide acceptation among Christian theologians. This theory is based upon a careless exposition of Matt. 24. At the beginning of this chapter we learn that His disciples asked our Lord three questions: First, "Tell us, when shall these things be?" The "these things" look back to the previous verse where Christ had foretold the destruction of the temple. Second, "And what shall be the sign of Thy coming? Third, "And of the end of the age?" Now in order to understand our Lord's complete answer to these three questions it is necessary to pay close attention to the parallel passages found in Mark 13 and Luke 21. A careful comparison of these chapters will make plain the different answers which our Lord returned to His disciples' questions. In His answers He made a clear distinction between the destruction of Jerusalem and His subsequent personal return, though we must remember that as "history repeats itself" some of the signs which heralded the approach of each event were common to both. When speaking of the former He said, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20); but when referring to the latter He declared, "And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the

sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them with fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:25-28) 6 (see footnote). That the destruction of Jerusalem did not exhaust the predictions made by our Lord with reference to His own return is evident from the fact that in the book of Revelation—written at least twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem—He promises, no less than six times, to "come again."

Third; another class of commentators regard the death of the believer as the fulfillment of our Lord's promise to come back again and receive His own unto Himself. This error has already been refuted in an earlier chapter so that nothing further needs now to be said concerning it.

In Acts 3:18 we have enunciated a principle which supplies a sure and certain key to prophetic interpretation—"But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." The important words here are "so fulfilled." How had the Old Testament prophecies concerning the "sufferings" of Christ been "fulfilled?" The answer is literally. And, in like manner, will be accomplished those unfulfilled prophecies which speak of the coming "glory" of Christ. Just as those predictions which made it known that Christ should be sold for "thirty pieces of silver," that His hands and His feet should be "pierced," that He should be given "vinegar, mingled with gall" to drink,—just as these were fulfilled to the letter, so the Scriptures which declare that he shall "descend from heaven with a shout," that "every eye shall see Him" when He comes back to earth, that He shall return in power and great glory and shall be accompanied by "ten thousands of His saints"—just so shall these predictions be fulfilled to the very letter.

3. The twofold bearing of this Fact.

We come now to a point concerning which it behooves believers, particularly young believers and beginners in the study of prophecy, to be quite clear upon. Like the other two great Facts which we have reviewed—the First Advent of our Lord to this earth and His going away, and the presence now of the Holy Spirit upon this earth—this third great fact of the Redeemer's Return also has a double bearing, a bearing upon the Church and a bearing upon the world. The Second Coming of Christ will occur in two stages. Just as a man living in New York might take a railroad journey to California, and while enroute break his journey at Chicago, so Christ will break His journey from heaven to earth. He is now in heaven; He will return to the earth. His ultimate destination is the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4), but He first breaks His journey in the air (1 Thess. 4:16). It is highly important to the understanding of unfulfilled prophecy that these two stages in the Return of Christ should be clearly distinguished, failure to do so will inevitably result in the utmost confusion. There are not yet to be two Returnings of Christ, but on Return in two stages.

The two stages in the Return of Christ are clearly distinguished in the New Testament. We now call attention to some of the leading differences between them. 1. The first stage will be in grace, the second will be in judgment. 2. The first stage will reach no farther than the air, the second will reach to the earth itself. 3. The first stage is when the Redeemer returns to catch up the saints unto Himself, the second is when He returns to the earth to rule it with a rod of iron. 4. The first stage will be secret, unseen by the world, the second will be public and seen by every eye. 5. The first stage is Christ returning as "The Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16), the second is His appearing as "The Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. 4:2). 6. At the first stage he comes for His saints (John 14:3), at the second He returns with His saints (Jude 1:14). 7. The first stage, His secret coming for His saints, is not the subject of a single Old Testament prophecy, the second stage, when He returns to the earth, is referred to in numerous Old Testament predictions. 8. The first stage of Christ's Return will be followed by God's blessings being poured upon the earth, and by the Holy Spirit being poured out upon all flesh. 9. The first stage will be followed by Satan coming down to this earth in great wrath (Rev. 12:9), the second will be followed by Satan being removed from the earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2, 3). 10. Between the present hour and the first stage of Christ's Return nothing intervenes, no prophecy needs first to be fulfilled, for our Lord may return at any moment; but before the second stage of Christ's Return can occur many prophecies must first be fulfilled. 11. Concerning the first stage of our Lord's Return we "wait for God's Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10), whereas the second stage is distinguished as "the coming of the Son of Man." 12. The first stage was typified by the translation of Enoch to heaven (Heb. 11:5), the second was foreshadowed by Elijah who has yet to return to this earth to herald the judgments of the great and terrible day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5). 13. The first stage is our Lord's Coming as our Saviour (Heb. 9:28), the second is His return to earth as King(Rev. 19:11, 16). 14. The first stage will be followed by the saints coming before the "judgment-seat" (Bema) of Christ to be judged according to their works and rewarded for their service ((2 Cor. 5:10), the second will be followed by the "Throne of glory" upon which shall set the Son of Man who will judge the nations that are upon earth at the beginning of His millennial reign and apportion them their positions in His Kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46). Here then is the double bearing of the Fact of the Redeemer's Return—it respects first His own people and then the whole world.

These two stages in the Redeemer's Return are in strict accord with the order of events which transpired at His First Advent. At the first coming of the Lord Jesus there was a secret or private manifestation of Himself, and subsequently a public revelation. The newly-born Saviour was actually seen by very few. The shepherds in the field, the wise men from the East, Anna

and Simeon in the temple saw the Redeemer in the days of His infancy, but Herod and Pilate, the scribes and the Pharisees—the unbelieving civic and religious heads—saw Him not! After His return from Egypt on the death of Herod, He retired to Nazareth and it was not until an interval of nearly thirty years had passed that He was publicly manifested. Thus will it be at His second coming. First there will be the secret manifestation (in the air) unto His own people, and then after an interval of seven years or more He will be publicly revealed to the world.

4. The Fact of the Redeemer's Return was typified in the lives of Joseph and Solomon.

In the Old Testament there are numerous references to the Second Coming of Christ, references both direct and typical, but in every instance it was His return to the earth which was in view. The secret coming of Christ into the air, to catch up the saints to Himself, was an event quite unknown to the Old Testament prophets, an event kept secret until revealed by God to the apostle Paul who, when writing to the Corinthians upon this particular aspect of our subject, said, "Behold, I show you a mystery7 (footnote); We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52).

Many of the Old Testament characters were remarkable types of Christ: In Adam we see Christ's headship; in Abel, Christ put to death by His own brethren according to the flesh; in Enoch, Christ's ascension to heaven; in Noah, Christ providing a "refuse" for His own; in Melchizedek, Christ's Kingship; in Abraham, Christ's Nazariteship; in Isaac, Christ the willing Sacrifice; in Jacob, Christ toiling for a "bride;" in Moses, Christ the faithful Servant; in Aaron, Christ the great High Priest; in Joshua, Christ conducting His people into their inheritance. And so we might continue right through the Old Testament.

Foremost among the typical personages of the Old Testament is Joseph. In almost every detail of his life we see Christ typified. The son of his father's love, yet the object of his brethren's bitter hatred. His very name meaning "adding" as Christ is adding to the inhabitants of Heaven by the seed which issues from His travail. Sent by his father to inquire after his brethren's welfare, he is despised and rejected by them. They plot against his life and sell him into the hands of strangers. While yet in his youth he was carried down into Egypt. In Egypt he entered into the degradation of slavery and rendered faithful service to his master. He was sorely tempted yet sinned not, but though innocent he was falsely accused and cast into prison. While in prison—the place of shame—he was associated with two others, one of whom—the butler—heard from his lips a message of cheer telling of his restoration to the king's favor, the other—the baker—receiving the sentence of death. So, when the Lord Jesus hung upon the Cross—the place of shame—two malefactors were crucified with Him one of whom heard from His lips a message of cheer telling of his restoration to God's favor, while the other died in his sins. Surely such perfect typification of Christ, such numerous points of analogy are not so many co-incidences, but are a Divine delineation of the person and work of the Redeemer—a picture drawn by the hand of the Holy Spirit Himself! If then the type is perfect, if the picture be complete, ought we not to look for something in it which foreshadowed our Lord's exaltation and coming glory? Assuredly. Nor do we look in vain—The sequel to Joseph's humiliation clearly pointed forward to the Return of our Lord to this earth in power and majesty.

Above, we followed the typical history of Joseph to the point where he, through no fault of his own, was sentenced to suffer the shame of being cast into an Egyptian prison. But at this point of Joseph's life there was a dramatic change. Joseph's history did not terminate in shame and suffering but in power and glory. From the dungeon he was exalted to Egypt's throne! And, mark, his sovereignty was foretold years before he entered into the enjoyment of it. As a boy he dreamed of seeing the other sheaves all bowing down before his, which signified that his brethren would yet pay homage to him. So the prophetic Scriptures bear witness to the coming sovereignty of our Lord over this earth many centuries before He actually takes the scepter in His hands. After his exaltation to the Throne of Egypt Joseph's sovereignty was publicly recognized and acknowledged, for all men were compelled to "bow the knee" before him (Gen. 41:42), and thus will it be with our Saviour when He takes unto Himself His power and sits upon the Throne of His Glory. To complete the picture, we find that after Joseph's exaltation his brethren were reconciled to him, and then in wondrous grace they are given a land in which to

dwell—the land of Goshen, the best in all Egypt; so when Christ returns to earth His brethren according to the flesh—Israel—shall be reconciled to Him and receive from Him the land of Palestine in which to dwell throughout His beneficent reign. Thus, as Joseph was exalted to power and glory after the period of his humiliation was ended, so shall our blessed Redeemer yet return to earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of lords.

In the glorious reign of Solomon which followed the checkered career of David we have another striking type of the position which the Redeemer shall occupy during the Millennium. This is one of the composite types of Scripture. There are a number such where two or more objects or persons were necessary in order to give a complete picture. For example: in the great Levitical offerings (Lev. 1-6) we find five—the Burnt, the Meal, the Peace, the Sin, and the Trespass offerings—were required to give a complete foreshadowing of the person and work of the Redeemer. In the Tabernacle, no less than seven pieces of furniture in addition to its structure and materials, were needed to set forth fully the varied glories of Christ. So it was with reference to living persons. Enoch and Noah, Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha supplemented each other in their typical characteristics. Thus it was with David and Solomon-the latter was the complement of the former and the two must be studied together in order to secure a complete picture. David was a type of Christ in His humiliation, Solomon foreshadowed Christ in His glorification, David pointed to Christ at His First Advent, Solomon looked forward to Christ at His Second Advent.

In many particulars David typified the humiliation of his "greater son." He was born in Bethlehem of Judea. He is described as "of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon," thus reminding us of Him who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," and who to the believer is the Fairest among ten thousand and the altogether Lovely One. By occupation he was a "shepherd," and during his shepherd life he repeatedly entered into conflict with wild beasts. He was preeminently a man of prayer and is the only one in all Scripture termed a "man after God's own heart." He was the one who slew Goliath—the opposer of God's people, and type of Satan, foreshadowing the conflict between the Serpent and the woman's Seed who, by His death, delivered God's people from the toils of their great Enemy. When his arch-enemy Saul was in his power he acted in great mercy by sparing his life, just as in Gethsemane our blessed Lord refused to summon the angels to destroy His foes and as on the Cross He prayed for the forgiveness of His murderers. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, suffering chiefly from those of His own household.

After David came Solomon who foreshadowed the glory and the millennial reign of Christ. The word "Solomon" means "Peaceable" and thus his name suggests the Kingdom of Christ over which He shall rule as the "Prince of Peace." He was "anointed" some time before he was crowned: so the Lord Jesus was "anointed with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:38) at His baptism but is yet awaiting the day of His coronation. Gentiles took part in the crowning of Solomon (1 Kings 1:38, 39), typifying the universal homage which Christ shall receive during the Millennium. At the time of his coronation, Solomon was followed by an army of soldiers (the "Cherethites and the Pelethites") (1 Kings 1:38), just as our returning King shall be accompanied by "the armies in heaven" (Rev. 19:14). Solomon was not only King of Israel but, like the One he foreshadowed, he was King of Kings (see 1 Kings 4:21, 24). During his reign "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:25): so it will be with Israel again during the Millennium (see Jer. 23:6). Solomon was the builder of Israel's Temple, so also we read of Christ that He will "return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down" (Acts 15:16); and again, "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord" (Zech. 6:12). At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon was the one who offered up the sacrifices to God (1 Kings 8:63), thus foreshadowing the One

who shall be “a priest upon His throne” (Zech. 6:13). Solomon’s fame spread abroad far and wide so that “all the earth sought to Solomon” (1 Kings 10:23) and came up to Jerusalem to pay him homage, and thus will it be with David’s “son” and Lord—“It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 14:16). During Solomon’s reign, for the first and last time until the Millennium, all Palestine rested in peace. The glory and majesty of Solomon’s reign has never been equaled before or since—“King Solomon exceeded all the Kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom” (1 Kings 10:23); “And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any King before him in Israel” (1 Chron. 29:25). Thus we see that the peaceful, international, and glorious reign of Solomon, following the death of David, typified the millennial reign of the Redeemer.

5. The Fact of the Redeemer's Return was foreshadowed in the Ritual on the annual day of Israel's Atonement.

The order of events on the Day of Atonement are described in Leviticus 16, a chapter which is exceedingly rich in its typical signification. The Day of Atonement had to do with the putting away of Israel's sins, therefore, its dispensational application refers mainly to Israel though, as we shall see, the Church was also typically represented. We shall not now attempt anything more than a bare outline of the happenings of that most memorable day on Israel's sacred calendar. The order of its ritual was as follows:—

First, Aaron washed in water and then attired himself in the holy linen garments. It is to be noted that Aaron was provided with two sets of garments—those which were "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2), and the plain linen garments which were used when he offered sacrifice to God: the change from the latter into the former is referred to in Lev. 16:23, 24. It was the plain, linen garments which were worn by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, because, clad thus in robes of spotless white he prefigured the sinlessness of the One who came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Second, Aaron offered "a bullock of the sin-offering" to "make an atonement for himself and for his house"(vs. 6). Our Great High Priest was without sin, He "knew no sin," yet He became so identified with His people that God "made Him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:20), hence in the type Aaron makes atonement not only for his "house" but for "himself" as well. But observe particularly "and for his house." That is where the Church is seen, the Church which by Peter is termed "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 3:6).

Third, Aaron took two goats and presented them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle where he cast lots upon them—"one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat" (vss. 7, 8). The two goats bring before us the two great sides of Christ's cross-work, namely, the Divine and the human. The death of the Lord Jesus not only provided a salvation for lost sinners but it also vindicated and glorified God Himself. On the Cross Christ met the claims of God's justice, satisfied the demands of His holiness, vindicated His governmental rights and publicly exemplified His righteousness. "One lot for the Lord," then, is what God obtained in the death of His beloved Son.

Fourth, the goat of the sin-offering was killed and its blood brought within the veil and sprinkled both upon and before the mercy-seat. (vs. 15). The mercy-seat was God's "throne" in Israel. Observe that the blood was sprinkled but once upon the mercy-seat and seven times before it (vss. 14, 15). Once was sufficient to meet all the claims of God, for that which the blood of the goat typified—the "precious blood" of Christ—was of infinite value in the sight of heaven, but seven times it needed to be sprinkled to meet our deep, deep need in order to provide for us a perfect standing ground before God!

Fifth, after making atonement for the holy place and the alter—showing there is that, even in our communion with and worship of God, which needs cleansing- Aaron laid both his hands on the head of the second, live, goat, and confessed over him "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, and putting them upon the head of the goat" and sending him away into the wilderness, into "a land not inhabited" (vss. 21, 22). Just as the first goat represented the great truth of propitiation, the Divine side of Christ's cross-work, the satisfying and glorifying of God, so this second goat represented the other great truth of substitution, the manward side of Christ's cross-work, the acting of the Lord Jesus as the Surety of His people and bearing away their sins "as far as the east is from the west." The laying on of the priest's hands upon the head of the innocent goat signified an act of identification, the counterpart of which now enables us to say by faith "I was crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20—Greek). The confession of Israel's iniquities over its head, intimated the transference of guilt,

pointing forward, as it did, to Christ bearing “our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). The thrice repeated “all” evidenced the completeness of the atonement there made, and thus it was with the Anti type “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity” (Titus 2:14). The sending away of the goat bearing Israel’s sins into “a land not inhabited,” typified the complete removal of sin; and blessed be God our sins have all been completely taken away so that it is written “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

Sixth, after atonement had been effected, the high priest came out of the Holy of Holies, attired himself in his robes of beauty and glory returned to the waiting Congregation in the outer court (vss. 23, 24). It is in this last act of Aaron that we arrive at the point which is specially germane to our present study. The Anti type, our great High Priest, has already made atonement and has passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies on high “now to appear in the presence of God for us,” but soon He shall divest Himself of the sacrificial garments and attired in robes of glory and beauty He shall come forth to His waiting people whose sins and iniquities shall be remembered “no more for ever.” It is to this coming forth of our High Priest that Heb. 9:28 (speaking in the very language of the above type) refers—“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin (our sins gone) unto salvation.” Thus we see that the Ritual of Israel’s annual Day of Atonement foreshadowed not only the cross-work of Christ and His present session at God’s right hand but that it also typified and looked forward to His return in glory.

6. The Fact of the Redeemer's Return is illustrated in the Gospel narratives.

We refer now to the incident of Christ walking over the water to the aid of His storm-tossed disciples, the dispensational significance of which has already been pointed out by several writers.

Immediately after our Lord had fed the five thousand, He retired into a mountain while His disciples went down unto the sea, and entering into a ship, they essayed to journey to Capernaum. But as they rowed "the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew." It was dark, and Jesus was not come to them, and all the progress they had made after hours of hard rowing was "twenty-five or thirty furlongs." Then it was that Jesus drew nigh, and with a gracious "It is I; be not afraid" He stilled their fears. The statement that follows is a remarkable one—"Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went"(John 6:15-21). At the risk of being considered "fanciful" we shall attempt to expound the typical and dispensational bearings of the above incident.

Christ on the mount, praying, points to His present position on high where He is interceding for us at the right hand of God. The restless, tossing sea, aptly figures the world's unrest in its opposition to God. The ship in the midst of the sea represents the Church which is in the world but not of it. The storm beating down upon the ship caused by the "great wind" that blew, prefigures the attacks and assaults upon the Church by the "Prince of the power of the air," seeking to destroy it during the time of Christ's absence. The rowing of the disciples and their failure to make headway against the storm, shows the powerlessness of the Church to improve the world as such. Nineteen centuries of Gospel preaching and Christian witnessing have failed to effect any real change in the world at large. The unrest of the world still continues, its hostility while not so open is yet just as real, and Christ is "hated" as bitterly as ever. The Church may pull at its oars, but it cannot still the sea—the storm will not be hushed until the Lord Jesus appears! All that the disciples could do was to keep the ship from sinking, and in that they were successful. There again our type is perfect. The world may be hostile to the Church and Satan may fling his angry winds and waves against it but, as its Founder declared, His church is built upon the Rock and "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," and blessed be God they have not. After almost two thousand years of human and Satanic opposition, after every conceivable weapon has been employed to encompass its destruction, Christ's Church still survives. And in the midst of the storm; at the darkest hour, in the fourth watch, Christ came to the deliverance of His disciples. So it will be at His Second Advent: He will come back to and for the Church which He ransomed with His own blood. He came to His disciples and, be it noted, He appeared not with a word of reproach but with a message of cheer—"It is I; be not afraid." Thus will it be at the Redeemer's Return: He will descent from heaven with a shout of welcome, bringing joy and gladness to the hearts of His own. Observe the blessed sequel—"and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." The typical meaning of this is obvious: when our Lord comes back again the Church's conflicts will be over, its journey is then completed, its voyage ended, its destined harbor is safely reached. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

"For the coming of the Bridegroom,
Whom, tho' yet unseen, we love;
For the King of saints returning
In His glory from above;
For the shout that shakes the prison,
For the trumpet loud and clear,
For the voice of the archangel,
The Church is waiting here.

For the light beyond the darkness,
When the reign of sin is done;
When the storm has ceased its raging,
And the heaven has been won;
For the joy beyond the sorrow,
Joy of the eternal year,
For the resurrection splendor,
We are waiting, waiting here."

7. The Fact of the Redeemer's Return had a spectacular setting forth on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The Transfiguration of Christ is perhaps as familiar as any of the leading events recorded in the four Gospels, yet is it less understood than the other great crises in His blessed life. The purpose and meaning of the Transfiguration is defined in the closing verse of Matthew 16 –"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." This is a verse which has puzzled many Bible readers, yet its meaning is simple if we pay heed to its exact wording. Observe that Christ did not here say, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till the Son of man come in His Kingdom" but "until they see the Son of man coming in His Kingdom." The little word "See" furnishes the key to the above declaration. Observe further, that our Lord said to his disciples, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom."

The above verse is the closing one of Matthew 16 and it is exceedingly unfortunate that a chapter division has been made to immediately follow it and thus obscure its real meaning to many readers. What follows in the next chapter is the fulfillment of Christ's promise to the disciples as is clear from its opening statement–"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them"–the "And" connecting Matthew 17 with chapter 16, the "after six days" dating from the promise given the disciples, and the "some" finding its fulfillment in "Peter, James, and John." Here then is the key to the significance of the Transfiguration scene–it was the disciples seeing "the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom:" it was a patternand sample of the glory in which our Lord shall return to the Mount of Olives; it was a visible representation, a spectacular setting forth of each of the leading elements which shall be found in Christ's Millennial Kingdom. To particularize.

"And after six days"–"about an eight days after" (Luke). Every detail in the description of this remarkable event is worthy of our closest study. A careless and flippant reader might ask, "Why are we told that our Lord was transfigured just six days after He had given His promise to the disciples?–What does it matter to us whether it was six or sixteen days?" But the reverent student of Holy Scripture has learnt that everything in God's Word has a meaning and value. "Six days after," then it was a seventh-day scene, a Sabbatical scene, in a word–a Millennial scene. Some students will differ from us upon this point, but we record it as our belief that the above words furnish Scriptural verification of a view which was commonly held by the ancients, by the Rabbis and by the Church "Fathers," namely, that in line with the statement found in 2 Pet. 3:8–"One day is with the Lord be regarded as a definition of the duration of earth's history, i.e., six thousand years of toil and labor followed by a thousand years of rest and peace, the Sabbath-day thus pointing forward to the Millennium.

"And his face did shine as the sun, and His rainment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). With this statement should be compared Peter's inspired commentary–"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we make known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory (i. e., the Shekinah Glory), "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice which came from heaven we hear, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16-18). During the days of Christ's humiliation when He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, we are told, "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Is. 52:14), but here on the Mount of Transfiguration "His face did shine as the sun." The disciples were favored with a glimpse of Christ in His resurrection glory! It is thus He now

appears in Heaven as is evident from the blinding effects of Christ's glory as manifested to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road. And it is thus He will appear when He shall return to this earth, arising as "The Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2).

"And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him" (vs. 3). From the fact that Moses (representative of the Law) and Elijah (standing for the Prophets) were with Christ at this time we may learn that the Old Testament saints shall have their part and place with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom. There is also another fact revealed here—precious thought!—when our Lord returns to the earth He will be accompanied by two classes of saints here represented by Moses and Elijah, namely, those who have passed through death and those who have been "changed" and raptured to heaven without seeing death. The three disciples—Peter, James, and John—may be regarded as representatives of the Church, not, of course, the Church in its Divine unity, but in individual capacity.

"While He yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him" (vs. 5). The mention of the "bright cloud" here is deeply significant, the more so as it was out of it that the Voice of God was heard speaking. This was the "Cloud" which had been withdrawn from Israel centuries before but which now suddenly appeared again. This was the "Cloud" in which Jehovah appeared of old—the Cloud of the Shekinah glory. It was the "Cloud" which filled the Tabernacle—"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34). This was the "Cloud" which guided Israel throughout their wilderness wanderings—"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went forward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up" (Ex. 40:36, 37). This was the "Cloud" in which Jehovah appeared in the Holy of Holies upon the mercy-seat (Lev. 16:2). This was the "Cloud" which filled the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 8:10). Little wonder then that the disciples "fell on their faces and were sore afraid" (vs. 7)! The appearing of the Shekinah "Cloud" on the mount of transfiguration was the intimation that it shall be visible to Israel again in the Millennial Kingdom. That it will be is further evident from the prophecy of Is. 4:5—"And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for above all the glory shall be a defense"—the context here, shows that this has reference to the Millennium. See further Ezek. 43.

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (vs. 8). This touch to the picture is a very beautiful one. It tells us that in the Millennium our blessed Lord shall be exalted high, above all, that He shall occupy the position of pre-eminency, that all human glories shall pale and disappear before His. As it is written, "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Is. 2:17).

The hour when the Transfiguration occurred is significant. From Luke's account we gather that it happened at night, for we read, "But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep" (Luke 9:32). Thus will it be at the close of the long, dark night of Israel's dispersion—they shall look up and behold their Messiah returning in power and glory, accompanied by ten thousands of His saints who shall be on such terms of holy familiarity with Him (compare "Moses and Elijah talking with Him") that the world shall marvel at that wondrous grace which made them "joint-heirs with Christ."

The Transfiguration also revealed the blessedness of that time when Christ shall set up His millennial Kingdom. "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (vss. 4) was the exclamation that fell from the lips of the astonished Peter. Thus will it be in the Millennium. "Lord, it is good for us to be here" will well express the contentment and the joy of those who will be upon earth in those days. O! what a time that will be. Satan removed, the Antichrist destroyed, and all that opposes

the Gospel swept from the face of the earth. Israel penitent and restored, the heathen nations then completely evangelized, and creation itself delivered from its bondage of corruption. The saints "with Christ," wearing their glorified bodies and participating in His reign over an earth full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Christ Himself on the throne, the Holy Spirit poured out upon all flesh, and outwardly, God's will done upon the earth as it is in heaven. Yes, then indeed, shall it be said, "Lord, it is good to be here."

Striking indeed was the vision vouchsafed to the three favored disciples. Remarkably full was that manifestation of the glory of Messiah's coming Kingdom. But, the sequel to the Transfiguration was equally wonderful in its typical signification, and was needed to complete this spectacular setting forth of the Redeemer's Return to the earth.

"And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.** And Jesus rebuked the demon: and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour" (vss. 14, 15, 18). What a sight was this which confronted our Lord and His disciples as they came down from the "holy mount"! What a picture of Israel in particular and of the world in general! Thus will it be at the time of our Lord's Return to this earth. The first thing which the Saviour did after He had given the disciples a vision of His glory in the coming Kingdom, was to cast out a demon; and the first thing He will do when He returns to the earth, will be to cast out the Devil and secure him for a thousand years in the Bottomless Pit (Rev. 20:2, 3). God hasten that blessed day!

Thus we see that the Fact of the Redeemer's Return not only occupies a prominent position in the didactic instruction of the Church Epistles, but that it was also the subject of Old Testament prophecy and typology, was pictorially illustrated in the miracles recorded in the Gospels, and received a spectacular setting forth in the wonderful scene which was enacted upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

Chapter Four

The Time of the Redeemer's Return

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the
sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and
the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the
heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the
sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all
the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see
the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven
with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:29, 30).

Having shown the Necessity of Christ's Return, having dwelt upon the Hope of His appearing, having pondered some of the bearings and types of the Fact of His Second Advent, we are now ready to discuss the Time of His Return and to consider the question—When is our Lord coming back again? By the "Time" of the Redeemer's Return we do not mean the date, but the position which this great event occupies in God's dispensational programme. Concerning this phase of our subject there is wide difference of opinion. Two positions have been taken and the advocates of each appeal to the Scriptures in support of their conflicting views. These two positions are known as Pre-millennialism and Post-millennialism. The word "millennium" means a thousand years, and "pre" means before and "post" means after. One school of theologians believe and teach that the Lord Jesus will return before the Millennium, another school insist that He will not come back again until the close of the Millennium, in fact not until the end of the world, the end of time itself. As the point at issue between these schools is of great importance and as this book may fall into the hands of a number of people who are bewildered by this contradictory testimony and who are anxious to know what the Scriptures really say upon the matter, we have decided to devote a separate chapter to an examination of the question—Will Christ return before or after the Millennium?

When is our Lord coming back again? In seeking a satisfactory and authoritative answer to this question our first need is a candid mind, and unprejudiced heart, a teachable spirit. It is impossible for us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord while we cling to our own pre-conceptions. The initial requirement in every student of Holy Scripture is that he shall bow to the authority of the Word and submissively receive at its face value all that God has revealed. We need to approach the Sacred Volume in the attitude of learners, willing to have our own ideas of Truth corrected, and prepared to have our beliefs formed and moulded by the teaching of Holy Writ. Such as assertion may perhaps appear a platitude, yet we are fully assured that it is a timely reminder. One of the main hindrances which prevents many of God's children apprehending Divine Truth is that they read the Bible through the eyes of others; they read it with opinions already firmly formed, they read it with prejudicial interest. This is largely true with reference to the subject of our present inquiry. People have been taught by some "Doctor of Divinity," or Seminary professor that the world is growing better, that the Gospel will eventually win all men to Christ, and that the Millennium is to be ushered in by the efforts of the church. It is difficult for those who have been taught thus to set aside the effects of such teaching and come to the study of the Bible to find out exactly what it says concerning these things. Yet we must do so if we would learn God's mind on the matter. It is "What saith the Scriptures?" not What does our church teach? not What does our Creed or Catechism say? not What did my

godly parents tell me? but–What saiththe Scriptures? We repeat, in seeking an answer to the question–When will our Lord return? Before or after the Millennium? we need to approach the Bible with an open mind, willing to be instructed by the One who inspired it, and coming to it in the spirit of the child Samuel saying, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

What is the Time of our Lord’s Return? As stated above, two general answers are returned to this question. One class of theologians argue that our Lord will not come back again until after the Millennium; another class declare that He will return before the Millennium. In order to be fair to each of these schools we will first give a brief description of their respective positions.

I. Post and Pre-millennialism Defined.

1. The position of Post-millennialism.

Post-millennialists teach that the great purpose of the Divine incarnation was that the Lord Jesus through His death and resurrection should found and establish a spiritual Kingdom. They tell us that the Jews who expected their Messiah to set up a material and visible Kingdom on the earth were mistaken. They insist that the only Kingdom Christ has or will ever have is an unseen, spiritual and heavenly Kingdom, the subjects of which are the members of His Church, in whose hearts Christ now rules. They declare that the Redeemer is even now reigning, reigning as King over this earth and that he will continue thus to reign, unseen, until He has overcome all enmity and opposition and won His very enemies unto Himself. The instrument by which He is to achieve this glorious victory is the church, and the church, we are told, is here to civilize as well as evangelize the earth. Post-millennialists teach that while the Church is an institution and organization separate from the State yet is it interested in the welfare of the State and that it is the duty of Christ's followers to take part in politics and see to it that the best men securable are elected to office and that they must be encouraged to frame and enforce laws which make for civic and social righteousness.

In present-day conditions post-millennarians see the fulfilling of their hopes and the promise of a speedy success crowning their efforts. They regard the multiplication of educational advantages, the discoveries and inventions of modern science, the improvements in hygienic and sanitary conditions, the growing demand for nation-wide prohibition, the increasing number of hospitals and agencies to relieve suffering, the modern trend toward interdenominationalism and religious unionism, as so many heralds of the near approach of the Millennium. They believe that the utilization and perfecting of such agencies will usher in the Golden Age, an age of world peace and prosperity, an age when all will know the Lord from the least to the greatest. It is not until the close of this Millennium that they look for Christ to return: then it is they expect Him to come back and "wind up" all things, judge the human race and settle the eternal destiny of every individual of it. Post-millenarians believe in a general resurrection and a general judgment at the end of time. Such a brief and in general is the position and belief held by post-millennialists. We turn now to

2. The position of Pre-millennialism.

At every point the teaching of pre-millennarians is diametrically opposed to that of the post-millennialists. Pre-millenarians regard the Jewish expectation of a literal, visible, material Kingdom as being set up on the earth by their Messiah as a hope authorized by the Word of God because clearly revealed and expressly foretold by the Old Testament prophets. They believe this Messianic Kingdom is now in abeyance but will yet be established. They do not hold that Christ is now reigning as King, on the contrary, they look upon Him as at present exercising His high-priesthood, and they do not expect Him to enter into the office of His kingship until He returns to the earth and sits upon the throne of His father David.

Pre-millennialists do not believe that it is the mission of the Church to civilize the world, but instead, they are deeply impressed that the great duty and business of the Church is to evangelize the nations. While recognizing that civilization is a bi-product of evangelism, yet they insist that their marching orders are contained in Christ's mandate—Go, preach the Gospel to every creature. Believing this, and realizing that a full obedience to their Lord's command will require all their strength, time and talents, they (or, at least, an increasing number of them) look upon politics, social-reform movements, humanitarian efforts, etc. as outside of their own jurisdiction, as something which is an integral part of that world from which their Master was cast out, the "friendship" of which is expressly declared to be "Enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4). While they rest with unshaken confidence upon the Divine promise that God's Word shall not return unto Him void but that it shall accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereto He sends it, and while they go forth preaching the Gospel in the assurance that the Holy Spirit will use and bless it to the conversion of many of those that hear it, yet pre-millennialists can find on promise anywhere in the New Testament that the world as a whole shall improve during the time of Christ's absence from it; on the contrary, they read that "In the last days perilous times shall come" and that "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse"(2 Tim. 3:1, 13).

Pre-millennialists do not believe there can be any Millennium until Christ returns to the earth, takes its government upon His shoulder, and reigns in power over it. They do not believe that there can be any real improvement in moral and spiritual conditions down here while Satan is free, and realizing the utter impotency of man to cope with his powerful Enemy they recognize that the only hope for this poor world is the Second Advent of Christ to earth and His removal of Satan from it. They believe that before this can happen Christ will first come for His Church and instead of interposing a thousand years between the present and this blessed event, they are looking for Him to return at any moment. Such in brief and in general is the belief and position of pre-millennialism.

Now it is very evident that both of these positions cannot be sound and tenable, that one of them must be false and unscriptural. Post-millennialism and pre-millennialism cannot both be right, one of them is most certainly wrong. Which of them is in error? Again we would urge upon our readers the need of drawing near to God and praying Him for a teachable spirit and asking Him to enable them to approach the examination of this issue with an unprejudiced mind and an open heart.

II. Post and Pre-millennialism Examined.

1. An examination of Post-millennialism.

Post-millennialists teach that the only Kingdom over which Christ will ever reign is a spiritual and celestial one. They say that those Jews who expected their Messiah to set up a visible and material Kingdom on the earth were mistaken, that they erred in the interpretation of their prophetic Scriptures and cherished a carnal and unworthy hope. Let us examine this assertion in the light of God's Word. In Psalm 132:11 we read "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." This was one of many Messianic prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. It is a prophecy which has never yet been fulfilled. When our Lord Jesus was here upon earth He did not sit upon any "throne," instead of occupying a Throne He was nailed to a cross. True, He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, but this is not the fulfillment of what Jehovah "swore in truth." David never occupied a heavenly throne; his throne was an earthly one, he reigned in Jerusalem; and God has declared that the Lord Jesus shall sit upon David's throne. This Old Testament prophecy was confirmed in New Testament times. In Luke one we learn that an angel appeared unto Mary and said, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:30-33).

The above is not a single prophecy but a compound one. It is made up of five separate items. Mary, the "virgin," was to conceive and bring forth a son; her son's name was to be called "Jesus;" Jesus was to become great and recognized as the Son of God; the Lord promised to give unto Him the "throne of David," and over the "House of Jacob" He was to reign for ever. Utterly unlikely as it appeared to human wisdom at the time, part of this prophecy has already been fulfilled—literally fulfilled. There was a literal birth, Mary's son was literally named "Jesus," and a literal "greatness" has become His portion; by what sleight of hand then can the exegetical knife be run through this prophecy and a literal reign over the "House of Jacob" be denied?

Post-millennialists teach that Christ is reigning as King to-day and that He will continue to reign thus, unseen, until He has subdued and won all His enemies. But the first part of this assertion is altogether lacking in scriptural authority. Nowhere in the New Testament are we told that Christ has already begun His Kingly reign, and nowhere in the Epistles is He denominated the "King of the Church." It is true that Christ is now seated upon a "throne," but not upon His own Throne. Christ is seated on the Throne of His Father, but His own Throne and the Father's Throne are clearly distinguished in Scripture—To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His Throne" (Rev. 3:21). It is not until after He has vacated His Father's Throne and returns to this earth that He will occupy His own throne as is clear from Matt. 25:31—"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of His glory."

Post-millennialists teach that the world is to be conquered by the Church. Their favorite slogan is "The world for Christ." It is supposed that in order to capture the world the Church must make concessions to and compromises with the world. Post-millennialists insist that it is the bounden duty of all Christians to help forward every movement which makes for civic and social righteousness. But of such it may be said, yea, it has been said by the Holy Spirit Himself —"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). The New Testament knows no righteousness apart from the Cross and places no value upon a reformation which is divorced from regeneration. Post-millennialists argue that believers ought

to take part in politics and that it is their business to look after the regulation of legislation. But politics gave Christ no place and where Christ has no place His followers must have none. The Lord Jesus has left us an example that we should follow His steps, but we search the records of His earthly life in vain to discover any mention of Him taking part in the politics of Palestine in His day.

Post-millennialists teach that the Gospel is yet to convert the world and that before Christ returns to earth all men will know Him from the least unto the greatest. A captivating concept surely, but upon what is it based? Certainly not upon the declarations of the New Testament. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature, but nowhere is there a promise that the time will come when every creature will believe the Gospel. The Lord Jesus taught that "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37). What were the conditions in Noah's days? Did all men then then receive the messengers of God's servants? Nay verily: On another occasion Christ said, "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-30)—do these words present the picture of our Lord returning to a world which has been won by the Gospel? Nay verily. Our Lord very plainly intimated that He did not expect to return to a world where Christianity had universally triumphed: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:8)!

Post-millennialists teach that our Lord will not return until the close of the Millennium and that then there will be a general resurrection of the dead, followed by a general judgment, at which every member of the human race will stand before the great Judge to have his eternal destiny decided. Such a conception is anti-scriptural in every part of it. In the nineteenth chapter of Revelation we see Heaven opened and the Lord Jesus coming forth seated on a white horse and with Him are the "armies which are in heaven." Accompanied by His saints the King of Kings and Lord of lords returns to this earth as is evident from the next verse, for there we are told that He shall "smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron." In Rev. 19 Christ is seen making a footstool of His enemies preparatory to the inauguration of His reign of blessing, and in the next chapter we read, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (Rev. 20:1-3). In the verses that follow we are told that those who have part in the first resurrection shall reign with Christ throughout the thousand years. Thus we learn that Christ leaves heaven and returns to the earth before the Millennium commences. The concept of a general resurrection and a general judgment is equally un-scriptural as we shall show later.

2. An examination of Pre-millennialism.

Pre-millennialists, as their name indicates, are looking for their Redeemer to return before the Millennium begins, looking for Him to introduce and usher in the Millennium itself. To them a Millennium without Christ is unthinkable. From their cradles they have been taught to pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven,” and they cannot conceive of a Kingdom without a King. The Millennium is the time when men’s desire for a Golden Age will be realized, but that Golden Age cannot dawn until the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings. The Millennium is the time when the sword shall be made into a plough-share and the spear into the prunning-hook, when for a thousand years there shall be no war, but earth-wide peace will only be made possible by the return and personal presence of the Prince of Peace.

Pre-millenialists believe that in the Millennium Christ will set up on the earth a visible, material Kingdom, that He will occupy the literal throne of David and reign from Jerusalem as the King of the Jews. They base their belief upon many plain declarations in Scripture to that effect. Isaiah predicted it—“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the Kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.” Ezekiel foretold it—“And He said unto me, Son of man, the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and My holy name, shall the House of Israel no more defile by their admonitions that they have committed” (Ezek. 43:7), while at the close of his prophecy he says of Jerusalem in the Millennium, “And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there.” Zephaniah heralded it—“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee” (Zeph. 3:14–17). Zechariah announced it—“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be My people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent Me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah His portion in the holy land and shall choose Jerusalem again” (Zech. 2:10–12, and see further 8:3, 23 and 14:16).

Pre-millenialists believe that the Messianic reign and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus are yet future. They believe that Christ Himself so taught. In the Parable of the Nobleman, He declared, “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom," and to return. And it came to pass, that when He was returned, having received the kingdom, then He commanded these servants to be called unto Him, to whom He had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading” (Luke 19:12, 15). Here we learn that Christ’s return and His reception of the “Kingdom” are inseparably connected together. Not only do the Scriptures plainly refute the assertion that Christ is now reigning, but existing conditions cannot be made to square with this belief. How absurd it is to say that Christ is now reigning over the earth when His authority is despised and rejected by the whole of the unbelieving world! No Christ-rejector can be termed a follower of the Lamb, and if he is not a “follower” then he is not subject to the will and rule of the Lord Jesus, and if he is not subject to Christ, then in no sense is Christ his “King.” Moreover, the conditions which prevail upon earth to-day repudiate the idea that Christ is even now reigning over it. The scepter which the first man lost has never been restored, the “Curse” has not yet been removed, and Satan is still at large! But all these things will be changed when the Lord Jesus takes the government upon His shoulder

and reigns in power and righteousness.

Pre-millennialists believe that it is God's purpose in this Age to take out of the nations "a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). To effect this the Gospel has been given and the Holy Spirit has come down to this earth. As the Gospel is preached, as many as are ordained to eternal life believe (Acts 13:48), for though "many be called," there are "but few chosen" (Matt. 20:16). God's purpose in this dispensation is an Elective one, and let it be said with emphasis, God's purpose has not failed, is not failing, will not fail—"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Is. 46:9, 10). The Gospel is not a failure, the Holy Spirit has not failed in His mission, it is theologians who have failed—failed to understand the purpose of God and to read aright His present programme.

III. Post-millennialism Refuted.

The post-millennial position rests largely upon a mis-translation. In Matt. 13:39 we read "The harvest is the end of the world," and again in Matt. 24:3—"And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Now the Greek word which is used in the above passages is entirely different from the one found in John 3:16—"God so loved the Kosmos." In the verses quoted above the word is not "Kosmos" but aion and ought to have been rendered "age"—"the harvest is the end of the age." In the marginal rendering of the R. V. Matt. 13:39 reads "The harvest is the consummation of the age." Both of the Greek words which are translated "world" in the King James Version occur in Heb. 9:26—"For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the Kosmos: but now once in the end of the aion hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Here it is evident that "aion" cannot mean "world." The Lord Jesus was offered as a sacrifice for sin more than eighteen hundred years ago, and the end of the "world" has not come yet. It was at the consummation or end of the Mosaic age that our Lord appeared and died upon the cross in order to effect our salvation. So, in the above instances read, "The harvest is the end of the age," the present age and not the end of time, for just as the Mosaic age was followed by the Christian age, so the present Dispensation shall be followed by the Millennium. That the "harvest" referred to by our Lord in the Parable of the Tares takes place at the end of this age rather than at the end of the "world," is further seen by a comparison of Joel 3:13-17 and Rev. 14:14-20 which refer to the same "harvest" and where this harvest is definitely placed at the commencement and not at the consummation of Messiah's reign. That our Lord will return before the Millennium rather than at its close is clear from many considerations.

1. The condition of the world when our Lord returns proves that His Second Advent cannot be post-millennial.

God's Word makes known the exact conditions which are to obtain here immediately preceding the Redeemer's Return. The Holy Spirit has given a number of graphic portrayals of the world as it will exist when our Lord comes back to it. One of these pictures is to be found in Isaiah 2—"For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up. And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Do these verses picture a world ready to receive a returning Christ? No; they tell us that in "the Day of the Lord"—that which immediately follows the present "Day of Salvation"—men will be "proud and lofty;" it intimates that idolatry shall prevail universally; it tells us that instead of men coming forward to welcome the Lord Jesus, they shall flee from Him in terror.

Another passage which describes the conditions which are to prevail on earth at the time of our Lord's Return is found in 2 Thess. 1:7-9—"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His might angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." Observe that here we are expressly told that our Lord comes back again to take vengeance on "them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel." It is utterly impossible to make this statement harmonize with the concept of Christ returning to a world which had previously been won to Him by the Gospel.

Again, in 2 Pet. 3:3, 4 we read, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of." Observe that the apostle is describing conditions that are to obtain in "the last days," i.e., the last days of this present dispensation. Here again we learn then, that instead of this Age closing with the universal acceptation of the Gospel, instead of the last days witnessing a world reconciled to God, instead of the Christian era closing with earth-wide prayer for the Coming of the King, we are told that, "there shall come in the last days scoffers," a class of people who have no concern for God's glory but who walk after their own lusts; and further, we are told that these "scoffers" shall mock at those who are looking for the appearing of our Saviour and that the "ignorance" of these scoffers is due to a wilful and deliberate rejection of God's revealed truth.

Putting together the above pictures we learn that in the days which precede Christ's Second Advent the earth will be filled with proud idolaters, with those that know not God and obey not the Gospel, and with those who mock and scoff at the prospect of a speedily returning Redeemer. Further; we learn that the actual return of Christ is introduced not by Gospel successes but by Divine judgments. Thus we say that the condition of the world when our Lord

comes back to it proves that His Second Advent occurs not at the close of an era of Millennial blessedness, but at the end of a dispensation wherein God has dealt with infinite long-sufferance with a race of rebels, and that at His coming He takes “vengeance” on His enemies ere setting up His Messianic Kingdom.

2. The Teaching of Matthew 13 proves that no era of Millennial blessing precedes Christ's Second Advent.

In Matt. 13 we have the record of seven parables—the number of completeness—which our Lord uttered consecutively. These parables are prophetic in their significance and scope. They deal with conditions which are to obtain here during the time of our Lord's absence. They are concerned with the visible profession of Christianity and they look forward to the closing scenes of the present dispensation. As there is much in them upon which we cannot now comment at length we shall content ourselves with singling out only that which bears upon our present inquiry.

The chapter opens with the well-known Parable of the Sower who went forth to sow. It pictures the broad-cast sowing of the good Seed by the Saviour Himself, and in His interpretation of the parable we learn that the "Seed" is the Word of God. The parable sets before us the beginning of the Christian dispensation and makes known to us the manner and extent of the reception of the Redeemer's mission and message. It gives us the ratio of the Gospel's success and forewarns us that all men are not going to receive God's Word, that the majority will not, that only a fractional minority will. It shows us that the proclamation of the Word is to encounter Satanic opposition, yea, that the world, the flesh, and the Devil, will combine in their efforts to prevent it bringing forth fruit.

The result of the sowing is plainly stated. Three castings out of four were fruitless! Most of the seed fell upon barren ground. The greater part of the field which, in our Lord's interpretation, we learn is "the world," completely failed to bring forth any increase. Some of the seed fell by the wayside and the fowls of the air picked it up; some fell upon the rocks and the sun burnt it up; some fell among thorns and it was choked. Only one fourth of it fell upon "good ground" and even there the fruitage varied and decreased in its yield from a hundred-fold to thirty-fold (see vs. 23). In His interpretation, the Lord tells us that the different kinds of ground on which the Seed fell represent various classes of people who hear the Word.

Now what light does the above parable throw upon our present inquiry? I throws a clear light and in its light we discover the fallacy of the post-millennial position. There is no hint whatever in this parable that a time was to come when the whole of the field would be covered with waving wheat, instead, the only possible inference which can be drawn from it flatly repudiates such a conception. Who would dare to suggest that the Divine Sower Himself, the "Lord of the harvest" would be followed by other sowers who should prove more successful than He? The results of our Lord's own sowing were prophetic of the history of the entire Christian dispensation. In no period of this Age has the whole field—the world—been receptive to the Seed, in no period have more than a fractional minority received the Word and brought forth fruit unto perfection. In every generation, from the time when our Lord walked the earth in the days of His flesh until now, the emissaries of Satan and the cares and riches of the world have combined to choke and make unfruitful the Word of God. From this parable then it is impossible to deduce any promise of a world ultimately converted by the Gospel.

The second of the parables found in Matt. 13—that of the Wheat and the Tares—brings out even more forcibly than the previous one the fact that there can be no Millennium of earth-wide blessedness before our Lord's return. The Parable of the Tares is also prophetic in its bearing. It makes known to us that which succeeded our Lord's own ministry. Immediately following the Divine Sower's scattering of the good Seed, an Enemy was "the Wicked One" and it is to be particularly noted that he sowed neither thorns nor thistles but "tares"—a bastard wheat—which so closely resembles the genuine article that the one cannot be distinguished from the other until the time of harvest. Here then is seen the efforts of the Evil One to neutralize the gracious work of the Son of God. The interpretation of this parable was supplied by the Lord Himself: just

as the wheat represents the “children of the Kingdom,” so the tares symbolize the “children of the Wicked One.” Let it be noted, however, that the “tares” do not represent wicked men as such, but “the ministers of Satan,” “false apostles, deceitful workers” (2 Cor. 11:13) who were secretly introduced by the Enemy amongst God’s people just as the tares were sown among the wheat.

Part of this parable began to be fulfilled in the days when the New Testament was written. In the false teachers who harassed the early disciples we may see the mingling of the tares with the wheat. The “children of the Wicked One” were the Judaizers who entered in among the churches of Galatia and who taught that salvation could not be secured by faith alone, that Circumcision was also necessary. The “tares” may be seen in Hymeneus and Philetus of whom we read, “who concerning the Truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:17, 18). The apostle Peter referred to the same class when he wrote, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily (“secretly”) shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). Jude, likewise, had reference to such when he declared, “For there are certain men crept in unawares(as the “tares” were sown secretly among the wheat), who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). Thus we see that at a very early date the tares were mingled with the wheat.

Again we ask, What light does this parable throw upon the point now under discussion? And once more the answer is, much every way. In our Lord’s declaration that the tares should grow together with the wheat until the time of harvest, which He expressly declares is the end of the age, we discover how preposterous, erroneous, and unscriptural is the teaching that the Gospel will yet win the world to Christ. At the time of harvest the world is still a mixed field, and this fact cuts away all ground for supposing that before our Lord returns the tares will be all rooted up or changed into wheat. Instead of the tares being transformed into wheat before the Millennium is ushered in, we are told that at the time of harvest the tares are bound into bunches and afterward cast into the fire—a very different picture that from the children of the Wicked One being reconciled to God! In the words “Let both grow together till the harvest” two solemn facts are revealed—first, Satan shall continue to hinder the success of the Gospel without interruption till the end of the age; and second, the Christian profession once corrupted shall continue thus to the close of the dispensation. And thus it has proven. Finally, be it observed, that in the casting of the tares—the children of the Wicked One—into the furnace of fire, we learn once more that the Age closes not with the universal reception of the Gospel but with Divine judgment upon the wicked!

The third parable of Matt. 13—that of the Mustard-seed—differs from the former ones in that it was not interpreted by our Lord. Post-millennialists have taken advantage of this fact and have made it teach that which gives countenance to their own pre-conceived theories. In this parable they see the promise of a world conquered by the Gospel. Now, whatever this parable may or may not signify, it certainly must not be made to contradict the teaching of the two which have gone before it. As already stated, the seven parables recorded in Matt. 13 form part of one connected discourse by our Lord and are so many prophetic representations of the development of the Christian profession during the time of His absence. This third parable then cannot set forth the universal diffusion of the Truth because the previous ones show that this is prevented by the opposition of Satan, which opposition is to continue until the end of the age. What then does this third parable teach?

The position which this parable occupies in the series is one of the keys to its interpretation. The first parable is concerned with the beginning of this dispensation, the time when our Lord

was here upon the earth. The second deals, prophetically, with conditions that obtained in the lifetime of the apostles, showing us the false teachers—the children of the Wicked One—who crept in among God's people in their day. This third parable then looks forward to a later period and presents a prophetic picture which saw its materialization in the fourth century of our era. The growth of the little mustard-seed into a great tree represents the development of the Christian profession from an insignificant commencement into a system of imposing proportions. In the fourth century A. D., Christianity was popularized by Constantine who adopted it as the State religion and compelled more than a million of his subjects to be baptized at the point of the sword. The parable of the Tares shows us Christianity corrupted by the insidious introduction of the children of the Wicked One among the children of God: the parable of the mustard-seed forecasted the growth and spread of a corrupted Christianity. This assertion of ours may easily be verified by the details of the parable itself.

The mustard-seed developed into a great tree—an abnormal thing in itself, nay, a monstrosity - so the popularization of Christianity in the days of Constantine produced an unnatural and ungainly system which was foreign to its spirit and nature. Observe that the "fowls of the air" came and lodged in the branches of the great tree. In the first parable of the series the Lord Himself tells us that the birds of the air represent the emissaries of Satan. The great tree then, stands for a nominal and national Christianity, a monstrous, world-system, that which in our day is the aggregate of the so-called "Christian nations." In a word, the great tree symbolizes Christendom which in Rev. 18 is said to be the "hold of every foul spirit and a cage for every hateful bird."

Further confirmation of our assertion above, that the great tree which issued from the mustard-seed represents the abnormal growth of a corrupted Christianity is furnished in Daniel 4 where we have recorded a dream which came to the first head of the Gentile powers. In this dream Nebuchadnezzar also saw a "great tree," and in the fate which it met with we learn the end which is appointed to the tree of our parable. To quote—"I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven; He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches" (Dan. 4:10-14).

To sum up our comments upon this parable. Instead of lending favor to the position of post-millennialism, its teaching—viewed in the light of Daniel 4—absolutely shatters the foundation of that system. Instead of teaching that the professing Church shall conquer the world, it shows that the world has conquered the professing Church. The mustard-seed symbolizes the outward character of the Christian profession at the beginning of this dispensation, when its devotees were few in number, poor in this world's goods, and despised by the great ones of the earth. In the third century A. D., the professing Church was like unto a humble little seed, unpretentious in appearance and insignificant in its dimensions. But in the fourth century there was a dramatic change. Constantine became a nominal Christian and adopted Christianity as the State religion. Then it was that the "tree" grew and became strong in the earth, putting out its branches in all directions. But then it was, also, that the fowls of Satan found shelter within its imposing boughs. However, great as the tree has become, its end is sure. Just as we learnt in the previous parable that the tares shall yet be consigned to the fire, so shall this great "tree" yet be cut down and brought to nought.

We turn now to the fourth parable of Matt. 13—the parable of the Leaven, the leaven which a

woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. This parable is one of the foundation passages of post-millennialists. In it they see clear proof that the Reign of Righteousness, the Golden Age, is to be brought about by the efforts of the Church. The woman, we are told, symbolizes the Church, the three measures of meal the human race, and the leaven the Gospel, which, working silently but surely shall yet permeate the whole of humanity and influence all men Godward and heavenward. But the assumption that the leaven here signifies the influence and power of the Gospel will not stand the test of the Scriptures, for in the Word of God "leaven" is uniformly employed as a figure of that which is evil. The Israelites in Egypt were commanded to put away all leaven from their houses on the night of the Passover, and to eat the lamb with un-leavened bread. Leaven was rigidly excluded from every one of the Levitical offerings which typified Christ. When our Lord was here upon earth He bade His disciples "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:11). Writing to the Corinthians the apostle exhorted them to "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). Thus we see that, in harmony with its nature, leaven, is uniformly used as a figure of evil. How strange then that sober expositions should ever have regarded sour dough—a form of incipient putrefaction—as a symbol of the unadulterated Word of God working in the hearts of men!

What then is the meaning of the parable of the Leaven? We answer that just as the former one brings before us the external development of a corrupted Christianity, so this one shows us the internal working of corruption within the Christian profession. The third parable brings us, historically, to the time of Constantine; the fourth carries us forward to the time of the rise and growth of the Roman Catholic Church. The "woman" in our parable figures the "mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5)—"that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess' (Rev. 2:20). Her act in "hiding" the leaven comports well with the secrecy and stealth which has ever characterized the methods of the Roman hierarchy. The action of the woman is further evidence that the post-millennial interpretation of this parable is erroneous, for there is nothing secret about the proclamation and spread of the Gospel. Said our Lord to His disciples, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matt. 10:27); and wrote the apostle, "But having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the Word of God deceitfully"(2 Cor. 4:2). But both "craftiness" and "deceit" did mark this woman's action. She stealthily introduced into the meal a corrupting element, and though the resulting bread might be rendered more palatable, nevertheless it had been polluted. The three measures of meal stand for the whole of Christendom, and as Dr. Haldeman has pointed out, it is very remarkable that there are just three great divisions in Christendom, namely, the Roman Catholic, the Greek, and the Protestant Churches. And how true it is that these three divisions of the meal have each and all been thoroughly corrupted by the leaven introduced by the "woman"! Everywhere there are relics of Romanism, even in all the so-called Protestant churches.

To say that this parable teaches that the Gospel is to win the whole world to Christ is to put light for darkness and is to make error equal truth. If the leaven represents the Gospel, the woman the church, and the meal the entire human race, then we have to confess that our Lord erred in His judgment and entirely over-estimated the power of the Gospel to find a response in the hearts of men, for after eighteen centuries of Gospel preaching we cannot point to a single country where all its subjects make even a profession of Christianity; nay, the world over, we cannot find a single city, town, or hamlet where everyone of its inhabitants is a believer in the Lord Jesus. No; this parable shows us the secret working of a putrefying element which spreads nought but corruption,—Can then the Millennium be introduced by the universal diffusion of a

corrupted Christianity!

In these four parables we discover the methods used by Satan to hinder the work of true Christianity. At the beginning he sought to oppose by catching away the Seed, which method was pursued throughout the first century when the Devil endeavored to exterminate and annihilate the Word of God by means of the sword and the bonfire. In the second parable we see him changing his tactics aiming to destroy Christianity by mingling his own children among the people of God. In the third we see how by a master-stroke of the Enemy the Christian profession was Paganized and as the result the world was won over by dazzling the eyes of men with a gorgeous ritual, with imposing architecture, and with the sanction and approval of the Roman Emperors themselves. In the fourth we discover how he succeeded in corrupting the doctrines and practices of Christianity by introducing into its midst a foreign and putrefying element which has resulted in the leavening of the entire mass.

We shall not tarry long with the last three parables of this series. There is nothing at all in them, any more than in those already considered, which confirms and establishes the post-millennial teaching. A treasure buried in the field (which is “the world”) can scarcely figure the universal success of the Gospel. A “pearl”—which is an object taken out of the “sea” (symbol of the nations) is no picture of a world won to Christ. While the Drag-net—the last of the series—enclosing as it does “every kind” of fish, the “bad” as well as the good, surely refutes the assertion that at the close of time Christ will return to find all men reconciled to Himself.

3. Our Lord's Olivet discourse shows that there is no universal triumph of the Gospel before His Second Advent.

The Olivet Discourse of our Lord is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. We cannot now attempt a detailed exposition of these highly interesting and important chapters, but would simply single our from them a few things which throw light upon our present inquiry. At the beginning of Matt. 24 we find that three of His disciples asked our Lord, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" (vs. 3). What then was the answer which our Saviour returned to these questions? Did He reply saying that the Age would end with the universal triumph of the Gospel? Did He tell them that the Sign of His coming would be a converted world that would be eagerly awaiting His return to it? If so, this clearly decides the issue once for all, for there can be no appeal against the declarations of the One who was truth incarnate.

As we read the verses which record our Lord's reply to the questions of His disciples we find that instead of Him painting a picture in bright and attractive colors, He portrayed a set of conditions which were pathetic and tragic in their bearing and nature. Instead of intimating that things on earth would improve during the time of His absence, He showed that they would get worse and worse. Instead of promising an era of peace and prosperity, He predicted a time of blood-shed and famine. Instead of telling the disciples that truth would be universally diffused and received, He forewarned them of the coming of false prophets who should deceive many. Instead of teaching that His followers would grow more zealous and faithful to Him, He announced that because iniquity should abound the love of many would "wax cold." Instead of saying that He should come back here to be received with an open-armed welcome, He predicted that on His return "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn." It is true that He said, "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations," yet a little further down in the same chapter He very plainly intimated that it should meet with an almost universal rejection - "For as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be," proves this.

It is therefore well nigh impossible for us to imagine anything more directly opposed to the post-millennial theory than what we find here in this address of our Lord's. It would appear from His utterances as if He, with omniscient vision, foresaw the very teaching which is so common in our day and that He designedly and deliberately anticipated and repudiated it. In verses 29 and 30 of Matt. 24 we read, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The "tribulation" here spoken of is described in verses 21 and 22 of this same chapter—"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." How different this from the glowing pictures painted by the post-millennialists! That the things here mentioned cannot possibly have reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is evident from the fact that "immediately after the tribulation" of those days the sun was not"darkened," the moon did not"cease to give her light," and the Son of Man was not seen "coming in the clouds of heaven." No; these verses describe conditions which are to prevail at "the end of the Age." Observe particularly that it is said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened" etc., and that "then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven." The conditions then which are to immediately precede the Second Advent of Christ are not those of Millennial blessedness but those of unparalleled tribulation.

4. The present working of the Mystery of Iniquity proves that there can be no Millennium before the Redeemer's Return.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians the apostle makes mention of the Second Coming of Christ in every chapter, and in the first chapter of the second Epistle he recurs again to the same theme —"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vss. 7, 8). Then, at the opening of chapter two in the Second Epistle he further 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 be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." Observe that here the apostle speaks of "The Day of Christ" which is different from "The Coming of Christ." The "day of Christ" signifies the Millennium and is used in contrast with "Man's day" (1 Cor. 4:3, margin) which denominates the dispensation in which we are now living. Here then the apostle expressly states that "that day (the Day of Christ) shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition."

The "Man of Sin" is the Antichrist who at the very close of this Age will oppose and exalt himself "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). In the seventh verse of this same chapter the apostle tells us "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth (hindereth) will let (hinder), until He be taken out of the way." Notice that the "Mystery of Iniquity" was said to "work" referring to the action of the leaven which was corrupting the meal even in the apostle's own lifetime. That which has "hindered" the full development of the Mystery of Iniquity" and which now prevents the revelation of the Antichrist is the presence on earth of God the Holy Spirit. But He is to be "taken out of the way"—removed from the earth when the saints are raptured to heaven. Then will the Devil be allowed "free rein" and the Son of Perdition will be publicly manifested. In the days of Antichrist God will send men strong delusion, "that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned," who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vs. 12). The career of the Antichrist will be cut short by the return of our Redeemer to the earth—"whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (vs. 8). The "Mystery of Iniquity" then, will be brought to a conclusion only by the Return of Christ in judgment which is another proof that there can be no Millennium before the Second Coming of Christ.

To sum up the teaching of 2 Thess. 1:6-2:12. The testimony of this passage is in perfect accord with the declarations of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24. Instead of teaching that before Christ returns all men will be converted by the Gospel, it distinctly affirms that the Day of Christ (the Millennium shall not come "except there come a falling away first" (Greek "apostasy"). Instead of teaching that this Age will close by witnessing a universal turning unto the Truth it explicitly states that it will terminate with God giving up multitudes "that they should believe a lie." Instead of teaching that this Dispensation will end with Christ exalted in the hearts of all, it declares that it will close with the manifestation and exaltation of the Antichrist and with the Lord coming back in judgment to destroy the Wicked One and to take vengeance on those that know not God and have scorned the Gospel of His Son.

IV. PRE-MILLENNIALISM ESTABLISHED.

1. Christ does not “receive the Kingdom” until the time of His Second Advent.

We must quote once more a passage that has already engaged our attention in another connection, namely, the Parable of the Nobleman. Before quoting from it, however, we would first observe that this parable was uttered by our Lord in order to correct a mistaken notion that was being entertained by certain of His auditors: “And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear” (Luke 19:11). Here is further proof that the “Kingdom,” referred to subsequently by our Lord was not a spiritual Kingdom instituted by Him just after His death and resurrection, but was a Kingdom which was not to “appear” for a considerable length of time, in fact not until He returned again to the earth. To quote once more from this parable—

“He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom and to return. ** And it came to pass, that when He was returned having received the Kingdom, then He commanded these servants to be called unto Him, to whom He had given the money, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading” (Luke 19:12, 15). Thus we see that our Lord’s receiving of the Kingdom and His return synchronize. The Kingdom to which was the subject of numerous Old Testament prophecies. It was the “Kingdom” mentioned by Daniel in 7:13, 14 of his prophecy—“And I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him(compare “received” in the above parable) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve Him.” As the context here shows, the time when the Son of Man is “given” this Kingdom is immediately following the destruction of t he Gentile powers which from the Book of Revelation, we know will occur just prior to the Millennium. If further proof be needed that Christ’s “receiving of the Kingdom” takes place before and not after the Millennium it is furnished by 1 Cor. 15:24 where we are told that at the close of the Millennium—which is the time when He shall have “put down all rule and all authority and power”—He shall deliver “up the Kingdom to God, even the Father.” If then Christ “delivers up” the Kingdom to the Father at the close of the Millennium then the conclusion is irresistible that He “receives” the Kingdom at the beginning of the Millennium.

2. The “Times of Restitution” can be ushered in only by the Second Advent of Christ.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the Times of Refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the Times of Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21). The “Times of Restitution” here promised to Israel on the condition of their national repentance is one of the names of the Millennium itself. It is termed thus because at that time Israel shall be restored to favor with God again. It is termed thus because at that time Palestine shall be restored, restored to its original fertility, when it shall again be “a land that floweth with milk and honey.” It is termed thus because at that time the animal creation shall be restored, restored to Edenic conditions, when once again “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb.” It is termed thus because at that time Creation shall be restored and delivered from its present bondage of corruption, restored to its original freedom and glory.

The “Times of Restitution” is defined in the very passage where this expression occurs, defined in the previous words “the Times of Refreshing” which shall come from the presence of the Lord.” Note particularly that these “Times of Restitution” cannot come until Christ Himself comes back again. This is expressly affirmed in the words “Whom the heaven must receive until.” Observe it does not say “Whom the heaven must receive or retain during the Times of Restitution,” still less “until the end of the Times of Restitution”—which it most certainly would say were the teaching of post-millennialism true—but “until the Times of Restitution,” that is, until those times arrive. When these “Times” come then shall the Lord arrive. When these “Times” come then shall the Lord return, and when He returns then shall come “Times of Refreshment” for His people on earth.

Observe, further, that we are told, these “Times of Restitution” were spoken of by all God’s holy prophets. Of what “Times of Restitution” then did the Old Testament prophets speak? We answer, of Millennial “Times,” when all nations of the earth shall be brought beneath the sway of Messiah’s scepter. The Old Testament prophets uniformly connect the Times of “Restitution” with the Coming of Christ to the earth and they certainly knew of no Kingdom being brought in by the efforts of the Church. The able declaration of Peter then proves two things: First, that until the Times of Restitution the Heaven must retain our Lord; second, that as soon as these “Times” arrive, Christ shall assuredly return. Hence, there can be no Millennium until Christ comes back again to the earth, but as soon as He does come back again the Millennium will be inaugurated.

3. The Restoration of Israel is only made possible by the Second Advent of Christ.

Under this head we shall seek to prove briefly three things—that Israel as a nation will be restored, that Israel's restoration occurs at the Return of Christ, that Israel's restoration will result in great blessing to the whole world.

That Israel as a nation will be actually and literally restored is declared again and again in the Word of God. We quote now but two prophecies from among scores of similar ones: —"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the House of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land"(Jer. 23:5-8). Again; "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one King shall be King to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be My people, and I will be their God. And David My Servant shall be King over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and My Servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 37:21-28).

That Israel's restoration synchronized with our Lord's Return to the earth may be seen from the following Scriptures:—"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; and He will save us: This is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9 and read on to the end of the following chapter). See further the whole of Isaiah 60 which follows the opening verse—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon them." In Acts 3 we learned that Peter declared to Israel that if they would "Repent and be converted" that God would "send Jesus Christ unto them" and that following Christ's Return there would be the "Times of Restitution," even the Times of Refreshing which should "come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19-21). In Acts 15:16 we read, "After this, I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down." And in Rom. 11:25, 26 we are told, "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

That Israel's restoration results in great blessing to the whole world may be seen from the following quotations—"And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men" (Micah 5:7). "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit"(Is. 27:6). While in Romans 11 we are told that the restoration of Israel will bring even greater

blessing to the world than did their casting away–“If the fall of them (Israel) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness! If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead!”(Rom. 11:11, 15).

4. A groaning Creation can be delivered only by the Second Advent of Christ.

The difference in belief between post and pre-millennialists concerning this point is as great as the difference between light and darkness. Post-millennialists believe that Christ will not return until the end of time and that then He will come to judge the human race. As to what is going to happen at the end of time Scripture does not leave us in ignorance. Says the apostle Peter, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up" (2 Pet. 3:10). Post-millennialists then look for the world (the Kosmos) to be "burned up" and for "the heavens" to "pass away" at the time of Christ's Return; in other words, they look for the destruction of the old creation as the consequent of the Second Advent. But pre-millennialists look for the emancipation of all creation from its present bondage as one of the glorious results of our Redeemer's Return. They base this belief on the teaching of Rom. 8:18-24, a passage which has already been examined in an earlier chapter. Without again entering upon a detailed exposition of the entire passage, let us seek to summarize its contents.

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (vs. 22). This is the lot of all Nature to-day. The world groans beneath an accumulating load of sin and wretchedness. Man groans: his soul groans, and so does his body. Animals groan. The earth itself groans, sometimes like a great giant in awful pain. How then can the world enjoy a thousand years of rest and peace and blessedness whilst the whole creation is in travail! The whole creation is here personified and represented as sending up to heaven a loud and agonizing groan. And God in heaven hears it: His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, nor is His arm shortened that it cannot save. A day of liberation for the groaning creation hastens on. It is announced in the very passage we are now reviewing. The day when this groaning creation will be delivered is the day when Christ returns to usher in the Millennium and when the saints shall be revealed in glory with Him. The time of creation's deliverance is here said to be at "the manifestation of the sons of God" (vs. 19 and compare Col. 3:3). This manifestation of God's sons is in verse 23 denominated "The Adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" which has reference to the "first resurrection"—the "resurrection of the just." A groaning creation then is waiting for the Return of Christ and with Him the Saints manifested in glory, for then, and not till then, will it be emancipated from its present thraldom.

Here then is the answer to our question—What is the time of the Redeemer's Return? He shall return before the Millennium. He shall come back to usher in the Millennium and set up His Messianic Kingdom, restore Israel, and deliver a groaning creation. As to how near His pre-millennial coming may be we leave for consideration in the next two chapters.

Chapter Five

The Imminency of the Redeemer's Return

"For yet a little while, and He that shall come
will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

In the previous chapter we sought to do nothing more than prove that our Redeemer would return before the Millennium, the date of His return, either the approximate or the precise date, we did not touch upon. Nowhere in the Bible is the actual time of the Second Advent made known, instead, it is presented as an event which may occur at any hour; or, in other words, the Fact of the Saviour's appearing is invariably set forth in the language of Imminency. When we say that the Redeemer's Return is an imminent event, we do not mean it will occur immediately, but that He may come back in our own lifetime, that He may come back this year; yet, we cannot say that He will do so. The Fact of the Second Advent is certain because expressly revealed in Holy Writ; the Date of the Second Advent is uncertain because it has not been made known by God. Here then we have a truth, which is simple to grasp, yet one which is of fundamental importance and great practical value. The majority of the errors and heresies which have gathered around this subject are directly traceable to the ignoring of this elementary consideration. For example: if the Lord's people had given due heed to the fact that Scripture presents the Second Coming of Christ as something which may happen at any hour, then the post-millennial teaching that our Lord will not come back again for more than a thousand years, would never have obtained the hearing and acceptance which it has received. Furthermore; if the wondrous truth that our Redeemer might return today once took firm hold on our hearts, it would revolutionize our lives and provide us with a spiritual dynamic which is incalculable in its reach and incomparable in its value. Without expatiating any further upon the general bearings of this aspect of our theme, let us not proceed to show that–

1. Our Lord Himself spoke of His Return in the language of Imminency.

In the Olivet discourse, where the Master replied to the inquires of His disciples concerning the Sign of His Coming and of the End of the Age, He said—"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24:42-51). 8

An analysis of the above passage reveals the following important truths. First; the "hour" of our Lord's Return is unknown to His people. Second; because we know not the exact time of His appearing, we must be in an attitude of constant expectation and watchfulness. Third; the Lord will return unexpectedly, even in such an hour as His own people "think not." Fourth; the faithful and wise servant is he who shall give meat in due season to those of the Lord's household during the time of Christ's absence, and the one who is found so occupied at the time of His appearing shall be richly rewarded. Fifth; the one who shall say in his heart "My Lord delayeth His coming" is an "evil servant," and such an one shall receive a portion of shame and suffering at our Lord's Return.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins intimates that the Lord Jesus desired His people to maintain an attitude of constant readiness for the appearing of the Bridegroom. At the beginning of the parable He pictures all of the "virgins" taking their lamps and going forth to "meet" Him. The interpretation of this part of the parable is very simple. In the early days after our Lord's departure from the earth, His followers detached themselves from all worldly interests and set their affections on Christ—His return being their one hope and great desire. But while the Bridegroom tarried the expectation of His appearing disappeared, and spiritual sloth and sleep was the inevitable consequence, and this condition prevailed until the midnight cry arose —"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." The effect of this cry is seen in the arousing of both the wise and the foolish virgins. The need of preparation and watchfulness is disclosed in the doom that overtook those who had no oil in their vessels. The practical application of the whole parable was made by the Lord Himself—"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." (Matt. 25:13).

At the close of St. Mark's account of the Olivet discourse he records at greater length than does St. Matthew our Lord's command to His disciples to watch for His return—"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:33-37). A careful reading of these verses makes it apparent that the design of the Master was to impress upon His disciples two things: first, that while it was certain He would return, yet it was uncertain when He would appear; second, that in view of the uncertainty of the exact hour of His second coming the Lord's followers must maintain an attitude of constant watchfulness, looking for Him to return at any moment.

On another occasion the Lord said to His disciples, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding: that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants” (Luke 12:35-38). The comparison is a very impressive one. The believer is exhorted to be like a faithful servant, standing on the threshold with loins girded and his lamp lighted, peering through the darkness for the first sign of his returning Master and listening eagerly with attentive ear for the first sounds of His approaching steps.

“For even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. ** I tell you in that night there shall be two men in one bed: the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be girding together: the one shall be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:30-35). The force of this passage is in full harmony with the others already considered. The Lord’s appearing is to be unannounced and unexpected. It will occur while men are busy at their daily vocations, and therefore it behooves us to be constantly on the qui vive. In passing, we may observe how the last quoted Scripture brings out the marvelous scientific accuracy of the Bible. We are told in verse 31 above, that it shall be “day” (in another part of the earth), thus anticipating a comparatively recent discovery of science and demonstrating that the Lord Jesus was perfectly cognizant of the rotundity and rotation of the earth!

“And take heed to yourselves, least at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:34-36). Mark particularly, above, the words “lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (self-indulgence) ** and so that day come upon you unawares.” Daily, nay, hourly, readiness is required of us. Language could not be more explicit. Let those who speak so disparagingly of the “any moment theory” weigh the words “at any time” and remember they were uttered by the Lord Himself. The precise Date of the Second Advent has been designedly withheld from us in order that we should maintain our attitude of watchfulness and that we remain on the very tiptoe of expectation.

Just here we must take note of an objection that is brought against the position we are now advocating, namely, In view of the fact that in the above quotations it is clear that our Lord taught His disciples to look for His Return in their own lifetime, how can we harmonize this with His teaching in Matthew 13 where we found He foretold that certain conditions must arise before the end of this age could arrive? How can we square the presentation of the Redeemer’s Return in the language of imminency with the predictions that before He came back the little mustard-seed must grow into a great tree and the whole of the three measures of meal be completely leavened? At first sight this appears a real difficulty, but further reflection will show it is more apparent than actual.

When we examine the parables of Matthew 13 in the presence of the above objection our first question must be, What impression were these parables calculated to make upon the minds of the apostles, or on Christians in apostolic days? That these parables contain prophetic pictures which it has taken many centuries to fully develop is evident to intelligent believers living now, but we insist that these predictions were couched in such terms that there was nothing in their surface and obvious signification which forbade the apostles and their converts looking for the Redeemer to return in their own lifetime. In other words, there was nothing direct

in these parables which argued the inevitable postponement of the Second Advent until a long interval of time had elapsed after they were uttered by the Lord Jesus. In our exposition of Matthew 13 (see the previous chapter) we showed how, very early in the apostolic era, these parables began to receive their fulfillment, and, as we would now point out, they were fulfilled to such an extent that as a matter of fact they presented no necessary obstacles to the first century saints who believed in the Imminent appearing of the Saviour.

The first parable need not here detain us, for, the Sowing of the Seed was done by Christ Himself while He was here in person on the earth. Concerning the parable of the Tares it is sufficient to say that within the lifetime of the apostles themselves, long before the end of the first century was reached, Satan had succeeded in covertly introducing his children among the people of God. It is true the parable teaches that the wheat and the tares were to grow together until the harvest and that the harvest would not be until the end of the age, but there is nothing in the parable which intimated that a protracted interval lay between the sowing and the harvest, nay, there was nothing in it which discouraged the belief that the crop might hasten rapidly and the harvest occur in the lifetime of the apostles themselves.

The third parable foretold that the little mustard-seed was to become a great tree and, as we say, it was the growth of Christianity (previously corrupted) which was thus symbolized. But let it be carefully noted that nothing at all was said in the parable as to how great the "tree" was to become. Furthermore, we know that even in the days of the apostles Christianity had made marvelous progress and had spread through extensive regions. At the time our Lord uttered the parable His followers were but a mere handful and there is nothing to indicate that up to the hour of His ascension His flock was anything more than a "little" one. But contrast the conditions that we read of in the Book of Acts. Mark the three thousand which were converted on the day of Pentecost. Take note of such expressions as, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14); "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake ** when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (8:5, 6, 12); "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord"(11:20-24). Take into consideration the churches which were planted in Galatia, Corinth, Thessalonia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13), Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and then it will be seen that the predicted growth of the mustard-seed could present no obstacle to the disciples' continual expectancy of Christ's appearing. And, if it be further objected that our parable foretold the corruption as well as the growth of Christianity, the answer is that the apostolic Epistles record the fulfillment of this part of the parable too. Read such passages as Phil. 3:18, 19, where the apostle says, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things;" (2 Thess. 2:7) and from such Scriptures we may discover how extensively the meal had been "leavened" in that early day. Thus the parables of the mustard-seed and the Leaven had been so far fulfilled in the lifetime of the apostles themselves that none could say the end of the age might not even then be near at hand.

One other Scripture needs to be noted in this connection ere we turn to our next point. It has

often been objected by post-millennialists that in view of our Lord's declaration "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14), that it was impossible for the apostles to be expecting Christ to return in their own lifetime. But this objection is disposed of by several passages recorded in the New Testament itself. In Acts 19:10 we read, "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." And again, in Col. 1:5, 6 we are told, "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel: which is come unto you, as it is in all the world" and in verse 23 of the same chapter "be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." From these passages then it is abundantly clear that no such formidable hindrance as imagined by post-millennialists interposed between the apostles and the hope of the imminent return of the Redeemer. Scripture thus affords positive evidence that the Gospel had been so widely diffused by the apostles themselves that nothing further necessarily and inevitably intervened between them and the realization of their hope.

Having thus, we trust, satisfactorily, disposed of the most plausible and forcible objection which can be brought against the pre-millennial and imminent Return of our Lord, let us now consider.

2. The Apostles referred to the Redeemer's Return in the language of Imminency.

"Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13:11, 12). The "salvation," to which the apostle here refers is the completing and consummating of our salvation, when we shall, in spirit and soul and body, be fully conformed to the image of God's Son. The time when this will be realized is the time of our Redeemer's Return, for, "when He shall appear we shall be like Him"(1 John 3:2). That time will be the believer's "day," that "perfect day" unto which the path of the just "shineth more and more" (Prov. 4:18). The "night," spoken of above, is the present period during which the Light of the world is absent. Observe that the apostle, under the Holy Spirit, regarded the night as "far spent," and the day as "at hand!"

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly"(Rom. 16:20). The reference here is to Gen. 3:15 where we have recorded Jehovah's promise to our first parents that the woman's Seed should bruise the head of the Serpent. As believers will, in the coming day, rule and reign "with Christ" (see Rev. 3:21; 19:14, 20:4) it is here said "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet." In the use of the word "shortly" we learn that the apostle did not regard the fulfillment of this promise as something which lay in the far distant future, but rather as that which was even then impending.

"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"(1 Cor. 1:4-7). From this passage we learn: first, that these Corinthian saints were "waiting" for the Coming of the Lord Jesus, which proves they were looking for Him to return in their generation; second, that the apostle commanded them for their attitude, yea, "thanked God always on their behalf;" third, that this expectation on the part of these Corinthian believers was the very summum bonum of Christian experience, inasmuch as it is said, they "came behind in no gift," and then as a climax it is added—"Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching"(Heb. 10:24, 25). The coming "Day" with its glories and blessedness was that which filled the apostle's vision. The promised "Day"—the Day of Christ—which was to follow this dark night of sorrow when the Bridegroom is absent, was the hope which stayed his heart. He could "see," by faith, that day was approaching, and on the fact of its imminency he bases an exhortation to those who are partakers of the heavenly calling to conduct themselves in the present in a manner befitting those who are the children of light. Again, in this same chapter the apostle says, For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (vs. 37). How clear it is from these words that the Holy Spirit desired the first century believers to be "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ"!

So real was the hope of the Redeemer's Return to the heart of the apostle Paul and so imminent did this event appear to him that we find he included himself among those who might not fall asleep but be among the living saints when the Assembling Shout should be heard. Said he, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). Again, "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our(not "your") vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:19, 20). Once more, "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(not "ye") which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). The enemies of the faith have seized upon these very statements to show that the apostle Paul was in error, that he wrote by unaided human wisdom, that he merely recorded in his Epistles his own beliefs, and that in some of these he was clearly mistaken. But such an objection is quite pointless to the saints who believe that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." We hope to show further on in this chapter why the Holy Spirit moved the apostles to write of the Second Advent of Christ as an event which might take place in their own day.

The apostle Paul was not alone in this regard: we find that the other apostles also regarded the Return of our Lord as something which might occur at any time. The apostle James wrote, "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"(Jas. 5:8). There is no ambiguity about this language: such a statement not only argued the pre-millennial Coming of Christ, inasmuch as His Coming could not be said to have "drawn nigh" if a whole Millennium intervened, but it also announced the imminency of His return—something which might be expected at any time. The apostle Peter declared, "But the end of all things (all things connected with this present regime) is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4:7). The apostle was expecting the speedy winding up of this present economy and the introduction of a new order of things when his Lord returned and took the government upon His shoulder. The apostle John said, "Little children it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). The "last time" or "last hour" (Greek hora) must be distinguished from "the last days" (2 Tim. 3:1) and "the last day" (Greek hemera—John 6:39). The "last days" refer to the closing decades of this present dispensation. The "last day" looks forward to the Millennium when the saints shall participate in the "first resurrection"—it is the last Day of God's dispensational week, foreshadowed by the Sabbath. The "last hour" is connected with the Antichrist. It is the "last hour" of Satan's freedom for, excepting the "little season" referred to in Rev. 20, after this dispensation Satan will be for ever banished from these scenes. This dispensation then is Satan's "last hour" as the "Prince of this world" and it is during the closing moments of this "last hour" that the Antichrist shall be revealed. The force then of the apostle's statement was to the effect that though the personal Antichrist had not appeared up to the time when he wrote this epistle, yet, the saints must not conclude from this that the Second Coming of Christ was necessarily a long way off. No; even then there were many Antichrists by which they were to know it was the "last time." Thus we see that the testimony of the apostles was uniform and explicit. They were looking for their Lord to return at any time. Such ought to be our attitude too.

"Let not my eyes with tears be dim,
Let joy their upward glance illume;
Look up, and watch, and wait for Him—
Soon, soon the Lord will come.
Soon will that star-paved milky way,
Soon will that beauteous azure dome,
Glories, ne'er yet conceived display—
Soon, soon the Lord will come.
Changed in the twinkling of an eye,
Invested with immortal bloom,
I shall behold Him throned on high,
And sing, "The Lord is come!"
One beam from His all-glorious face

These mortal garments will consume,
Each sinful blemish will efface–
Lord Jesus, quickly come!
What will it be with Thee to dwell,
Thyself my everlasting Home!
Oh, bliss- Oh, joy ineffable!
Lord Jesus, quickly come!”

3. Why was the fact of our Lord's Return presented in the language of Imminency and the exact date withheld?

At first sight it may appear strange that our Lord has not made known to us the precise date of His appearing. He has caused many details concerning the Blessed Hope to be recorded in the Word. He has made known many things which are to transpire at His second advent, and in view of the fact that so much has been revealed it may strike us as peculiar that the very point upon which human curiosity most desires enlightenment should have been left undefined. We need hardly say that it was not ignorance on our Lord's part which caused Him to leave the hour of His second coming un-determined, though some of His enemies have dared to charge this against Him, basing their evil indictment upon Mark 13:32—"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." These words need occasion no difficulty if we pay due attention to the particular Gospel in which they are found, namely, Mark's- the Gospel of the Servant of Jehovah. The purpose of Mark's Gospel is to present the Lord Jesus as the perfect Servant, the obedient Servant, the Servant whose meat it was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and "the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth" (John 15:15). Mark 13:32 does not call into question our Lord's omniscience but asserts that, as a Servant, He waited Another's will. A little reflection will reveal the perfect wisdom of our Lord in concealing the exact date of His Return. One reason was that He desired to keep His people on the very tiptoe of expectation, continually looking for Him.

Again; this question needs to be pondered in the light of the Unity of Christ's church. The tendency with all of us is to regard believers as so many detached individuals, instead of viewing the saints as "one body" (1 Cor. 12:13) "members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). The church is not an organization, it is a living organism, a "body" of which Christ is the "head." Hence, the Imminency of the Redeemer's return is to one member precisely what it is to all the members. and therefore it is that first century believers were just as truly and just as much interested in the appearing of the Saviour as are believers now living in the twentieth century. The object of hope then is the object of hope now, for the Body is one, and conversely, the object of hope now must necessarily have been the object of hope then. Consequently, the early Christians, by virtue of the Unity of the saints, were exhorted to walk in the light and blessing of a hope which is common to the entire church.

The Return of our Lord might not have been revealed at all, but in that case a most powerful dynamic to godly living would have been withheld from the church. The Imminency of the Redeemer's second advent was revealed as an incentive to watchfulness and preparedness. If then the fact of our Lord's return had not been presented in the New Testament as something which might occur at any time, but, instead, had been expressly postponed and fixed to happen in some particular and distant century, then all believers who lived in the centuries preceding that one would have been robbed of the comfort which is to be found in the assurance that Christ may return at any hour and would have lost the purifying effects which such a prospect is calculated to produce. As it has been well remarked, "It is not that He desires each succeeding generation to believe that He will certainly return in their time, for He does not desire our faith and our practice to be founded on an error, as, in that case, the faith and practice of all generations except the last would be. But it is a necessary element of the doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ, that it should be possible at any time, that no generation should consider it improbable in theirs" (Archbishop Trench).

Here then is the simple but sufficient answer to our question. The second coming of Christ is presented in the language of imminency because of the far-reaching effects it is designed to exert on those who lay hold of the promise, "Surely I come quickly." The imminent return of the Redeemer is a practical hope. It is the commanding motive of the New Testament. The Holy

Spirit has linked it with every precept and practice of Christian character and conduct. As another has so well expressed it: "It arms admonitions, it points appeals, it strengthens arguments, it enforces commands, it intensifies entreaties, it arouses courage, it rebukes fear, it quickens affection, it kindles hope, it inflames zeal, it separates from the world, it consecrates to God, it drys tears, it conquers death" (Brookes). To amplify this statement in detail—

The hope of our Lord's second advent produces loyalty and faithfulness to Christ."Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth, I say unto you, that He will make him ruler over all that He hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The Lord of that Servant will come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke 12:42-46). The moral purpose of this parable (see context of above quotation) is apparent. While the steward maintained an attitude of watchfulness he was faithful and sober, but when he said in his heart "my Lord delayeth His coming" he began to beat his fellow-servants and to eat and drink and be drunken. Watching for the Lord then is an incentive to loyalty and fidelity, while unwatchfulness results in worldliness of heart, carelessness of walk and carnality of life.

The Return of our Lord is presented as a motive to brotherly love- "And the Lord made you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess. 3:12, 13). In view of the fact that our Lord may return at any hour, how awful are divisions between the Lord's own people. Soon shall each of us appear before the Bema of Christ where every wrong will be righted and every misunderstanding cleared up. The Lord is at hand, therefore let us sink our petty differences, forgive one another even as God hath for Christ's sake forgiven us, and increase and abound in love one toward another.

The perennial hope of Christ's second advent is used as a call to a godly walk- "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13). How clear it is from these words that the Blessed Hope is intended to check the spirit of self-pleasing and self-seeking in the believer and to promote holiness in the daily life. As says the apostle John, "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

The return of our Lord is designed to comfort bereaved hearts—"For I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 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 (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"(1 Thess. 4:13-18). Those to whom the apostle was writing were sorrowing over the loss of loved ones. But observe, he does not seek to solace by telling them that shortly they would die and join the departed in heaven. No; he held up before them the prospect of a returning Saviour who would bring back the sleeping saints with Him.

The promise of the Redeemer's return is calculated to develop the grace of patience—"Be

patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5:7, 8). These words were addressed to saints who were poor in this world's goods and who were groaning beneath the oppression of unrighteous employers. How timely is this word of exhortation to many a twentieth-century saint! How many of God's poor are now crying unto the Lord for deliverance from pecuniary difficulties, from tyranny and injustice! These cries have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts, and just as He intervened of old on behalf of Israel in Egypt, so will He speedily come and remove His people from their present cruel task-masters. In the meantime, the word is, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord."

The hope of our Lord's return is the antidote for worry- "Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand, In nothing be anxious"(Phil. 4:5, 6, R.V.). Brethren in Christ, why be so fearful about meeting next year's liabilities? Why be anxiously scheming and fretting about the future? Why be worrying about the morrow? Tomorrow you may be in heaven. Before tomorrow dawns the assembling Shout may be given. At any hour thy Saviour may come.The Lord is at hand and His appearing will mean the end of all your trials and troubles. Look not then at your dangers and difficulties, but for your Redeemer. In nothing be anxious.

The prospect of a speedily returning Saviour is employed to stimulate sobriety and vigilance- "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light"(Rom. 13:11, 12). As we have shown in a previous chapter the "salvation" here spoken of is that mentioned in Heb. 9:28 ("unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation") which salvation is brought to us at Christ's second advent. Note, particularly, that this salvation is not presented as a distant hope, to be realized at some remote period, but is set forth as that which is nigh at hand.

Ere closing this chapter one other question claims our attention—

4. Why is it that our Lord has tarried till now? Why has not the Redeemer returned long ere this?

At first sight perhaps this inquiry might appear almost irreverent and some may feel inclined to remind us that "secret things belong unto the Lord." In response we would say, It is not in any spirit of idle curiosity nor is it to indulge an inquisitive speculation that we take up this question, but simply because we believe that a humble examination of it will prove profitable to our souls, inasmuch as the answer to our inquiry demonstrates the wisdom and grace of Him with whom we have to do.

Of old, the mother of Sisera cried concerning her son, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" (Judges 5:28). We might well appropriate these words to our present inquiry. On the eve of His death, the Lord Jesus said "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also," but eighteen centuries have run their weary course since then and He has not yet returned! Is not this deeply mysterious? A world in which iniquity abounds more and more; an Israel without a home and without a king; a church rent by divisions and, like Samson, shorn of its power; a groaning creation and a war stricken earth , all unite in crying with the souls under the alter "How long, O Lord!" (Rev. 6:10).

Why then such delay? Why has the millennial era of blessedness been thus postponed? Why has not the Redeemer returned to enter into His blood-bought inheritance long ere this? Stupendous questions surely. Questions which sometime or other exercise the hearts of all the saints of God. Is it possible to discover a satisfactory answer? A complete answer—No; for now we "know in part." But an answer—yes, an answer that will at least enable us to see, even though it be through a glass darkly, something of the meaning of our Lord's delay. Why this protracted interval since the time of His departure? Why has He not returned long ere this? We answer—

First, because God would give man full opportunity to develop his schemes and thereby demonstrate the world's need of a competent Ruler.

Man cannot complain that God has not allowed him full opportunity to experiment and test his own plans. Man has been permitted to do his utmost in ruling and regenerating the world. God, as it were, has put the reins of government into his hands, and withdrawn for a season. Why? To show whether man was sufficient for these things. To show whether or not man was capable of governing himself. To show whether man was competent to grapple successfully with the powers of evil which war upon his soul.

Throughout the ages man's efforts have been directed toward ruling and regenerating the world. Man has been given full scope. With what results? With the result that the incurable hatred of the human heart to God and the utter depravity of human nature have been fully displayed. How has man used the freedom, the opportunities, the privileges, the talents with which his Maker has endowed him? To what profit has he turned them? Have they been used with the purpose of glorifying God or of deifying himself? To ask the question is quite enough. Loud have been man's boasts. Lofty have been his claims. Pretentious has vauntings. Such terms as improvement, advancement, enlightenment, evolution, civilization, have been his favorite slogans. But the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, and the folly of the world's wisdom and the vanity of man's claims are now displayed before our eyes. What has "civilization" effected? With all our so-called enlightenment and progress unto what have we attained? Let the records of our Law-courts tell us. Let the columns of the daily newspapers make response. Let the economic political and moral conditions of the day make answer. Let the world war with all its inhumanities, its barbarities, its fiendish atrocities, give reply. And mark, it cannot be said that these things are due to man's ignorance and inexperience. Man is not just starting out to make history. We are now living in the twentieth century of the Christian

era. Man then cannot complain that God has not given him plenty of time to mature his plans. No; God has given ample time, time enough to show that he is an utter failure, time enough to demonstrate that he is totally incapable of governing himself, time enough to prove that if relief comes at all it must come from outside himself.

Here then is the first part of our answer. Christ's return has been delayed in order to provide opportunity for man's plans to fully develop. God waits till harvest-time. He has been waiting for the harvest time of man's schemes and efforts. He has been waiting patiently with sickle in hand, and as soon as the crops of human industry have fully matured, the word will go forth —"Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe"(Rev. 14:15).

Why has not our Lord returned long ere this?—We answer—

Second, in order that God might fully display His long-sufferance.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:8, 9). All through these nineteen centuries the Lord has been saying, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Ever since the Saviour left the earth, God has been dealing with the world in mercy instead of visiting it with judgment. God's patience toward our wicked race has been truly marvelous. Wonderful it is that the vials of His wrath have not been emptied upon the nations long ere this. What long-sufferance Jehovah hath shown in bearing with such rebels these twenty centuries! Why is it that the Day of Salvation has lasted until it now exceeds in length every dispensation that has preceded it? Why is it that the door of mercy still stands open wide and God is yet beseeching sinners to be reconciled to Himself? Why is it that Christ has not long, long ago returned in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not His Gospel? Why is it that He is not even now seated upon the Throne of His Glory and saying to His enemies, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"? Why? Ah! why? Because the Lord God is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish. Suppose that Christ had returned five, ten, twenty, fifty years ago, then, in such case, how many who read these lines rejoicing that they have been accepted in the Beloved, would have perished in their sins! Join, then, with the writer in returning thanks for the marvelous long-sufferance of our gracious God.

Why has not the Lord returned ere this? We answer—

Third, in order that God might fully test the faith of His own people.

This has ever been His way. Why those years of waiting before Abraham received Isaac? Why that protracted bondage in Egypt, when the chosen groaned beneath the burdens imposed on them by their cruel taskmasters? Why those four centuries of silence between the ministries of Malachi and John the Baptist? Why a four thousand years interval from the giving of the promise of the woman's Seed until its realization? Why?—to test the faith of His people, to demonstrate the reality of their confidence in Him. So in this dispensation. Why has our Lord tarried so long in the Father's house? Why these eighteen centuries for His church to journey through the wilderness of the world? Why is it that the first, the second, and the third "watch" has passed and yet our Lord has not come? Why did God permit the Blessed Hope to be recovered almost a hundred years ago, and still the Bridegroom tarries? Why this earnest expectation on the part of His own for three generations past and even now the heavens are silent? Why tarry the wheels of His chariot? Why?—because God would fully test the faith of His people. Why is He pleased to do this? To the praise of the glory of His grace. Perhaps to demonstrate to the angels, to whom we are "made a spectacle"(1 Cor. 4:9), that God has a people who by His grace can trust Him even amid the darkness of a profound mystery!

Wonderful are the ways of our God. Scoffers may cry “Where is the promise of His coming?” Evil servants may exclaim “my Lord delayeth His coming,” and our own wicked hearts may sometimes be tempted to murmur against the long delay, nevertheless, it shall yet be seen that He “doeth all things well.”

Chapter Six

The Signs of the Redeemer's Return

As we have shown in the last chapter, the apostles and their converts looked for Christ to return in their own lifetime. They did not affirm that He would but they believed that He might. But eighteen centuries have passed since then and yet He has not come. The question therefore arises, What evidence is there that the second advent of our Lord is now nigh at hand —that is, nigh as judged even by human measurement of time? May there not be another eighteen centuries which must yet run their weary course before the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings? Have we any means for ascertaining the approximate period when our Lord may be expected to appear? Have we any good ground for believing that another long interval will not yet elapse before the Saviour comes back again?

In connection with other great events which God has brought about in human affairs, fair warning has been given to announce their approach. The Flood-judgment, the length of sojourn and the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, and the time of our Lord's first advent, may be cited as illustrations. Thus, before each of the marked interpositions of God in the past, plain intimation of their approach was given. Has then the time—the approximate time—of the great consummating event of all events been left shrouded in such secrecy that it is impossible for us to know anything about it until it arrives? Nay verily. The inspired language of Holy Writ declares—"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:1-6). Words could scarcely be plainer.

God does not desire His people to remain in ignorance concerning the period when His Son shall return. Just as of old, He said concerning the impending destruction of Sodom "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" so has God graciously taken the Church into His counsels and revealed to us a "part of His ways" at least. We do not know the day or the hour, we are unable to determine the precise year when the Redeemer shall return, but we do know that His coming is now near at hand. We know it from the testimony of God's living oracles. He has not left us in darkness, but has placed in our hands the more sure Word of Prophecy "whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts." The prophets of Old Testament times are commended because that they "searched what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow"(1 Pet. 1:11); surely, then, a similar "searching" is commendable in us.

As we study the Old Testament Scriptures we discover that a number of "Signs" were given to herald the first advent of Christ. There were conditions to be realized and certain events which would come to pass, and as these conditions were met and as these events occurred those who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38) saw in these things so many intimations of the approach of Messiah's advent and His public manifestation. The Scriptures of Israel revealed the fact that the Redeemer would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2); they foretold that He should be a lineal descendant of David and therefore of the Tribe of Judah (Ps. 132:11); they announced that a forerunner should go before Him make straight His way

(Isaiah 40:3); they went so far as to set forth the approximate date of His appearing, namely, before the scepter had departed from Judah (Gen. 49:10), while the Temple was yet standing (Mal. 3:1), and sometime before the sixty-ninth week of Daniel had run its course (Dan. 9:24-27). In like manner, the New Testament Scriptures also record certain "Signs" in connection with our Lord's second coming to the earth. We say "to the earth," for let it be distinctly understood that Scripture interposes nothing whatever between the present hour and the coming of Christ for His saints, when He descends into the air and catches them up to Himself. All the "Signs" recorded in the Word of God have to do with His return to the earth. But as there will be only a comparatively short interval between the two stages in the second coming of Christ, the Signs which proclaim the one announce the other. If the fulfillment of certain inspired predictions declare that the return of Christ to the earth is near at hand, then His descent to the air is so much nearer still. If we know that the end of the Age itself is now almost reached, then it is doubly certain that the rapture of the saints may occur at any hour. Yet, we repeat, the various Signs to which we shall call our readers' attention have to do with our Lord's return to the earth. We repeat this for the sake of warning, for as another has said, the business of the Christian is not to be looking for signs but listening for a Shout (Haldeman). Yet, while we ought not to be looking for signs we may look at them (W. Scott).

As we have said, the Old testament Scriptures foretold certain things concerning the Lord when He should appear: fore-announced Signs were to characterize the times of His advent. But the Jews failed to discern these Signs and the Saviour reproached them for their failure. Said He, "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the Signs of the Times?" (Matt. 16:2, 3). The reason why the Pharisees and Sadducees were blind to the significance of the things which were then transpiring before their eyes, was that they were ignorant of the contents of that Book in which these Signs were recorded. This is clear from the words of our Lord on many occasions—"Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures"(Matt. 22:29). The reason why they were ignorant of the contents and real meaning of the Scriptures was because they had substituted their own "tradition" for the Word of God (Mark 7:13). And history has repeated itself! We are living in a day when the vast majority of people are unable to "discern the Signs of the Times," when our religious leaders "err, not knowing the Scriptures" because they are following their own "tradition" rather than the Word of God. The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees because they could "discern the face of the sky" but would not take the necessary pains to "discern the Signs of the Times." Then let us beware lest we fall through the same example of unbelief. Let us approach the Scriptures reverently and prayerfully, seeking to discover our position on the calendar of prophecy and thus be prepared for the solemn yet blessed events now so near at hand.

While it is true that the great majority of the Jews who lived during the days of our Lord's first advent failed to discern the Signs of the Times and in consequence did not profit by the announcements of their prophets, nevertheless, there were a few who were "waiting for the Consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25), And so it is now. By the grace of God, there is a remnant today who are reading the Signs of the Times in the light cast by the prophetic Word. At some of these Signs we shall now look. And

1. The Recovery and Revival of the Blessed Hope itself.

In Daniel 12:4, 9, 10 we read—"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. ** And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the Time of the End. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." 9 As we shall yet seek to show this prophecy is a composite one and its fulfillment is being manifested in many different directions. That to which we would now direct attention is the manner in which this prediction has been accomplished in connection with the Scriptures and particularly in regard to the modern interest and wide-spread study of Prophecy.

As is well known, the book of Daniel is largely composed of prophecies, prophecies which refer frequently to the closing days of the Times of the Gentiles. The Scripture now before us makes known seven fats, namely—first, that the contents of Daniel's prophecies were to be "shut up" and "sealed;" second, that the book of Daniel should not remain a "sealed" book for ever; third, that at "the Time of the End" it should be unsealed, for it was to be "shut up" only "to" and "till" the Time of the End; fourth, that at the Time of the End there should be a "running to and fro," in other words, there should be a revival of interest in the prophetic word, an earnest inquiry and seeking for light; fifth, that as the result of this revival of interest in and study of the prophetic word "knowledge shall be increased;" sixth, as the consequence of this "increase of knowledge" many would be "purified, and made white, and tried;" seventh, that notwithstanding this, the wicked would "do wickedly" and none of them would "understand," thus are we told in this last item that the understanding of the Word of God is a matter of spiritual discernment and not a question of intellectual acumen: if it were the latter then the wicked might understand as readily as the righteous (compare Matt. 13:10–15). Let us briefly consider these seven points and note how remarkably they are verified in present-day conditions.

Daniel was informed that the things he had seen and the communications which he had heard were not to be turned to use for the present. All was to be as a sealed book until a distant day, in fact would be "shut up" until the Time of the End. How accurately and literally this part of our prediction has been fulfilled may best be seen by reviewing the writings of theologians and commentators who lived prior to the last century. For the most part the prophecies of Daniel have been utterly neglected until recently, and where attempts were made to open up its contents the wildest theories were indulged and the most absurd interpretations were adopted. There was no spiritual understanding. The book was "shut up!" But the book of Daniel was not to be shut up for ever. God had some wise purpose in making these disclosures to His prophet, He had some good reason in making known to Daniel the trend and end of the various world empires.

At the Time of the End the contents of the book of Daniel were to be opened and unsealed, for many would "run to and fro" and knowledge would be "increased." How plainly has this mark of the end been manifesting itself during the past century! Though, the masses still turn from prophecy as from a sealed book, yet what a stir and study has it awakened in many earnest minds! "Many" have turned to the word of prophecy (witness the great number of books now written on the subject) and given their most sedulous attention to the understanding of its contents. Particularly has this been the case with the book of Daniel itself. Large numbers of God's people have been moved to inquire concerning the things recorded therein and have spared no pains or cost to obtain a knowledge of them, and under the blessing of God and the guidance of His Spirit light upon this book is steadily increasing and its mysterious hieroglyphics are becoming clearer and plainer as the fulfillment of its predictions draws nearer. Expositors of this important book may differ in details but in the main they are agreed and their leading

conclusions are the same.

The result of this earnest and widespread study of prophecy is seen in the increased devotion and consecration of God's people—"many shall be purified and made white." Side by side with increasing light on prophecy has come a deepened sense of responsibility toward the lost. It is a striking fact that the remarkable growth in Foreign Missions of last century synchronized with the widespread turning to the prophetic Word. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century the heathen were, with rare exceptions, utterly neglected, so also was it with the book of Daniel. On the other hand, it strict accord with Daniel's prophecy, side by side with the increase of prophetic light and its purifying effects on the people of God, we find the "wicked doing wickedly" and that none of them "understand"—i.e., that the wicked are in utter ignorance of the terrible times (referred to in Daniel) which lie just ahead of them.

One of the most marked and blessed results of the widespread inquiry and enlightenment upon the subject of prophecy has been the recovery and revival of the Blessed Hope. We believe it is to this that Daniel's prophecy (in its present-day application) refers when it says "but the wise shall understand." The "wise" are those who are governed by God's Word and whose thoughts are formed by the teaching of Holy Writ, for "The entrance of Thy words giveth light" (Ps. 119-130). What is it that the "wise" understand? They "understand" the meaning of the days in which they are living. They "understand" that the last days of the age are upon us. They "understand" that we have now reached "the Time of the End." They "understand" that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Parallel with the prophecy of Daniel is the teaching of Christ in the parable of the Bridegroom and the virgins. This parable sets forth the several attitudes of the Lord's people, in different periods of this Dispensation, with reference to their expectation of the Redeemer's Return and was uttered in response to the disciples questions (recorded at the beginning of the previous chapter) "What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?" At the beginning of the Christian era all His followers were waiting for the Lord's appearing. Then followed a mixed condition—part were wise and part were foolish. Then, while the Bridegroom tarried, "they all slumbered and slept." The Blessed Hope was lost and the church lapsed into a condition of spiritual apathy. But this sleep was to be broken. It was foretold that at the midnight hour a cry should be made—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. 25:6). This was a prophetic announcement that just before our Lord returned, a loud and distinct testimony concerning His coming would be sounded upon the dull ear of Christendom. This Cry is now going forth. Everywhere the servants of God are proclaiming the news that the Lord is at hand. All over the world the cry is being raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." Never since the days of the apostles has there been so much yearning and longing, preaching and teaching, watching and praying, upon the subject of Christ's second coming as there is now.

The parable of the Bridegroom and the virgins corresponds very closely with the prophecy of Daniel 12. The midnight Cry—the recovery of the Blessed Hope—matches the unsealing of the prophetic word and the "increase" of "knowledge." The arising of the virgins agrees with the "running to and fro." The "trimming" of their lamps—preparation for the Lord's appearing—tallies with the many being "purified." The two classes—the wise and the foolish virgins—corresponds exactly with the two classes mentioned by Daniel—the "wise" and the "wicked," for just as it is said that "none of the wicked shall understand," so the foolish virgins shall declare "our lamps are gone out"—they will be in the dark!

One other Scripture which confirms us in saying that one of the Signs which heralds the Return of Christ is the midnight Cry, is to be found in 2 Pet. 3:3, 4—"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from

the beginning of the creation." Observe that it is in the "last days" (of this Age) that there should arise a class who shall scoff at the promise of Christ's return, which is further intimation that at the Time of the End there would be a renewed and special testimony to the Blessed Hope.

To return to Daniel's prophecy. "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased"(Dan. 12:4). These words must not be limited to an application which confines it to the increase of light on the prophetic word, but should be taken in their widest signification. We believe they have reference to the recent and phenomenal increase both in Travel and Knowledge. The words "run to and fro" would seem to point to modern methods of transportation. How this mark of the end time is being manifested today is well known to all. "Railways cover the earth, and steamers track the sea like a mighty spider's web" (Blackstone). Automobiles have become commoner than horses, and appearances indicate that within a few years at most aeroplanes will be used as a regular means of travel. Observe that our text says, "Many shall run to and fro." Restlessness now seems to be common to human nature. The rising generation is obsessed with this spirit of running to and fro. Witness the enormous growth of immigration. Study railroad statistics and mark the rapid increase in the number of passengers carried, now numbering hundreds of millions annually. How accurately these words "many shall run to and fro" describe present-day conditions! Everything is in a turmoil. Everybody is on the run, and hence it is that the Day of Rest has become a thing of the past.

"And knowledge shall be increased." What advances have been made in the educational realm! Facilities which hitherto were available to only a privileged class are now open to the children of the artisan and common laborer. Illiteracy will soon be a thing of the past. By the multiplication of schools, colleges and universities "knowledge" has been marvelously increased. Another agency for increasing knowledge is the press. "The public press, with its ceaseless streams of news and information, covers the earth with its ever increasing circulation, like falling leaves from some mighty tree of knowledge. And of the making of many books, there is truly no end" (Blackstone).

Witness the remarkable increase of scientific knowledge. Contrast our present-day knowledge of astronomy, archeology, zoology, physiology, psychology, with what was known about them even one hundred years ago. How wonderfully man has harnessed to his service the forces of Nature! Things never dreamed of by our grandparents are now actualities, and many of them mere common places. What discoveries have been made! What inventions have been perfected! What triumphs have been achieved on land and sea, in the air and under the waters! How the discovery and utilization of electricity has revolutionized every department of our life! Truly, scientific knowledge has been increased.

The above parable corresponds very closely with the first three found in Matthew 13. Like them it is prophetic in its scope. Its dispensational application is simple yet remarkable. The sowing of the seed here is the same as the sowing of the seed in Matthew 13 and relates to the gracious mission of the Lord and His apostles at the beginning of this dispensation. The seed was the Word of God (Luke 8:11). The period of "sleep" (Compare Matt. 13:25; 25:5) was the spiritual lethargy of the third and fourth centuries which merged into the "Dark Ages," and corresponded with the order of nature. The natural seed sown into the ground becomes corrupt and dies, or almost dies; and so it was with the Divine seed. The epistles of the New Testament furnish evidence of how quickly and how sadly the purity of the Word became corrupted with the grossest errors and adulterations. But yet it lived. And more, it "grew." The language used in the parable describing the order of growth corresponds exactly with its prophetic fulfillment. There was first the "blade," which in nature continues in a feeble state of vitality for a long time. So it was with the Divine "seed" all through the "Dark Ages." "Then the ear:" does not this point prophetically, to the Reformation period when copies of the Scriptures were multiplied a

hundredfold and given once more to the masses in their own tongue. “After that the full corn in the ear.” How remarkable! as the harvest approaches, the original seed now re-appears, though greatly multiplied in quantity. And this is exactly what we are witnessing today. Many long lost truths, truths which have been buried beneath the soil of human tradition, have been given back to the people of God. And, as to multiplication in quantity, contrast the millions of copies of the Scriptures now in circulation with the limited number in use in the first century when printing was unknown. Yes, the Seed has “grown” though man “knoweth not how.” But note the next words: “But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come.” How unspeakably solemn! What follows the “full corn in the ear?” “Immediately,” we are told, “he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come.” Compare with this Matt. 13:39—“the harvest is the end of the age.” And compare further Rev. 14:15—“Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe!” Thus by putting side by side our Lord’s teaching in the above parable with the prophecy of Daniel we find that the “full corn in the ear” corresponds with “increase of knowledge” and “immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come” (“the harvest is the end of the age”Matt. 13:39) agrees with the “Time of the End.”

To review and sum up: From Daniel 12 we learn that at the Time of the End knowledge shall be increased; from Matthew 25 we learn there would be a recovery of the Blessed Hope and a proclamation concerning the imminent Return of the Bridegroom; from 2 Peter 3 we also learn that in the “last days” there is to be a renewed and special testimony borne respecting the second coming of Christ; and in Mark 4 we learn that the Divine seed (the Word) was to grow until it brought forth the “full corn in the ear” and that this increase of fruitage occurred “immediately” before the harvest. How wonderful and how perfect is the harmony of Scripture! The fact that these things are now spread before our eyes declares in language loud and clear to all who have ears to hear that the Time of the End has been reached, that the Bridegroom is now at hand, that the “last days” are already entered upon, and that the Harvest—symbol of Divine judgment—is impending and to be expected “immediately.”

2. The Apostasy which prepares the way for the Antichrist.

The question has often been raised and is still hotly disputed as to whether the world is getting better or worse. Are conditions in general more propitious or more iniquitous? From one viewpoint conditions are improving, from another they are deteriorating. Good and evil are now both of them rapidly coming to a head. This is exactly what our Lord foretold in the parable of the Tares—"Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matt. 13:30). Both the wheat and the tares are growing. Hence it is that present-day conditions are so conflicting. Godliness and lawlessness, good and evil are, side by side, each advancing, the conflict between them ever increasing in severity. And hence it is that side by side with the increase of spiritual light and prophetic knowledge, we are now witnessing also a wide-spread departure from the Truth. As the light increases the shadows deepen. It is written, "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18); but, it is written again, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse"(2 Tim. 3:13).

Of old, the question was asked, "Watchman what of the night!" and the answer from the lonely watcher upon his lofty tower was "The morning cometh, and also the night" (Is. 21:11, 12). Here again we meet with a seemingly conflicting testimony. Yet, the conditions which prevailed in Isaiah's day are precisely the same which characterize ours. "The morning cometh," the morning of the Perfect Day. As we have shown above, the intimations of the approaching Morn are unmistakable. The increasing light vouchsafed by God upon His Word together with the recovery of the Blessed Hope, herald the approach of the Morning Star, which shall precede by a few years the arising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

"And also the night." The Night which shall draw down the curtain upon "man's day." The Night of the world's judgment, when "the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Is. 60:2). The Night of the Great Tribulation when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light" (Matt. 24:29). The Night when the Power of Darkness shall be given full sway for a little season because men loved darkness rather than light. That Night which shall so soon come upon Christendom because it has turned away from God's Word which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And the intimations of the approaching Night are as marked and as plain as are the heralds of the coming Day. Consider one of them.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." (2 Thess. 2:3). The "day" mentioned here is the Day of the Lord (see Is. 2) which follows the present day of man. The Day of the lord succeeds the Day of Salvation, now so nearly ended, and its character and course is fully described in the last book of the Bible. The "man of sin, the son of perdition" referred to in our text will come before us for consideration in a later chapter, sufficient now to say that he makes his appearance some time after the Rapture of the Church and that he continues in his terrible course of open defiance of God until the Lord Jesus returns in power to the earth when He shall destroy this Wicked One by the brightness of His coming. The "falling away" (apostasy—Greek) is one of the things which shall be the harbinger of the Day of the Lord and prepare the way for the revelation of the Antichrist. The fact that the "falling away" has already commenced, yea, has even now advanced a terrible distance, is proof that the appearing of the Man of Sin is nigh at hand, and therefore that the "last days" of this dispensation are upon us.

The "falling away" which 2 Thess. 2:3 predicts has reference to departure from the Word of God, and apostasy from the faith once delivered unto the saints. Specifically, it refers to repudiation of the Truth by those who are its professed friends. The fulfillment of this solemn prophecy has now been going on for upwards of half a century, and sad to say, the circle in which it is receiving its accomplishment is ever growing wider and wider. More than forty years

ago the late C. H. Spurgeon protested faithfully and fearlessly against the "Downgrade movement" of his day, and owing to the doctrinal looseness and theological unsoundness of many of its leading spirits withdrew from the English Baptist Union. The "Downgrade" has gone on apace since then. The majority of our Seminaries in which our preachers receive their theological training, are hot-beds of rationalism, skepticism, and infidelity. The deadliest foes of the Faith are now to be found inside of the professing Church and not outside as hitherto. The "vain philosophies" and Scripture-denying heresies of such agnostics as Darwin and Huxley are now openly espoused and enthusiastically proclaimed from many of our leading pulpits.

The "falling away" has had an awful exemplification in the "Higher Criticism" movement, a movement which originated with atheists but has operated within the professing Church. The "Higher Critics" are men who deny the supernatural element in the Scriptures, who undermine their authority and belittle their value. They are rationalists whose minds are blinded by the god of this world, whose they are and whom they serve. No censure of them can possibly be too severe. The inspired apostle referred to them when he said, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). The words that follow this terrific indictment, reveal the sad havoc wrought by these apostates, and tells us of the doom which awaits them—"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (vs. 2, 3).

The "falling away" is evidenced on every hand. Not only are many of our Seminaries cesspools of spiritual corruption, not only are hundreds of our pulpits now filled by traitors to the cause they profess to champion, not only is every cardinal doctrine of the faith attacked and denied by the very ones paid to defend them, but the evil effects of such teaching from our religious leaders has influenced multitudes of souls committed to their care. The man in the pew, following the lead of his teachers, has lost faith in the Bible as a Divine revelation, and in consequence, no longer submits to its authority. Hence it is that there is such a "falling away" in the number of genuine conversions—we say "genuine" conversions because there are multitudes of those who come forward to shake some popular preacher by the hand, multitudes of card-signers, "trail-hitters" etc., etc. Hence it is that there has been such a sad and such a wide-spread "falling away" from the old time family worship. Hence it is that we now witness such a lamentable "falling away" from the mid-week prayer-meeting. Hence it is that there is such an awful "falling away" from the observance of the Holy Sabbath. Hence it is that there is such a fearful "falling away" from the moral standards of former days. Hence it is that there is now such an ever-growing "falling away" from Sunday School attendance all over the land. Yes, the "falling away" has commenced and is already far advanced.

The "falling away" is also to be seen in the many false systems of recent development. We may cite as illustrations the "New Theology" formulated and popularized by R. J. Campbell; "Christian Science" (so called) with its repudiation of sin and the vicarious Sacrifice of Christ; "Russellism" with its horrible blasphemies upon the person of our Lord and its erroneous and soul-destroying heresy of the "second chance;" "Spiritualism" with its intercourse with demons who impersonate the dead. Formerly, three-fourths of the votaries of these anti-Christian systems were outwardly attached to the Truth, inasmuch as they were members of evangelical denominations. The same "falling away" may be seen in the rapid decay of Protestantism and the silent but sure growth of Roman Catholicism.

The "falling away" which characterizes our day was referred to by the apostle when he said, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from

the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). That time has arrived! Church-goers today will not endure "sound doctrine." Those who preach the total depravity of man, who insist upon the imperative necessity of the new birth, who set forth the inflexible righteousness and holiness of God, and who warn against the Eternal and conscious torment awaiting every rejector of Christ, find it almost impossible to obtain a hearing. Such preachers are regarded as puritanical pessimists, and are not wanted. In these degenerate times, the masses demand that which will soothe them in their sins and amuse them while they journey down the Broad Road. The multitude is affected with "itching ears" which crave novelty and that which is sensational. They have ears which wish to be "tickled," ears which eagerly drink in the songs of professional and unsaved soloists and choristers, ears which are well pleased with the vulgar slang of our modern evangelists. Concurrent with this "Falling away" we may note,

3. The Laodicean state of Christendom.

In Revelation two and three we have seven Epistles addressed to the seven churches in Asia. These Epistles—in keeping with the nature of the book in which they are found—are prophetic in their scope. They record the sentences of the Divine Judge who appears in the midst of these churches (see 1:13-20) inspecting and passing decisions. They contain a panorama of the Church's history. They give us a complete outline of the entire course of the Christian profession, of going from bad to worse, until at the end a condition is reached which compels the Lord to utterly repudiate that which bears His name. We cannot now do more than hurriedly trace the order of thought and point out the leading features in these seven prophetic pictures. 10

The first of these Epistles is addressed to the church at Ephesus and is recorded in Revelation 2:1-7. In it we have viewed the originating cause of the declination which began in the apostolic age. "Thou hast left thy first love" (vs. 4)—the cooling of the church's affection for Christ was the source of all the evil that followed. There was much outward zeal, but the heart was not right, and where love declines evil practices soon follow. Even so was it at the early date contemplated by the first of these seven Epistles, for at Ephesus we learn there were "false apostles" (vs. 2) and "Nicolaitanes" whose deeds were "hateful" to Christ and the Ephesians themselves (vs. 6). "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent" (vs. 5) shows the beginning of the downward path.

In the second Epistle addressed to the church in Smyrna and recorded in Revelation 2:8-11, we have a prophetic picture which describes the conditions that prevailed from John's time till the beginning of the fourth century A.D.—a period of persecution and martyrdom. Here we are shown a Judaizing Christianity spreading within the church, and mention is made of the "synagogue of Satan" (vs. 9).

In the Epistle to the third church—Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17)—we find the progress in evil is still more marked. The prophetic application of this Epistle carries us on to the days of Constantine when the church and the world joined hands. This unholy alliance was foreshadowed by the name of the church addressed, for Pergamos signifies a "marriage." Here we read of "Satan's throne"). Here, too, mention is again made of the Nicolaitanes, but whereas in Ephesus it was the "deeds of the Nicolaitanes" (vs. 6) that were mentioned, here it is the "doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" (vs. 15)—false practices had now become articles of faith. Observe that at first the church "hated" their deeds (vs. 6), here their evil beliefs were tolerated and cherished.

In the fourth Epistle—to Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29) we have disclosed a yet fouler condition of ecclesiastical corruption and are carried forward to the rise of Roman Catholicism, which is here termed "Jezebel"—"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not" (vss. 20, 21). That "space" began at the Reformation period and has lasted till now, but the Papacy is still unchanged.

In the fifth Epistle addressed to the church in Sardis (3:1-6) we are brought down to the days of Martin Luther and his contemporaries, when many of God's people were delivered from Popery. Observe here "Thou hast a name" (vs. 1). That name was "Protestantism" which defined both their claim and testimony. But note further, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Thus it has proven; so it is today. Protestantism is now nothing more than a "name," its vitality has long since departed. How this latter-day condition was anticipated by the very terms of this Epistle may be seen by the language of verses 2 and 3—"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect

before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent." Alas! that this admonition passed unheeded. "But, are all within the circle of Protestantism now spiritually dead?" it may be asked. No; and mark the prophetic accuracy of this Epistle—"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments" (vs. 4)!

In the sixth Epistle addressed to the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13) we are brought down to the last century. Three things are to be noted here. First, Philadelphia signifies "brotherly love" and it was during the last century particularly that this Christian grace was acknowledged and displayed. Not until the nineteenth century was the truth of the Unity of the Church recovered and the common brotherhood of believers practically owned. Second, the Lord sets before this church an "open door" (vs. 8), a door which He had opened Himself. This was the "door" which led to the Foreign Mission field, and it was not until last century that age-long barriers were so wonderfully removed by God and world-wide evangelism made practically easy. Third, "Thou hast a little strength"(vs. 8) accurately describes the condition of the church during the last hundred years.

We turn now to consider at a little more length the seventh Epistle, addressed to the church of the Laodiceans (Rev. 3:14-22). This Epistle portrays the last state of the professing church on earth, a state characterized by high pretensions and self-sufficiency, but so utterly nauseous to Christ that He declares "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm I will sue thee out of My mouth"(vss. 15, 16).

The word Laodicea means "the rule of the laity or people." It is the people's church, not Christ's for notice He is outside (vs. 20), standing and knocking for admission. Its condition is described as "lukewarm:" it is neither one thing nor the other, partly hot and partly cold. How accurately this describes the present day condition of the professing church! A condition of mixture—mixed up with the world, claiming to be heavenly and yet clinging to everything that is earthly; bearing the name of Christ, and yet misrepresenting Him and putting Him to an open shame. Much religion but little life. Much activity but little vitality. Much doing but little accomplished. Much display but little power. Neither hot nor cold: neither out and out for God, nor out and out for the Devil. "Luke warm," as though hot and cold water had been poured into the same vessel. This is exactly what we have in the churches today—intense worldliness and wickedness veneered over with humanitarian and religious pretenses.

Another characteristic of Laodicea is the spirit of boosting—"Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (vs. 17). Loud and lofty are the pretensions of the professing church, but how shallow they really are! There is much ostentatious parading of resources, but it is an empty profession. There is self-conceit, showy attainments, architectural display, intellectual acquirements, influential numbers, but Christ is excluded! In this church (see the Epistle), unlike all the previous ones, there is nothing whatever in it that Christ commends—sad commentary upon its true condition! But this is merely negative: there is much in it that He condemns—"and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (vs. 17). The church is utterly ignorant of its actual and deplorable state. Its leaders are crying "Peace and safety" when "sudden destruction" is upon them (1 Thess. 5:3). Unspeakably sad is this. Whenever there is recognition of our condition and our need, there is hope, for recognition and acknowledgement of weakness is the secret of strength (2 Cor. 12:9). But self-complacency is fatal. For self-righteousness there is no remedy. Though self-sufficient and self-righteous the professing church will shortly be "spued out" by the One whose name it bears.

Now observe particularly that this "Laodicean" Epistle is the final one of the series. It sets before us the last state of the professing church on earth. In keeping with this note the time-

mark here. The Lord speaks of “supping” (vs. 20). It is eventime. It is the closing meal of the day! The end is at hand. The church is feasting inside and the Saviour is standing outside. Such was what was predicted eighteen centuries ago, and such is what we now witness in Christendom today. Christ is now outside the professing church undesired, unheard, unknown. And, we repeat, this Epistle is the final one of the series: there is no eighth which follows it. The Laodicean condition is the last phase of apostate Christendom. Nought remains but its spueing out. The very next thing we read of in Revelation after the Laodicean Epistle is—“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither” etc. (4:1) which clearly symbolizes the catching up of the saints. But we turn now to consider—

4. The Prophecy of the Perilous Times.

This prophecy is found in 2 Tim. 3 and is another delineation of the professing church in the last days. It is particularly to be noted that the verses we are about to consider, describe not mankind in general but Christendom in particular. Note now the several lines in this picture. Lengthy comment is needless.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." "Men shall be lovers of their own selves"—two things, closely connected, are referred to: selfishness and egotism. Self-lovers! Was there ever a time when there was so much self-seeking and self-pleasing, and so little self-sacrifice by professing Christians? "Covetous"—money-lovers. What fortunes are now amassed by those who claim to be not their own but bought with a price! Our average church-member is as greedy and grasping as the worldling. "Boasters"—intellectual boasting—laying claim to the possession of a wisdom and scholarship unknown to our forefathers; ecclesiastical boasting, evidenced in denominational pride; and what is most obnoxious of all, spiritual boasting—the profession of superior piety, the advertising of a "victorious life," "baptism of the Spirit," "sinless perfection," etc. "Proud"—proud of their culture, liberality and broadmindedness. How different from the One who said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart.""Blasphemers"—Christian Scientists (?), Russellites, Higher Critics, etc. "Disobedient to parents." When was this deplorable sign of insubordination so rife as it is today? Instead of parents ruling their children, children now rule their parents, and, of course, the parents are to blame. This failure to exercise parental authority, this rebellion in the young which will brook no restraint, is the certain forerunner of the downfall of the State, fostering, as it does, the spirit of lawlessness. "Unthankful"—temporal blessings received as a matter of course without any recognition of their Giver. God's providential mercies unappreciated. Returning of thanks at mealtime, almost entirely a thing of the past. "Unholy" which has reference to the utter absence of separation from the world: the disappearance of the Nazarite spirit.

Behold further characteristics of the Perilous Times—"without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). It is needless to enlarge upon each separate item, but mark the first and the last of those enumerated here. "Without natural affection." How terribly this is exemplified today in the enormous increase of divorces, in the abandonment of their infant offspring by unnatural mothers, and in the neglect of the poor, the sick, the aged! "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." See our church-members on the Lord's day, preferring a ride in their automobiles to the assembling of themselves together with the people of God. Mark them on prayer-meeting nights at the picture-shows instead of at the throne of grace. And witness the musical programmes, the entertainments, the ice-cream suppers etc., held in our church-houses.

"But, it may be asked, "have not these things always been true of men in general?" Perhaps so, more or less, though never to the same extent as now. But these verses do not describe "general conditions," they depict Christendom as it exists in the "last days." This is clear from the next verse—"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (vs. 5). There is music but it is of the siren kind, not the singing, and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. There is eloquence but it is the wisdom which man's words teacheth, and not that which speaks for God and wins souls. There is fervour but it is the heat of carnal excitement born of novelty and sensationalism, and not that which cometh down from above. There is zeal, but it is without knowledge. There is a demand for righteousness, but it is civic and social righteousness and not the righteousness of God. There is love but it is a sickly

sentimentality and not that which is the fulfilling of the law. There is gospel-preaching, but it is "another gospel" and not the gospel of the grace of God. There is much religion, but it is lacking in life. There are notorious evangelistic campaigns, but they are devoid of spirituality. There is much ritualistic performance but it is a form of godliness without its power.

"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts" (vs. 6). We believe the reference is to Mormonism, yet the principle is of still wider application. How striking it is that we should read of "silly women" in this inspired list of "last days" characteristics! Observe the way this is fulfilled in modern Feminism! Observe the words "led away with divers lusts," which might be freely rendered "ambitious desires." This craving for publicity, this deplorable masculinity, this denial of man's headship, this unsurping of authority, is one of the most striking Signs of the Times. We refer, not only to the modern Suffragette movement which makes every self-respecting woman blush for shame at the immodesty of her sisters, but also to the attitude and position taken by so many "silly women" in the churches. How sad it is to see the plain command of God—"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak" (1 Cor. 14:34)—now so generally disregarded. Today there are not a few who unblushingly denounce the inspired apostle as "an old bachelor with narrow ideas" (Ironside).

Now mark that what we have been considering above is a part of a Divinely drawn picture describing the Perilous Times of the "last days." How clear it is that the Perilous Times are now upon us, Times that are "perilous" to the souls of God's people, "perilous" to the spread of the Gospel, "perilous" to the whole of Christendom. How evident it is to those who have eyes to see that we have already entered into the "last days." And how dark are the immediate prospects for the world!

Take note of one other item in this striking prophecy—"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Surely moral conditions cannot get much worse than they are now. Immorality has come in like a flood which is ever swelling and widening in its course. "Uncleanness is rampant. There is an army of over thirty thousand painted prostitutes in Chicago alone. This sin of impurity, the greatest of the age, is literally undermining and honeycombing the nations till they are now tottering to their fall." (R.V. Miller). How true this statement is appears from a recent speech made by Secretary Daniels of the U.S. Navy. In the course of an address which he delivered before the Clinical Congress of Surgeons of North America he said:—"There is not an army in the field whose effectiveness is not reduced by reason of immoral diseases. The navy suffers likewise and business halts because venereal diseases destroy the manhood of workmen and fighters. During the last statistical year men of the American navy lost 141,387 days' sickness from a small group of absolutely preventable diseases contracted by sin. This means that every day throughout the year there are 456 men disabled by this disgraceful malady. In the navy of 1915 there were admitted for treatment for venereal diseases 112 persons in every 1,000, and in the army 84 for every 1,000. In civil life the number afflicted is quite as large proportionately as in the military service. It has been printed that Hecht of Vienna, stated that at one time the equivalent of three entire Austrian divisions of 60,000 men was under treatment for venereal diseases, while the German army in Belgium, representing only a small part of the total German forces, is reported during the first five months of its occupation to have furnished 35,000 such patients. Canadian and Australian officers have deplored the ravages of this disease. The late figures from the British army gave 78,000 cases, and all other countries have also been weakened." Surely such appalling figures as these, furnished by so eminent an authority, declare plainly that the "Perilous Times" of the "last days" are upon us! Does some one ask, What will be the outcome? We answer, the same as of old. God still lives and reigns, and just as surely as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for similar wickedness, so surely shall He pour out His indignation and wrath upon the present

generation of evil-doers. Yea, He has already begun to do so, and this leads us to consider–

5. The Overturning which is visible on every hand.

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is" (Ezek. 21:27). In close accord with this prophecy through Ezekiel is the word recorded in Haggai 2:6, 7—"For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come." Note carefully the coupling of these two things together—the coming of the Desire of all nations (the Lord Jesus), and the shaking of all nations. Surely this is just what we see going on before our eyes today! Verily, God is now "shaking" and "overturning" everything that is on the earth. What has been the watchword and catchword that has rung in our ears during the last decade? Reform! Reform! Reform! Governments must be reformed. Churches must be reformed. Creeds must be reformed. The Bible must be reformed, and conformed to "modern thought." Schools must be reformed. Everything must be reformed. The marriage-laws and divorce-laws must be reformed and deformed. What does all this indicate? Nothing is any longer right.

This demand for reform is not merely local, it is not confined to some cotery of enthusiasts. It is worldwide. It is enveloping the earth. It has swept over Europe and across this continent, and has now reached the lethargic East. In Turkey and Egypt, in Japan and China, in Mesopotamia and India, in Asia and Africa, peoples who have been stagnant for centuries are now aroused, and the cry is going forth—Down with the old regime; Down with ancient institutions. Down with everything which brooks restraint. Never before were such conflicting forces at work. Never before were the foundations of society so seriously threatened. "I will shake all nations"—surely the appointed time for this is now here. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn"—truly this is exactly what God is doing today. Revolution is in the air, but those who are able to read the Signs of the Times can see that revolution is moving rapidly toward dissolution, the dissolution of the old order. Closely connected with the overturning of ancient institutions we may consider—

6. The present Distress of Nations.

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them with fear, and for looking after those things which are coming to pass on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25, 26). As we have already remarked more than once, prophecy invariably has a double fulfillment at least, and so we believe it is with the one just quoted. Directly, it has reference to conditions that will prevail during the Great Tribulation which immediately precedes the return of the Lord to the earth itself, but there is much to be said in favor of giving this prediction a present-day application. It agrees exactly with the conditions which now exist. Mark five of the characteristics here enumerated:—

First, "Distress of nations." How well these words describe the well-nigh universal groaning and anguish of mankind! "Distress" is now no longer confined to any one people but is international and earth-wide in its reach. The "distress" and suffering caused by the exorbitant cost of living when it is becoming more and more difficult to secure even the bare necessaries of life. The "distress" occasioned by increasing taxation and the accumulation of national debts which must prove intolerable burdens for future generations to bear. The "distress" caused by shortage of fuel and food-stuffs so that one half of the world is living upon short rations. The "distress" of bereavement which is now in millions of homes which mourn the loss of loved ones slain in battle.

Second, "with perplexity." Statesmen unable to discover any way out of present difficulties. Men of Solomonic astuteness at their wits' end, fearful of what they see approaching and powerless to hinder and prevent it. Problems between capital and labor becoming more acute and insoluble. Situations arising which the wisest of our statesmen, despite all our boasted enlightenment and progress, are unable to cope with successfully. "Perplexity" by reason of political corruption, economic agitations, and revolutionary troubles.

Third, "the sea and the waves roaring." In Scripture, the sea is used to figure the peoples of the earth which, away from God, know no rest. Like the sea, the masses today are in a seething turmoil. Everywhere there is fermentation and dissatisfaction. When were human politics so confused, so contradictory, so threatening as they are now? When was law so utterly impotent to restrain the violent passions of men? Every day brings new indications of disquietude and convulsion. Every government on earth is being shaken to its very foundations. Mark the political changes which almost weekly take place in the great world powers. The time for listless indifference is gone. No longer may we quietly fold our hands and take our ease. There is among the nations a spirit of restlessness, insubordination, anarchy; a consuming desire to overthrow every established system which has made for law and order; a spirit and desire which is too deeply rooted, too furious, too general, to be long withstood. It is something more than a passing tumult or the frenzy of an hour. Every day it is gathering strength and ere long it will burst every bound that legislation can devise. The waves of human passion are rising higher, and higher and threaten to swamp the landmarks of the ancients and take possession of the whole earth.

Fourth, "Men's hearts failing them with fear, and for looking for those things which are coming on the earth." We live in a day of unprecedented agitation and unparalleled tribulation. Conditions on earth have now reached such a pass that no human skill an steer clear of the mighty maelstrom which is rapidly drawing all nations within its awful whirl. Human society is becoming panic-stricken. Heart failure both physically and morally is seizing thousands of victims. Little wonder that suicides are increasing at such an alarming rate. Men's hearts are "failing them." And well they may. Confidence between man and man has disappeared. Friendships have become barren formalities, little more than selfish conveniences. Human

compassion is no more. Conscience is dead, and men are giving up in hopeless despair as they discern still worse evils presaged by present-day conditions. Feverish eyes are moving to and fro in dread expectation of the approaching total collapse of civilization.

Fifth, “the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” In Scripture the powers of nature are frequently used symbolically. “Mountains” figure “Kingdoms” (Dan. 2:35; Jer. 51:25); “waters” represent “peoples” (Rev 17:11); and the sun, moon, and stars, typify human governments (Rev. 12:1). In the Great Tribulation the physical “powers of heaven will be literally“shaken,” but we take it that the present-day application of our text is to be regarded symbolically, having reference to human governments. And when were the political heavens so “shaken” as they are today? Note the development of the “Young Turk” Party in Turkey. Mark the growing popularity of a revolutionary Socialism. Witness the revolution in Portugal, and the yet more recent revolutions in Mexico, China and Russia. Ancient dynasties are being overthrown; thrones are tottering; kingdoms are being broken up. The very cement by which human society has been welded together is corroded so that Civilization is now like walls without mortar—ready to fall to pieces.

What is the message voiced by these universal conditions? What do they say to the children of God? The answer to these questions is found in the same passage where these things are described—“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”(Luke 21:28). Let us next consider—

7. The conflict between Capital and Labor.

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabbath. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and He doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (James 5:1-9).

Observe that the above passage makes express reference to "the last days" (vs. 3). It tells us that in these "last days" there shall be a class of "rich men" (vs. 1). It speaks of them having "heaped treasure together" (vs. 3). It declares that their riches have been acquired by "fraud" (vs. 4). It makes mention of them having "condemned and killed the just" (vs. 6). It intimates that their rapacity and dishonesty will evoke and provoke a loud "cry" (vs. 4) from their victims. It denounces them for having "lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton" (vs. 5). It pictures the sorrows and anguish brought upon the laboring classes whose cries have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts (vs. 4). It announces the terrible judgments of heaven which shall yet descend upon them for their crimes, and predicts that they shall "weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them" (vs. 1).

What human wisdom could have delineated so faithfully the present conflict between capital and labor! What mortal mind could have foretold, almost two thousand years beforehand, the amazing and heart-rending situation that is now before our eyes. Who but men "moved by the Holy Spirit" could have foreseen the recent rise of multi-millionaires, the accumulation and concentration of three fourths of the wealth of the world in the hands of scarcely one hundred men, the hoarded riches of the capitalist and monopolist, the extravagant and voluptuous living of the wealthy, the suffering which should be brought upon the laborer by the rapacity of his merciless employer! How remarkable is this prophecy in view of our twentieth century trusts and syndicates which corner the markets, hoard up raw materials, and rob the masses by fixing extortionate prices! And what is the significance of these things? They are another proof that the end of the age is reached. They are further intimation that the "last days" are upon us. The cries of the distressed poor have reached heaven, and the Divine Judge is just about to come to the deliverance of His people and deal in vengeance with those who have robbed them. The Lord's people are not to resist and fight: the command is "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned." Believers are here urged to stablish their hearts and be patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." We turn now to consider.

8. The Rejuvenation and Restoration of Israel.

The Jew has been termed the mystery and miracle of history. Terrible have been the privations and persecutions which he has suffered and yet has he survived them all. For two thousand years Israel has been a homeless wanderer among the nations and yet has he preserved his individuality. Sore have been the Divine judgments inflicted upon him and yet God has not made a full end of Jacob's children.

In other chapters we have called attention to some of the numerous prophecies in both the Old and New Testaments which announce the revival of Israel, their return to Palestine, and their restoration to God's favor, and ere pointing out the manner in which some of these predictions are beginning to receive their fulfillment, we would quote just one other. In Matt. 24:32, 33 we have a part of our Lord's answer to the disciples' questions—"What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?" Here our Lord says, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that He (margin) is near, even at the doors." The fig-tree symbolizes the nation of Israel—compare Matt. 21:19 etc. The putting forth of its leaves after the long winter of dispersion among and subjugation to the Gentiles, points to the reinvigoration of this ancient people. The taking on of new life by Israel is a sure sign that the return of the Redeemer is near at hand.

That the Fig-tree has begun to put forth leaves is evident to all who are acquainted with the leading events of the day. God is once more placing the Jew before the eyes of the men as those by whom He has blessed the world in the past and through whom He has purposed to bless it in the future. In a most noticeable manner the Jew is today commanding the attention of both the church and the world. Until the last fifty years the Jew had no place on our missionary program, but now we behold "Missions to the Jews" springing up in many lands. Others besides Christians are interested: the future of Palestine is being carefully pondered by all the leading diplomats. In every realm the Jew is pushing to the front. More and more his rights and claims are being recognized, and as he is allowed to enjoy common privileges he is making his mark in all the leading professions and arts: many of our most influential positions are now filled by the descendants of Abraham, and it is well known that they control the fiances of the world.

Perhaps the most significant and portentous episode in Israel's history since their dispersion was the formation of the "Zionist Society." The Zionist movement has for its aim the return of the Jews to Palestine, and for its ultimate object the purchase of the Holy Land. During the past twenty years this movement has spread with startling rapidity. "All over the earth societies have been formed, bodies have been legally incorporated, and vast sums of money subscribed. Children are being taught that the day of Israel is at hand, and are speeding the ancient word "Zion" from lip to lip" (Haldeman). At the time the War began, there were upwards of 100,000 Jews who had returned to the land of their fathers. Colonies had been established everywhere and soil which had lain idle for centuries was once more tilled and sown by the offspring of David. "The land, as foretold by Jeremiah, is being bought and sold at the very gates of Jerusalem. The Jew is already the preeminent factor in the once holy city. He controls its business and is the present guaranty of its prosperity. His synagogues are rising within the shadow of the Mohammedan mosques. His lamentations for the city of the ancient splendors, and his prayer for the restoration of the former glory, and the swift descent of an avenging Messiah, resound every Friday beneath the moss covered stones of Solomon's walls, where thousands turn their faces and weep as they contemplate the past, reciting the penitential Psalms, and whose same tear-wet faces shine as they sing of the day when Zion shall be as a garden planted of the Lord, and when the holy hill of the great solemnities shall be the place for the soles of the feet of Him who is their promised King" (Haldeman). If all this became possible

under the Turkish government who shall say what shall come to pass if, as now appears most probable, Palestine should become a British or American protectorate! Yes, the rejuvenation of the Jews and their return to Palestine is one of the most striking Signs of the Times. It tells us that the Times of the Gentiles are rapidly drawing to a close. The budding of the Fig-tree evidences that Israel's summer is nigh at hand and that their Messiah is even at the doors. Let us next consider—

9. The limitations of Earth's great Week.

We are well aware that in broaching this point we shall probably evoke the criticism of honored brethren and be charged with "setting a date" for the Return of our Lord. Nevertheless, we feel constrained to set down our honest convictions, only asking our readers to examine in the light of Holy Writ what we now advance tentatively and not dogmatically.

In ancient times it was commonly held by Jewish rabbis before our Lord's first advent, and by many of the most eminent of the church fathers afterwards, that the Creation week of Genesis one defined the limits of earth's history. Before we proceed with our argument we shall first quote from three who lived in the second and third centuries, not that we appeal to them as authorities, but simply to show that the view was commonly held in the century which immediately followed the apostles and before the Blessed Hope was lost.

In the thirteenth chapter of the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas, written about 150 A.D., we read—"God made in six days the works of His hands, and He finished them the seventh day, and He rested the seventh day and sanctified it. Consider, my children, what this signifies: He finished them in six days. The meaning of it is this: that in six thousand years the Lord will bring all things to an end. For with Him one day is a thousand years, as Himself testifieth. Therefore, children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years—Shall all things be accomplished. And what is that He saith, And He rested the seventh day? He meaneth this: that when His Son shall come, and abolish the season of the wicked one, and judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun, moon and stars, then He shall gloriously rest in that seventh day. ** Behold, He will then truly sanctify it with blessed rest, when we (having received the righteous promise, when iniquity shall be no more, all things being renewed by the Lord) shall be able to sanctify it, being ourselves first made holy."

Next we quote from the writings of the distinguished Irenaeus who was a disciple of Polycarp, who, in turn, was a disciple of John the apostle. It has been said that "for learning, steadfastness and zeal, he was amongst the most renowned of the early fathers." Consider then his testimony—"In whatever number of days the world was created, in the same number of thousands of years it will come to its consummation. God, on the sixth day, finished the works which He made; and God rested on the seventh day from all His works. This is a history of the past and a prophecy of the future; for a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Similarly, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who was martyred in the year 258, wrote—"In the Divine arrangement of the world, seven days were at first employed, and in them seven thousand years were included."

It may be objected to the above quotations that they are merely the opinions and speculations of fallible men, and that their views find no warrant in the Word of God. It is true that they were the beliefs of eminent saints, beliefs which were shared by many of God's people in ancient times, and it is also true that this appeal to antiquity is no proof of the authenticity of the view we now advocate; but to say that it is has no warrant in God's Word is more than we are prepared to admit, yea, as we shall seek to show there is not a little in the Scriptures which seems to countenance and confirm it.

First, we would appeal to the Septenary system of the sacred calendar of Israel. Here we cannot do better than quote from the late Dr. Johnson—"Through the whole Scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments, there is a striking typical representation of some great and important Sabbath, as a great septenary that has not yet taken place, and which evidently appears to be the Millenarian Septenary, as the great Sabbath of the whole earth. God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it. In the Decalogue this peculiar distinguishment of the seventh day, or weekly sabbath, was most solemnly renewed. Every seventh year was appointed a sabbatical year. And the commencement of the year of jubilee which was every fiftieth year, was to be

fixed by the running of a septenary of sabbatical years. “Thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years, and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years” (Lev. 25:8). The number seven, because used in Scripture to complete all the sacred divisions of times, was regarded by the Jews as the symbol of perfection, and is used in this sense in Scripture. The question then arises, Is it to be supposed that all these events, which are interwoven with the Mosaic dispensation, which was itself symbolical or typical, and which are introduced into the New Testament, and abound so much in the Book of Revelation, have no antetype to correspond to them?—no great sabbatical septenary to which they all point and in which they all shall be accomplished? Is it not highly probable that they are all typical of the seventh millenary of the earth, which is the great Sabbath?” To which we answer, we certainly believe so.

Second; God is a God of order. In Scripture, in creation and in history, we find innumerable evidences that God works according to a mathematical plan. Numerical design is stamped upon all His handiwork. This fact is so freely recognized that we need not pause to illustrate. What we would now ask is, Is it likely that in His great dispensational plan He has departed from His general rule? We cannot believe it. But we are not left to bare conjecture. That part of God’s age plan which is already before us gives plain intimation that He who knows the end from the beginning and has “framed the ages” (Heb. 1:2-Greek) has appointed symmetrical lines to the main divisions and the limits of the world’s history. From Adam to Abraham there were two thousand years. From Abraham to the Divine incarnation there was another two thousand years. May there not be another two thousands years then between the first and the second advents? We firmly believe there will be. God’s ways in the past foreshadow His dealings in the future, for He changeth not. That the proportions of the present dispensation will correspond with the preceding two great divisions of the world’s time we shall seek to demonstrate in our next argument.

Third; we would here call attention to a statement made in connection with the resurrection of Lazarus. In John 11:6, 7 we learn that “When He had heard therefore that he (Lazarus) was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was. Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again.” Why are we told the exact length of time our Lord remained away from Judea after that He received word of Lazarus’ sickness? There must be some good reason for the record of this fact. There is nothing superfluous or meaningless in God’s Word. We believe that there is a deeper meaning to this than appears on the surface. Before we suggest what this meaning is, let us note another important word in this connection. In John 11:17 we read “Then when Jesus came, He found that he (Lazarus) had lain in the grave four days already.” Again, we ask, Why this information concerning the precise number of days that Lazarus had lain in the grave? Is the answer far to seek? Did not Lazarus typify the condition of man at that time?—the time of the first advent, the time “when Jesus came.” In what condition did the Son of God find the one who had been made in His own image? He found him dead—dead in trespasses and sins. And how long had man been in this state? According to God’s estimate of time—a thousand years as a day—exactly four days, for there can be little doubt that from Adam to Christ was just that length of time. Here then is the key to the “two days” of verse 6. Lazarus not only represented the natural man in his spiritually dead condition, but as the one whom “Jesus loved” he typified the nation of Israel, and just as Christ, after abiding for two days outside the land, said “Let us go into Judea again” and there, and then, raised Lazarus, so after two thousand years absence from the earth, our Lord shall return to Judea and restore Israel to life. “A fanciful supposition” says someone. Not at all, is our reply. Our conclusion is in perfect harmony with the express testimony of Scripture. Listen, “After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight” (Hosea 6:2)!

If further proof be required to show that our Lord will be absent from the earth "two days" (two thousand years) we have another typical hint in John 4:43, 45—"Now after two days He departed thence, and went into Galilee. ** Then when He was come into Galilee, the Galileans received Him," and then follows the record of the healing of the nobleman's son. Who can fail to see in this dispensational picture which will be realized in the millennium! As John 11 presents our Lord's return to Judea after an interval of "two days" which is followed, typically, by the restoration of Israel, so here, in John 4, after "two days" our Lord comes into Galilee "of the Gentiles" which is followed, typically, by their "healing"! The same time-mark is found in John 2:1. It was on 'the third day" - after "two days" that "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee," where the wine (symbol of joy, see Ps. 104:15) is provided by Christ—the "best" kept till "the last" and where He "manifested forth His glory" (vs. 11)—how perfect the type!—which clearly pictures another millennial scene, and this also is on "the third day"—the "third" after two days absence from the earth! Still other illustrations might be adduced but these are sufficient. "Four days" from Adam to the first advent, "two days" of absence, making a total of six (6,000 years) and then the Lord returns to usher in the "seventh day," the Millennium, when the sick will be healed, the dead raised, the wine provided, and the glory of Christ fully manifested.

Fourth; in 2 Pet. 3:8 we read, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Two things here are to be particularly noted. First, the immediate context of these words directly connects them with the second advent of Christ! In verses 3 and 4 the apostle tells us that in the last days "scoffers" should ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" to which they add, "for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The force of this is obvious: men will point to the world around and declare that everything is stable and prosperous, refusing to see any indications of the approaching doom of Christendom. In reply the apostle declares, "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens which were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Having silenced the objection of the "scoffers," the apostle now addresses himself to the saints, saying, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Thus we see that these words are directly connected with the subject of our Lord's return. In the second place, observe the words, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing." The "be not ignorant" is in apposition to the "this they (the "scoffers") willingly are ignorant of" (vs. 5). The "this one thing" calls attention to the importance of what he was about to say. God forbid that His people today should be "willingly ignorant of" what He has been pleased to make known to us. If, then, Scripture distinctly tells us that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," are we not fully justified in concluding that the six days' work of Genesis one foreshadowed six thousand years of human toil and labor, and that the seventh day, the Sabbath, which God "blessed" and "sanctified" and on which He "rested from all His work" typified that dispensation of blessing which shall follow the six thousand years of human effort, a dispensation over which the Prince of Peace shall preside, and a dispensation which will last exactly "a thousand years"!

Fifth; as we have pointed out in an earlier chapter, the Transfiguration upon the holy mount was a seventh day scene. Matthew says, "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them" (Matt. 17:1, 2). Luke says, "And it came to pass about an eight days after these

sayings. He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His rainment was white and glistering" (Luke 9:28, 29). Why these time-marks? The "transfiguration" was a spectacular setting forth of the leading features and characteristics of the millennial kingdom, and the fact that the Gospels present this as a seventh day scene certainly seems to add weight to the conclusion that the Millennium will follow six thousand years (six days) of human toil and labor, and thus be the antitypical fulfillment of the seventh day of Gen. 2:3.

Sixth; the Millennium is distinctly termed "a Sabbath-keeping"—Heb. 4:9.

Seventh, whatever may be thought of what we have advanced above, personally, we know of nothing whatever in Scripture which contradicts it. It is true that Acts 1:7 is often appealed to but it is clear from 1 Thess. 5:1-7 that it will not bear the construction that is frequently placed upon it. We may be considered "fanciful," but if so, we are fanciful in company with a goodly and godly number—"Luther entertained it. Melancthon wrote it on the fly-leaf of his Bible, as a matter not to be disputed. Thousands of divines since his time have received it as part of their faith. And when we come, to place together certain statements of the Scriptures, there seems to me to be a weight of testimony in its favor sufficient to warrant us in regarding it as sacred truth. Look at these sentences:—

"In six days the Lord made heaven and earth."

"On the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

"One day is with the Lord as a thousand years."

"There remaineth therefore a keeping of Sabbath to the people of God." (Quoted from "The Last Times" by J. A. Seiss).

What then is the practical value of this computation? This, that it furnishes us with another proof that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. No doubt there is Divine design about the present confusion in human chronology. It is impossible for us to ascertain with certainty the precise year of grace in which we are now living. But it is almost certain, as certain as any human calculation can be, that the year 5900 A.M. was passed considerably more than a decade ago, and therefore less than a century is now required to complete the sixth millennium. The end of the sixth day is nigh at hand, and as we know that the Tribulation period which follows the Rapture will last at least seven years and probably much longer, then the descent of Christ into the air to catch up His saints to Himself is that much nearer still. Let it be distinctly understood that the period of "two days" when our Lord is absent, has to do with His absence from the earth and that His coming back to the earth at the close of the 6000 years to usher in the Millennium follows some years after the first stage of His second advent, so that in no sense are we "fixing a date" for the coming of Christ for His saints—the date of that event is absolutely "hidden in God." Yet, as we say, we know that the approximate time this must be very near, because at the close of the present century (and how far this century has progressed we cannot say for certain) the Millennium itself will begin, and before that arrives there is the Tribulation period which may last forty or even seventy years. Consider now—

10. The analogy between the two Advents of Christ.

That there will be a close analogy between the first and second Advents of our Lord is intimated by two Scriptures which contain a similar expression. In Gal. 4:4 we read, “When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.” This, of course, has reference to the first advent. In Eph. 1:10 we are told “that in the dispensation of the fullness of times H might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him.” This has reference to that which shall immediately follow the second advent. The Millennium will be “the Dispensation of the fullness of times” inasmuch as it will be the final one of earth’s Ages. The “gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” points to the uniting of heaven’s and earth’s interests under His blessed reign. Then will be fulfilled that word of John 1:51—“Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,” for then will perfect communication be established between heaven and earth, or rather, earth and heaven. In order to understand the force of this expression “fullness of times” let us ponder the words “fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4) in the light of the conditions which prevailed at the Divine incarnation.

The coming of Christ to this earth was not some sudden, isolated, unexpected event. The advent of our blessed Lord, and with it the dawn of Christianity, marked a climax and a consummation. The world was prepared through long processes for the coming of the one and the preaching of the other. From Paradise to Bethlehem the centuries were preparing for the appearing of Emmanuel. As the processes of creation prepared the earth for man, so all history prepared the way for the birth of the Saviour. The Holy Scriptures focus the preparation in one race, but all peoples shared in the process. Outside of the elect, God was at work, and all streams converged to one center.

If we look closely at the character of the age when Christ was born, we may, in some measure at least, understand the “fullness” of which Gal. 4:4 makes mention. It consisted chiefly in two things - preparation and need. There was a wonderful combination of circumstances tending to prepare the world for the Gospel, and a terrible climax in the world’s need of redemption. The break up of old heathen faiths and the passing away of the prejudices of antiquity disposed men for a new revelation which was spiritual, humane and universal. The utter failure of Pagan religion from its immorality, and of pagan philosophy from its impotency to cure that immorality and the misery which accompanied it, called loudly for some fresh faith which should be both pure and powerful.

The century immediately preceding our Lord’s advent was probably the most remarkable in all history. Everything was in a state of transition. Old things were passing away and there seemed little prospect that they would give birth to a better and brighter future. The fruit of the ancient order was rotting upon the tree without yielding the seeds of a new order. And yet there were strange rumors of coming relief afloat, and singular hopes stirred the hearts of men that some Great One was to appear and renovate the world. But to particularize—

The world had reached its climacteric of sin.

History has given a faithful record of the terrible moral conditions which obtained among men in the century which immediately preceded our Lord’s appearing. At Rome, which was then the metropolis of the world, the Court of Caesar was steeped in luxury and licentiousness. To provide amusement for his senators, six hundred gladiators fought a hand to hand conflict in the public theater. Not to be outdone, Pompey turned five hundred lions into the arena to engage an equal number of his braves, and delicate ladies (?) sat applauding and gloating over the flow of blood that followed. At this period children were the property of the State, to be disposed of as was deemed best for the public interests. Weak and sickly infants were looked upon as a

useless encumbrance and generally suffered an early and cruel death. The aged and infirm were often banished to an island of the Tiber, there to starve out their few remaining days. Marriage, if such this holy institution could then be called, was wholly a matter of sensual caprice. Divorces were so common and frequent that it became the custom for women to count them by the number of rings worn on their fingers. Almost two-thirds of the population of the entire civilized (?) world were computed to have been slaves. Those who were in this unhappy situation were treated with the utmost cruelty. Their masters had absolute power over them and were permitted to scourge or put them to death at pleasure. This right was exercised in the most merciless manner. When punished capitally slaves were generally crucified. So wretched was the lot of mankind that the sanest of the philosophers of that time calmly advocated suicide as the best way of escape from the miseries of life.

Conditions in Greece were even worse. Sensual indulgence and every species of cruelty were carried to the highest pitch. Eating, or we should say, gluttony, became the chief occupation, everything being ransacked to gratify the appetite. Fornication was indulged without restraint. Parents were at liberty to expose their children to perish with cold and hunger or to be eaten up by wild beasts. Such exposure was frequently practiced and passed without punishment or censure. Wars were carried on with the utmost ferocity. If any of the vanquished escaped death slavery of the most abject kind was the only prospect before them and in consequence death was considered preferable to capture. The nature of their conflicts then can well be imagined. The Greeks commonly sacrificed their captives at the tombs of their heroes. With what truth then did the Scriptures declare that, “the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty”!

We say then, the world had reached its climacteric of sin. Often-times a disease cannot be treated until it ‘comes to a head.’ In view of the above conditions surely the world was ready for the appearing of the Great Physician, and surely we can now discover a deeper meaning in the words, “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son.”

The world had reached its consummation of Want.

It had been predicted of old that the Messiah should be “the Desire of all nations,” and to this end there must be a complete exposure of the failure of all human plans of deliverance. This time had fully come when Christ was born. Never before had the abject misery and need of men been so apparent and so extensive. Philosophy had lost its power to satisfy men, and the old religions were dead.

The Greeks and Romans, stood at the head of the nations at the time our Lord appeared on the earth, and the religious state of these people in that age is too well known to require any lengthy description from us. Without exception all were idolaters. The fundamental truth of the Unity of God was held by the Jews alone. Among the heathen, Polytheism and Pantheism were the popular concepts. Innumerable deities were worshipped and to these deities were attributed the most abominable characteristics. Pagan worshipers represented their gods as guilty of drunkenness, thefts, quarrels and incest. Mercury was a thief; Bacchus a drunkard; Venus was a harlot; and Saturn murdered his own children. The worship of their devotees entirely correspond with the characters their gods bore. Human sacrifices were frequently offered upon their altars.

Among the Romans, infidelity and atheism were rampant. The altars were forsaken and the temples were deserted. The general skepticism of his countrymen seems to have been voiced by the bitter words of Pilate—“What is truth?”

Judaism was also fully ripe for the accomplishment of ancient prophecy. Sadduceeism had leavened the ruling classes and afflicted the whole nation with rationalism. Phariseeism, which represented the ideas and ideals of the popular party, was too often only formal and hypocritical, and at best was cold and hard “binding heavy burdens” and laying on men’s

shoulders a load which they refused to touch with their fingers (Matt. 23:4). The Jewish people were under the government of Rome and were thoroughly dejected. Was there then no eye to pity, no arm to save? Was God unmindful of the tragic conditions of mankind? No; blessed be His name. The "fullness of time" had now come. Earth's fields were "white unto harvest." A platform was erected on which the glories of God's grace might be exhibited. His own blessed Son now appeared among men and the glorious Gospel was proclaimed far and wide. The "fullness of time," then, spoke of ripeness of opportunity and consummation of need.

History repeats itself. As it was in connection with the first advent so it is concerning the second. Just as there was a definite and unmistakable movement in all history preparing the way for the Dispensation of Grace, so is there a similar one going on now making ready the world for the Millennium. Just as the world's urgent need was fully demonstrated before the Saviour appeared among men, so shall it also be ere He comes back as the Prince of Peace to take the government upon His shoulder. And to those who have "understanding of the times," to those whose eyes are not blinded by the glare of a false and foolish optimism, it is evident that the "fullness of times" is rapidly drawing nigh, yea, that it is already almost upon us.

History is repeating itself. Conditions in the world today more closely resemble those which obtained just before the first coming of Christ, than have those of any other generation since then. Today the same luxury and licentiousness; the same skepticism and credulity; the same coldness and formality among those who profess to be God's people; the same lack of natural affection toward children and disrespect for the aged; the same military spirit and lust for blood, followed now by the enslaving of the conquered—deportation of the Belgians. The need of the world for a competent and righteous Ruler was never so apparent as now. The "Dispensation of the fullness of times" must be at hand. As all History prepared the world for our Lord's first advent, so it is now "making straight His way" for His second coming, when He shall be seen not in a manger but on a throne of Glory; not as the victim, but as the Victor.

But we must restrain our pen and conclude in few words. We have examined many Scriptures, we have listened to the evidence of numerous witnesses, we have compared sundry and independent lines of prophecy, and we have found that they harmonize in their testimony, that they are mutually corroborative, that each sustains the truthfulness of the others, that singly and unitedly they affirm with voice loud and clear "the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh!" Never before did the Church of God gaze upon such a constellation of Signs attesting the near approach of the Redeemer, as it does today. Never before was there such unmistakable demonstration that this Gospel age is rapidly drawing to a close. Never before was there such reason for the sinner to heed that word "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; Call ye upon Him while He is near." And never before was there such urgent need for believers to obey that admonition—"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord"(Luke 12:36, 37). The Bridegroom cometh! Then trim your lamps and go forth to meet Him.

Chapter Seven

The Beneficiaries of the Redeemer's Return

or

The Scope of the Rapture

"The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with
all His saints" (1 Thess. 3:13).

We come now to a phase of our subject which has given rise to much controversy. Sad it is that the "Blessed Hope" should have been an occasion for contention. But, just as men have divided into different camps over every fundamental doctrine of Scripture, so have sides been taken in regard to various points which bear upon our Lord's Return. Alas! "What is man?" Surely "an enemy hath done this." One of the points upon which Bible teachers and students are divided is that of the scope of the Rapture. Some have taught that at our Lord's descent into the air all of His saints will be caught up to meet Him; while others insist that only a small part of the Church will be removed from the earth at that time—that part which is obedient, faithful, spiritual. Thus, translation to heaven at the second coming of Christ is made a matter of merit and reward.

What saith the Scriptures? Do they teach a partial or a total rapture of the Church which is Christ's body? Do they declare that all believers will be removed from earth at the time our Lord descends from His Father's throne, or, that only a few of them will? Clearly, they cannot teach both, and surely a matter of such moment is not left indeterminable. We cannot believe that a question of such importance is left an open one. Yet, we are not unmindful of the fact that the advocates of each position referred to above, appeal to the Word in support of their views. But just here we would ask, Are the Scriptures pressed into service really relevant to the point at issue, and will they actually bear the interpretation which is given them?

What saith the Scriptures? and particularly, What is the explicit teaching the the Church Epistles? If we are seeking to find the inspired answer to the question, Will the whole Church or only a part of it, escape the judgments of the Great Tribulation? then, surely, it is to the Church Epistles we must turn for information. We are not here arguing that there are no Scriptures which treat of the first stage of Christ' second coming outside of the Church Epistles, for doubtless there are—for example John 14:1-3—yet, we repeat, If the question before us concerns the Church, then the testimony of the Church Epistles must decide the dispute. If this much be granted—and personally we do not see why it should not—then the range of our inquiry is narrowed down and the issue is simplified. It is highly significant that almost all of the passages which are in dispute (as to interpretation) between the advocates of the conflicting schools are outside of the Church Epistles: in other words, the verses which are made the occasion for controversy are found, for the most part, in the Gospels, in Hebrews, or in the Apocalypse.

To one who is a beginner in the study of Dispensational truth and is unacquainted with human writings upon the second coming of Christ, the teaching of the Church Epistles on this subject appears to be simple and harmonious. Those passages which deal at greatest length with the return of our Lord and the taking of His people to be with Himself, seem to set forth no limitations in regard to the number of the saints which shall be translated. Such expressions as,

“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” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17); “They that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23); and “We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:51); certainly appear to teach the rapture of the entire Church, and, ought not we be very slow to accept any conflicting line of teaching which would compel us to abandon the obvious meaning of these verses, and instead, have to give them a strained interpretation so as to harmonize them with something which is foreign to their plain signification? Yea, is it not evident that any system of teaching which would compel us to do this carries with it its own condemnation?

What then saith the Scriptures and what is the testimony of the Church Epistles? The present writer believes there can be only one answer to this question, namely, that every member of Christ’s body will be raptured at the time our great Head comes to conduct His blood-bought people to His Father’s House. We believe this, not only because a number of Scriptures expressly affirm it, but also because some of the great basic principles which underlie both the Gospel, and what is known as “Church truth,” demand this conclusion and repudiate the other alternative. We would now humbly submit to the prayerful and careful attention of our readers some of the grounds for our belief in a total rather than in a partial rapture of the Church which, in faithfulness to our apprehension of God’s Truth on this subject, we must denominate the partial-rapture theory.

1. Because GRACE is that which characterizes all God's dealings with His own during this dispensation and grace, necessarily, eliminates all distinctions of personal merits.

The advocates of the partial-rapture theory declare that only those who are intelligently and eagerly looking for the Lord will be caught up at His return. They affirm that none save those who are walking worthily and who are faithful to the end will be taken to be with the Lord when He descends into the air, and that only such, will, subsequently, "reign" with Him during the millennial era. They teach that all un-spiritual believers will be left behind on earth to suffer the judgments of the Great Tribulation. As a consequence, not a few of the Lord's people have been harassed and distressed, fearful lest they should be among the number who are rejected by the Lord at His coming. We are told that none but those who attain some high standard of spirituality will be raptured, but when we ask for a precise definition of this standard none can enlighten us; when we inquire, How faithful and how worthy we must be in order to be among the select company who shall be taken to the Father's House, none can give us a satisfactory reply. Hence, instead of the Return of our Lord being a blessed hope it becomes a source of bewilderment and anxiety.

It appears to the writer that there is one Scripture which simply and satisfactorily disposes of every objection which can be brought against the affirmation that the entire Body of Christ will be raptured at the appearing of our great Head. We refer to 2 Thess. 2:16—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace." Here we learn that the "Hope" which has been given to God's people in this Age, like every other blessing we enjoy, is "a good hope through grace," hence, all questions of worthiness, merit, desert, are forever ruled out. Let us settle it once for all that the Dispensation in which we are living is a unique one, that it is fundamentally different from all that have preceded it and from that which is to follow it—the Millennium. This is the Dispensation of Grace, and grace obliterates all distinctions, grace eliminates all questions of merits; grace makes every blessing a Divine and free gift. But, the human heart is essentially legalistic. Man wishes to have a hand in his own salvation and desires to contribute something to the price of his redemption. When, by grace, the Holy Spirit has taught a soul that the Finished Work of Christ is the sole ground of our justification before God, when he has learnt from the Scripture of Truth that the Blood of the Cross cannot be plussed by anything from the creature, then it is that the Enemy comes to that heart and seeks to disturb its peace and rob it of the liberty wherewith it has been made free, by insisting that faith in Christ merely puts us in a salvable condition, that believing the Gospel simply places us on an extended probation, and that only if we obey God's commands and walk worthily before Him shall we be taken to Heaven at the close of our earthly pilgrimage. This is Law mingled with Grace; thus is the precious Blood supplemented by human works. Instead of realizing that good works flow from a heart that is filled with gratitude to God and which are constrained by the love of Christ, the believer is led to believe that good works must be performed by him as a condition of his eternal salvation. But, even when the believer has been delivered from this error, the legalistic tendency of the human heart still seeks an outlet, and in our day it is manifested in reference to the Blessed Hope of the believer. The saints are now taught that their Rapture and Glorification are not "through grace" but will be the result of personal effort and attainment. Thus does the leaven of legalism work to the robbing of God of His glory and the believer of his peace.

Again we say, let us settle it once for all that we are living in the Dispensation of Grace (John 1:17; Eph. 3:2) and that every blessing we enjoy is a gift of Divine clemency. We are justified by grace (Rom. 3:24). We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8). The Holy Scriptures are termed "The Word of His Grace" (Acts 20:32). The Third Person of the Holy Trinity is denominated "The Spirit of Grace" (Heb. 10:29). God is seated upon a Throne of Grace (Heb. 4:16). And, the Good

Hope which is given us is “through grace” (2 Thess. 2:16). It is all of Grace from first to last. It is all of Grace from beginning to end. It was grace that predestinated us before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9), and it will be grace that makes us like Christ at the consummation of our salvation. Thank God for such a “Blessed Hope.”

2. Because the Rapture is the CONSUMMATION OF OUR SALVATION and therefore, being an integral and essential part of our salvation it cannot, in anywise, be determined by our personal worthiness.

Our salvation will not be complete until the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament "salvation" is threefold in its scope—past, present, and future; and it is threefold in its character—from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the presence of sin. The penalty of sin is "death" (separation from God), and we are delivered from it because our Substitute died for us on the Cross—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). But while every believer has been completely and eternally saved from the penalty of sin—from the wrath to come—while it is true that there is no sin ON us (all our iniquities were "laid" on Christ—Is. 53:6), yet, sin is still IN us. The evil nature remains even in the one who has been born again. Yet, notwithstanding this, Christ also indwells each of His own people and from Him may be drawn grace and strength and thus, day by day, we are being saved from the power of sin. But we shall yet be saved from the very presence of sin—"For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21). At our Lord's return we shall be completely emancipated from the dominion and pollution of sin. It was this the apostle Paul had before him when he wrote—"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly—completely, i.e. in each part of our threefold being—and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto (at) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

We have thus shown that our salvation will not be consummated until the Return of our blessed Saviour, that not until then shall we be completely "conformed" to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29). It is not until Christ's second advent that the purpose of our predestination will be fully realized, for it is not until then we shall be "glorified" (Rom. 8:30). If then salvation is by grace and if Christ is our Saviour- our Saviour from the presence of sin as well as from its penalty and power—then our own works (our obedience, faithfulness, service, etc.) are not the determining factor, nor even a contributing factor. Salvation is not partly of grace and partly of works, if it were we should have ground for "boasting" and Christ would be robbed of at least a part of His glory. Once we see that the time of our Lord's Return is the time when our salvation is consummated, and once we see that salvation is by grace, through faith, and not of works, then it will be clear that it cannot, in anywise, be determined by our personal worthiness.

3. Because to make our Rapture dependent upon anything in us is to attack the Finished Work of Christ.

We do not charge the advocates of the partial-rapture theory with intentionally doing this, nay we are fully satisfied that most if not all of them would shrink back in horror from wittingly committing such a sin. Yet, we do say that this is the logical and actual outcome of their teaching. A long drawn-out argument is not needed to prove this after what we have said above under the first two heads. If the Rapture is the consummation of the application of our salvation then anything which makes that salvation, or any part thereof, dependent upon anything in or from us, necessarily attacks the Finished Work of Christ upon which alone our salvation rests.

As we have already said, the Rapture is the time when Christ returns to conduct His blood-bought people to the Father's House (John 14:1-3). What then is it that gives title and fitness for the Father's House? Surely there can be only one answer to this question. Surely none but those who are ignorant of the character and contents of the Gospel of God would declare that our wretched works are needed to supplement the Cross-Work of Christ. But, blessed be God, the point we are now considering is not left to be determined by logical deductions, but is the express subject of Divine revelation. In Col. 1:12 we are exhorted to give thanks unto the Father "which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." The "inheritance of the saints in light" is not a matter of attainment as certain teachers are today affirming, but is an occasion of thanksgiving to God, because it is due solely to His grace. Observe carefully the tense of the verb here: it is not we are "being made meet," still less that we are making ourselves meet, but "which HATH made us meet." Again we ask, What is it that gives us title to the inheritance of the saints in light? And we reply, Nought but the precious blood and infinite merits of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. What was it that qualified the "Prodigal" for a place at the Father's table? Did he have to submit to a lengthy probation after he returned home and before he was permitted to feast with the Father? No; the "best robe"—which is the portion of every believer—was all that was needed. Was not the "Repentant Thief" made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light the same hour in which he believed? Unquestionably, for our Lord assured him, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." If then the "best robe" was all that the Prodigal needed to fit him for a place at the Father's table, and if repentance toward God and faith in our lord Jesus Christ was sufficient to translate the Dying Thief to Paradise, is it not clear that nothing further will be demanded of those whom the Lord shall conduct to the Father's House at the time of His Return?

4. Because the Rapture of a part of the Church only, would leave the remainder of it still upon the earth and that would prevent the manifestation of the Man of Sin.

The picture that is presented in 2 Thess. 2 is an exceedingly solemn one. There we learn that the mystery of iniquity which was at work even in the days of the apostle Paul and which has been hindered from coming to complete fruition will yet head up in the appearing of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. The coming of this Devil-Man will be "after the working of Satan will all power and signs and lying wonders and will all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Then it will be that the Devil is allowed "free rein." Then it is that, through the Anit-christ, Satan will deceive the whole world. There will be many on earth at that time who in former days had listened unmoved to the preaching of the Gospel and had treated with scorn or indifference its gracious offers. hence, "because they loved not the truth, that they might be saved ** God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie that they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

We have said above that 2 Thess. 2 pictures a time when the Devil will be allowed "free rein." This will be the season when all his diabolical scheming will attain its full development in the manifestation of the Son of Perdition. Today it is otherwise. In this Dispensation, satan is held in check, and his plans are not permitted to fully materialize. Today it is impossible for the Man of Sin to appear on the stage of this world as the above passage clearly intimates. Says the apostle, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now until He be taken out of the way" (2 Thess. 2:5-7, R.V.).

The "mystery of lawlessness" (in contrast to "the mystery of godliness," i.e. "God manifest in the flesh"—1 Tim. 3:16) will terminate in the Satanic parody of the Divine incarnation—the bringing forth by Satan of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. This Man of Sin will be revealed "in his own season." That "season has not yet arrived. The reference is to the Great Tribulation period. There are two entities which are now preventing the appearing of the Anti-christ. They are referred to in 2 Thess. 2 as "that which restraineth" and there is "One that restraineth now until He be taken out of the way." The former is the Church which is the body of Christ; the latter is the Holy Spirit Himself. The Church which is indwelt and energized by the Holy Spirit is now hindering and preventing the full development of the Mystery of Lawlessness and the consequent appearing of the Lawless One. Not until the whole of the Church and the Holy Spirit leave this earth("until He be taken out of the way") can the Man of Sin appear.

Here then is a simple but conclusive argument which all should be able to grasp. Passing by the question of—How would it be possible for the Holy Spirit to be "taken our of the way" while many of those whom He indwells are left behind on the earth—we would point out the obvious fact that no part of the Church can be left behind on earth at the Return of Christ into the air, or, otherwise, there would still be a hindrance to the consummating of the Mystery of Lawlessness. 11 Christ declared that His disciples were "the salt of the earth." They are God's preservative. They are His instrument for preventing everything on earth going to utter decay and rottenness. But in the Tribulation period everything on earth will have gone to utter corruption as is clear from the words of our Lord—"For wheresoever the carcass is, there will be eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28)—a prophetic utterance which will receive its fulfillment at the very season of which we are now treating. We are told that in the days which immediately preceded the Flood "All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12) and our Lord declared, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37) i.e.—His coming back to the earth: the conditions which He will find prevailing here at that time.

We repeat, at the Rapture and during the Tribulation period everything on earth will be

morally and spiritually rotten. Even God's judgments at that time will have no other effect than to cause earth's-dwellers to "blaspheme God" (Rev. 16:11 etc.). Hence, is it not evident that the whole of the salt(except that which has "lost its savor," i.e., formal professors) must have first been removed: that the church and the Holy Spirit which now make impossible this total corruption must first be "taken out of the way"!

5. Because for the believer there is “no judgment” and all upon earth during the Tribulation period are unquestionably the subjects of God’s judgments.

One of the most blessed, most remarkable and most far reaching utterances which fell from our Lord’s lips while He tabernacled among men is that recorded in John 5:24 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.” Nothing could be simpler than this. The one who has received Christ as his or her Saviour is for ever beyond the reach of Divine “judgment.” We quote this verse from the Gospels because the same assurance is given to us in the Church Epistles. There, also, we read, “There is therefore now no judgment to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

In the above verses an unequivocal assertion is made which requires no great learning to understand. Every believer has been justified by God Himself, justified eternally, justified “from all things” (Acts 13:39). The result of this decision in the High Court of Heaven for those who have been pronounced righteous is that there is for them “no judgment.” Hence it ought to be clear that no believing sinner who has been “accepted in the Beloved” can possibly be left on earth during the Great Tribulation, for at that time God’s sore “judgments will be on the earth. That then will be the time when God’s Judgments are let loose needs no arguing—the last book in the Bible makes that abundantly clear. The “seven golden vials” in which are stored up the concentrated and long suppressed “wrath of God” (Rev. 15) will then be poured forth upon the world which crucified the Lord of Glory. To teach then, that any of the members of Christ’s Body will be left behind on earth to suffer these judgments is to repudiate the express testimony of our Lord to the contrary, is to undetermine the glorious doctrine of Justification, and is to make God’s children the subjects of His “wrath” instead of the objects of His love and grace.

6. Because nothing can separate believers from the Love of Christ.

To those that believe perhaps the most precious and amazing truth in all God's Word is Christ's Love for His own. Unlike human love, His love knows no change. Unlike human love, nothing can separate us from His love—"Who (or "what") shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:35-37).

The time when our Lord's Love will be fully exhibited and publicly displayed (before all Heaven's inhabitants) is that time when He shall rise up from the Father's Throne where He is now seated. Then it will be that he shall descend from heaven with a "shout." What will occasion this "shout"? What is it that He is descending for? Is it that He may return to the earth and take its government upon His shoulder? Is it that He may be coronated the King of kings? Is it that He may vanquish His blatant enemies? Is it that He may bind that old Serpent the Devil? No; important as these may be, there is something else which must take the precedence; there is something else which lies much nearer to His blessed heart. He descend to receive to Himself His blood-bought people. Why? Because He loves them. He comes for that Church which He loved and for which He gave Himself in order "that He might present it (not a part of it) to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). Ah! this will be the time when "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," and think you He would be "satisfied" by seeing an incomplete Church? To teach then that a part of the Church will be left behind when our Lord comes back again to receive His people unto Himself is to declare that something (unfaithfulness or unworthiness) will separate some of the saints from their Redeemer's Love and thus Rom. 8:35 is repudiated. Moreover, it is to deny the comforting declaration of John 13:1—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." Therefore, we say, Because nothing shall or can separate any believer from the Love of Christ, not one shall be left behind when He returns to take unto Himself His blood-washed people. As it was declared of Israel of old in connection with their leaving Egypt (type of the world)—"There shall not a hoof be left behind"(Ex. 10:26).

7. Because the inevitable tendency of the partial-rapture theory is to get believers occupied with themselves instead of with Christ.

We shall not now attempt to argue at length what is a matter of common observation. One of the favorite devices of the Enemy is to get the believer occupied with something other than Christ who is "Our Hope." And, let us say it with emphasis, Satan cares not what that "something" may be, providing it shuts out our blessed Lord. This is his favorite device for the sinner. While ever the sinner is taken up with his own works of righteousness, the Finished Work of Christ is excluded from his vision. So it is with the believer. We are bidden to "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). But to hinder him from doing this Satan is ever seeking to get the believer concerned with something else. With some it is "the mammon of unrighteousness;" with others it is "the care of this world." With some it is politics and civic affairs; with others it is Temperance reform work and Social-uplift activities. With some it is an intellectual study of doctrine or prophecy divorced from heart-occupatin with Christ; with others it is their own experiences and attainments.

The life-task of the believer—blessed privilege—was defined by the Lord Himself in that word to Martha, "But one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42)—i.e., to sit at His feet and find our delight in Him. O that we might come to the place where we can say actually and experimentally, "Thou O Christ art all I want, more than all in Thee I find." But, as we have said, this is exactly what Satan seeks to prevent, and one of his "wiles' for preventing it (so it appears to the writer) is the partial-rapture theory which today is unsettling so many of the Lord's dear people. Teach that participation in the Rapture is a reward for faithfulness, and at once, the eyes are turned from Christ to self. Necessarily so; for immediately, I shall be occupied with my faithfulness, my obedience, my diligence, my service, the effect of which will be the drawing of invidious distinctions and the cultivating of an I-am-holier-than-thou spirit. But teach that the Rapture is "a good hope through grace" and I shall be occupied with my returning Lord. The Holy Spirit is here to glorify Christ and not to magnify personal attainments, and whether or not a line or system of teaching proceeds from Him may be judged by its logical and actual tendency to glorify Christ by getting His people occupied with their Lord.

8. Because the partial-rapture theory introduces a situation that is full of Confusion.

The leading advocates of the partial-rapture theory teach that all believers who fail to come to the standard necessary for participation in the Rapture will not only be left behind on earth to suffer the judgments of the Great Tribulation but that such will have no part or place in the Millennial kingdom, and therefore that they will not be raised from the dead until after the thousand years. 12 Now apart from the fact that there is no Scripture which teaches a resurrection of saints at the close of the Millennium, we affirm that such a theory as the above involves confusion of the worst kind. We are told that certain saints (many of them) because of their unfaithfulness or failure to "look" for their returning Saviour will not be raptured at the time our Lord descends to the air, in fact will not be "glorified" until the close of the thousand years. Unquestionably there have been many saints all through this Dispensation who failed to measure up to the standard fixed by partial-rapturists and yet, dying hundreds of years ago, they have during all the intervening centuries been "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). What absuridy is it then which teaches that these saints who have been with the Lord all these centuries, will nevertheless, be separated from Him during the Millennium!

Again. During the Tribulation period there will be on earth a Jewish remnant who will cry unto God in the language of the Imprecatory Psalms. These Jews, harassed by the Anti-christ and persecuted by his followers, will cry—"Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 59:13). They will exclaim:—"Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against Thee. ** Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea let them be put to shame and perish" (Ps. 83:1-5, 13-15, 17). Now could such prayers as these ascend from the lips of the members of the body of Christ who have been saved by grace! The above are inspired prayers which the Jews will appropriate to themselves in the time of "Jacob's Trouble," but who can imagine Christians praying such prayers? We have been instructed to be "king one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). The saints of this Dispensation are told "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (Rom. 12:14). The requirement of the Church Epistles is, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thess. 5:15). If then a part of the Church were on earth during the Tribulation period we should have the following strange anomaly—The Jews praying to God to take vengeance upon their enemies and Christians praying to God to "forgive" these same foes! Surely a theory which involves such confusion as this cannot be according to the Scriptures.

The truth is that partial-rapturist's confound entrance into the Kingdom with position of honor in it. All believers who belong to this Dispensation will partake of the blessedness of the Millennial era and will reign with Christ throughout it, but all will not be on the same level. Special positions of honor will be allotted to those who have qualified themselves for such (Luke 19:17, etc.). Special "prizes" await those who shall win these marks of distinction. But this is quite another thing from entrance into the Millennial Kingdom itself. Entrance into that Kingdom is solely a matter of Divine grace, but an "abundant entrance" into it is conditional upon our present fidelity to the Lord. New birth admits us into the Kingdom of God (John 3:5), but diligent service, faithfulness unto death, and loving the appearing of Christ are the several conditions for the "crowns."

9. Because the Church Epistles plainly teach that ALL believers will be raptured at the time of our Lord's Return.

In Rom. 8:30 we read, "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Glorification is co-extensive with justification. This is admitted by all: the point at issue is- Will all be glorified at the same time? We answer, as surely they will. Do we not read "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52)? "We shall all be changed" at the same moment, for the passage continues "At the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (all living believers) shall be changed."

In 1 Cor. 15:22, 23 we read, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." Note particularly the words, "They that are Christ's at His coming." How simple! how all-inclusive! how blessed! It is not "They that are faithful or worthy." It is not "they that have attained some high standard of moral excellence." It is not "they that have been unusually diligent and successful in service." But "They that are Christ's." That is all. It is simply a question of belonging to Christ, being one of His people.

In 2 Cor. 5:10 we are told "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; they every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." That un-faithful believers are not excluded from this appearing before the Bema of Christ is clear from 1 Cor. 3—"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's word of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:13-15). There will be some in that day who will "suffer loss," nevertheless, they will be present at the Bema with their fellow-believers and furthermore, they will be "saved." How remarkable it is that these comprehensive assurances are found in the Corinthian Epistles —addressed to a church whose moral condition was the worst of all the churches addressed by the apostle Paul, as if to anticipate this modern heresy of limiting the Rapture to spiritual believers!

In 1 Thess. 4:16 we read, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels ** when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." Observe once more the universality of such a promise, and note, too, its simplicity and how it turns back to first principles. Our Lord is to be admired in all them that believe. All is traced back to simple faith. It is not at all a question of worthiness or attainments. The same simple heart trust in Christ which delivered us from the wrath to come, shall most certainly secure for every saint a participation in the Rapture and a place in the Millennial Kingdom, for this last quoted passage carries us forward to the Millennium itself.

10. Because there is not a single Scripture in the Church Epistles which, rightly interpreted, teaches a partial rapture.

How could there be? Scripture cannot contradict itself. If the Pauline Epistles explicitly teach and expressly affirm that "all shall be changed in a moment," that "they that are Christ's at His coming shall be raised from the dead, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ" and that when our lord returns to the earth to be glorified in His saints He shall be "admired in all them that believe" then these same Church Epistles cannot teach that a part of the Church only shall be taken to be with the Lord, that merely a favored selection from among His people shall be conducted by Him to the Father's House, and that the remainder shall be left behind on the earth to suffer the judgments of the Great Tribulation or be left in their graves until the close of the Millennium. Even though there should be certain passages which seem to teach or imply a partial rapture we know that it cannot be so, and that is is we who fail to expound these passages in harmony with those which positively teach a total rapture of the Church.

It is a fundamental principle of Scriptural interpretation that whenever God's Word speaks plainly and emphatically on any subject that obscure passages which treat of the same theme must be explained in accord with those passages about which there is no dubiety. For example, when we hear our Lord saying "My sheep shall never perish" etc. then we know that in such passages as those of Hebrews 6 and 10, which treat of the irrecoverable doom of apostates, the apostle must have had before him professors and not persons who had been born again. In like manner when we find a passage which appears to bear upon the Rapture and which is in anywise ambiguous then we must not make it teach that which would conflict with other passages which deal with the Blessed Hope and which are plain and positive.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10, 11). These words, "If by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead" (Greek) are understood by partial-rapturists to refer to a select resurrection from among the dead at the time of our Lord's Return, and hence, they conclude that as the resurrection here referred to is spoken of as a matter of attainment, then, only a select company of believers will participate therein. But let us ask the question, Does the apostle here refer to a physical resurrection? In the New Testament the terms "death" and "resurrection" have a fourfold scope, viz:—physical death and resurrection, spiritual death and resurrection, judicial death and resurrection, and experimental death and resurrection. We need not submit proof texts for the first, but we will do so with reference to the last three.

In John 5:24-26 we read, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have lifein Himself." Now the words "death" and "life" in this passage can only refer to spiritual death, spiritual life, and spiritual resurrection—"passed from death unto life." By nature we are spiritually dead—"dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), but by the new birth we pass from death unto life. Regeneration is therefore a spiritual resurrection.

Further. In Rom. 6:2 we read, "How shall we that died to sin (Greek), live any longer therein? and in Col. 3:1—"If then ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above." These two verses refer to the believer's judicial death and resurrection. This side of the truth is little known or understood, but we cannot now dwell upon it at any length. One word sums it all up—identification. On the Cross there was a double identification—all believers understand the first

side of it, but few are clear upon the second. In the reckoning of God and in the eye of the Law Christ was identified with us as lost sinners. He took our place and bore our sins. He endured the full penalty of the broken law in our stead. But further, (and it is deeply important that we should apprehend this) in the reckoning of God and in the eye of the Law all believers were identified with Christ. Hence, every believer can say "I was crucified (Greek) with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). In the sight of God I died on the Cross because Christ hung there as my substitute and what a substitute does or suffers is imputed to the account of the one on whose behalf he is acting. Hence, we repeat, in God's sight, when Christ died I died, "died to sin," died to the law, died to the world, died to everything that had to do with my old standing in Adam.

But further still. Death did not retain Christ. He rose again, and in the reckoning of God I rose too, for all believers were identified (reckoned one with) with Christ in His resurrection, so that it is written, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins (spiritually, and therefore, judicially), hath quickened (made alive) us together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4, 9). It is not our individual spiritual quickening (the new birth) that is here in view, but our judicial identification with Christ—"together with Christ." The next verse goes farther still and informs us that, in the reckoning of God, all believers were identified with Christ in His ascension—"And hath raised us up together (Christ and His people), and made us sit together in the Heavenlies (Greek) in Christ Jesus." Observe that this is "in Christ Jesus" which refers to our position before God (compare "in Christ Jesus" Rom. 8:1) and is not at all a question of experience or attainment. We are now prepared to consider the fourth aspect of "death" and "resurrection."

Every believer in Christ has "died to sin," died judicially not experimentally, died in the sight of God because he was "crucified with Christ." Here then is where faith comes in. God says I am"dead to sin" (Rom. 6:2), but "I don't feed dead to sin: my experience shows me otherwise" says one. Beloved, it is not a question of "feelings" or "experience" but of believing the testimony of God. Hear Him: "Reckon ye also yourselves to have died indeed unto sin (Greek) and to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). Here then is the experimental death and resurrection. By faith I am to translate into my practical life what is true of me judicially. Believing God's Word which tells me I have died unto sin and that I am alive unto God through (or rather "IN") Jesus Christ our Lord, I am now to live in the realization and power of that truth. This is what the apostle had reference to when he said, "Mortify(put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5): the "therefore" looking back to the previous verses where he had been discussing the believer's judicial death and resurrection. It was as though he said, See to it that your practical state corresponds with the standing which you have before God "in Christ."

Returning now to Philippians 3. Here Paul is speaking of "resurrection" but, as we have seen, the New Testament treats of four different orders of resurrection, to which of them then is the apostle here referring? Is he here speaking of physical resurrection, spiritual resurrection, judicial resurrection, or experimental resurrection? The context must decide. A close reading of the entire passage will make it evident that it is experimental resurrection which the apostle had before him. The whole passage refers to his practical experience and is a biographical amplification of Romans 6:11. Beginning at the seventh verse he says—"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things (how evident it is that the apostle is here recounting a practical experience!), and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him (the Greek word here is "ginosko" and means know intimately), and the power of His resurrection" (verses 3 to 10). The apostle yearned to live as one who had been raised from the dead. He longed to walk in "newness of life." He desired that he should no longer "serve

sin." And the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." The apostle longed to tread the same path his Lord had trod, to be baptized with the baptism He had been baptized with, and to drink of the cup which He drank (Mark. 10:38, 39).

"If by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead" (Phil. 3:11), that is, if, by any means I might experience the full and blessed effects of complying completely with the terms of Rom. 6:11—reckon myself indeed to have died unto sin and be alive unto God. The apostle longed to apprehend or lay hold of that for which he had been apprehended, namely, to be "conformed to the image of God's Son." What he desired above every thing else for himself, was that he might realize practically in his daily life, that which was true of him judicially in regard to his standing before God. But had the apostle fully achieved his ambition? Had he arrived at the place where he was now beyond the reach of the lusts of the "old man"? Did he never yield to temptation? Was he delivered from the very presence of sin? Nay, verily. The language of the next verse is very emphatic—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (vs. 12). Here is proof positive that in the previous verse the apostle was not writing about a future resurrection of the body, for if participation in the first resurrection (or of an eclectic resurrection at the return of Christ) is the reward for a life of exceptional spirituality, the apostle here acknowledges that he himself did not measure up to the required standard—and if he did not, who has? No, this passage proves too much for the partial-rapturist, for in making the resurrection of believers a matter of spiritual attainment he excludes the Apostle Paul himself! It should be evident that the apostle is here referring to an experimental resurrection, something which had to do with his practical everyday life. Someone once said to an Irish brother, "Pat, you are dead to sin: Your old man was crucified with Christ." "Yes," was the reply "but, I'm frequently troubled with my ghost." Says the apostle, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind (his successes and his failures; his attainments and his sins), and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark (goal) for the prize of the high calling (or "vocation") of God in Christ" (vss. 13, 14). A further word on this last verse.

Note the apostle speaks of "the prize of the high calling" which is quite distinct from the "high-calling" itself. The "high-calling of God in Christ Jesus" is the judicial position which is occupied by every believer. It is to this the apostle referred when he said, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation(the "high-calling") wherewith ye are called"(Eph. 4:1), and for those who do "walk worthy" there is a "prize." Did the apostle succeed in winning it? We certainly believe so. 2 Tim. 4is the SEQUEL toPhil. 3! Listen to the beloved apostle as he has arrived at the close of his earthly pilgrimage—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness (the "prize" he so earnestly coveted), which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim 4:6-8). May grace be given both reader and writer to fight the good fight of faith, to finish our course with joy, and to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

Chapter Eight

The Churchward Results of the Redeemer's Return

What will take place when our Lord comes back again to receive His blood-bought people unto Himself? What will be His portion and what will be their portion in that happy day? What will be the results of Christ's second advent insofar as they affect the Church? We say "the Church," though it would be more accurate to speak of the saints, for Old Testament believers equally with the New Testament believers, will share in the wondrous blessings and glories of that glad occasion. How then will the Redeemer's return affect the redeemed? We leave for consideration in our next chapter the question of the worldward results of Christ's second advent. For the present, we confine ourselves to the results, Chruchward, of the Saviour's appearing. What will these be? What will be the order of events? Surely these questions are of entrancing interest and profound importance. And blessed be God, they are not left unanswered. It is true that the Holy Scriptures were not written to gratify an idle curiosity, and that many questions which engage our minds are passed over in silence; nevertheless, upon everything that concerns our vital interests sufficient has been revealed to satisfy every trusting heart.

Were we to attempt an exhaustive reply to the questions asked above, we should be carried far beyond the limits of a comparatively brief chapter. All we shall now essay will be to present to our readers an outline which sets forth the most prominent features of this phase of our subject as they are unfolded in the Word of God. Seven items will engage our attention, namely: —The descent from Heaven of the Lord Himself, The Resurrection of the sleeping saints, the Translation of living believers, the Transformation of every saint into the image of our glorified Saviour, the Examination and Rewarding of our works, the Presentation of the Church by Christ unto Himself, and the Manifestation of the Church with Christ in glory. May the One who has been given to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us, illumine our understandings and draw out our hearts in adoring worship.

The one Scripture which sets forth more fully than any other the order of events which shall occur at the Redeemer's return for His saints, is found in 1 Thess. 4. In the course of these pages we have had occasion to refer to this passage a number of times in various connections, but we would ask our readers to bear with us while we quote it once more. "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). In this passage three things claim special notice: first, the descent of the Lord Himself; second, the resurrection of the sleeping saints; third, the translation to heaven of those believers which shall be alive on the earth at that time. Before we enlarge upon these, we would first call attention to the close relation the above passage bears to our Lord's words as recorded in the opening verses of John 14—"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that were I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). There is a fourfold correspondence between these two passages: the Saviour said, "I will come again;" the apostle wrote, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." The Saviour avowed, "I will receive you unto Myself;" the apostle declared that the saints shall be "caught up together to meet the Lord in the air." The Saviour promised, "Where I am, there ye may be also;" the

apostle assures us, “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” The Saviour prefaced His gracious promises by saying, “Let not your heart be troubled;” the apostle concludes by saying “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” To borrow the language of T.B.Baines, “There can surely be no question that these passages, running so closely parallel, relate to the same event.” How wonderful is the verbal agreement of Holy Writ! How the comparison of one passage with another, brings out the unmistakable unity of the Scriptures! And how this demonstrates for fact that behind all the human amanuenses there was One superintending and controlling Mind! Verily our faith rests upon an impregnable rock! But to return to 1 Thess. 4. Let us view

1. The Lord's descent from Heaven.

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." The Lord Himself—who had compassion on the multitude, shed tears at the graveside of Lazarus, and wept over Jerusalem; who healed the sick, cleansed the leper, and restored the dead to life; who stilled the angry waves, cast out demons, and emancipated the captives of Satan; who was despised and rejected of men, condemned to a malefactor's death, and was crucified on the accursed tree; who rose again on the third day, ascended to heaven, and took His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high; who has been given the Name which is above every name, at which Name every knee shall yet bow, "of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Yes "this same Jesus" shall descend from heaven with a shout.

Forty days after our Crucified Saviour had risen from the tomb, He ascended into Heaven "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," and took His seat upon the Father's Throne. There He has remained throughout this dispensation waiting, patiently waiting for the promised harvest. As He declared, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). The Lord Jesus was the "Corn of Wheat" that died, and the Church which is His body is the "much fruit" that will be the immediate issue out of that death; we say the "immediate issue," for in the Millennium many others shall then also enter into the salvation which was purchased upon the cross.

For nineteen long centuries has the Christ of God waited for the fruit of His travail. As the apostle James says, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it" (Jas. 5:7). Long indeed has the Lord of the harvest waited. Thus, too, we read of "The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9). Slowly but surely has the Church which is His body been growing, growing "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 fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). And now the time of waiting is over. The last member has been added to the Body; the last living stone has been fitted into that Temple which the Holy Spirit is now building (Eph. 2:21); the last moments of the dispensation of grace have run out. Now has come that hour for which the Redeemer has waited so long. Now has come the time for the Head to be united to the Body. Now it is that the Saviour is to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

"The Lord Himself shall descend." Unspeakably precious is this word to the hearts of His own. Christ is coming in person to effect the object which He has in view. The joy of welcoming His blood-bought people must be exclusively His own. Angels cannot be commissioned to perform it, as will be the case when He gathers His scattered people Israel (see Matt. 24:31). Gabriel was granted the honorus privilege of announcing to Mary the first advent of Christ, yet not even to him will be entrusted this work. Christ Himself shall give the gathering shout. The Lord Himself shall descent. "I will come again" was His promise. The same blessed Lord Jesus who loved His own unto death, and who has gone to prepare a place for them, is the very One who has pledged His word to return for them. He will not send the arch-angel to conduct us to the Father's House. No; the Lord Himself is the One who shall descend from Heaven with a shout"—with a "shout" of triumph, with a "shout" of joy, with a "shout" of welcome. That Voice which summoned Lazarus from the tomb, shall again be heard calling the sleeping saints forth from their graves. That Voice of the Shepherd who addresseth His own sheep by name, shall then be heard calling His "little flock" from the valley of the shadow of death unto pastures ever green. That Voice which is "as the sound of many waters" (Rev. 1:15) shall then be heard summoning His people Home. "The Voice of my Beloved; behold, He cometh leaping upon the

mountains skipping upon the hills" (Song of Solomon 2:8). And what is it that the Voice of the Beloved shall say? "My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away" (vss. 10–13). We turn now to consider—

2. The Resurrection of the sleeping saints.

"And the dead in Christ shall rise first." This is the second blessed event which shall occur at the Redeemer's return—the sleeping saints will be awakened and raised. This brings us to a branch of our subject upon which there is much ignorance and confusion in Christendom generally. The idea which popularly obtains is that of a general resurrection at the end of time. So deeply rooted is this belief and so widely is it held that to declare there will be two resurrections—one of saints and another of sinners, the two being separated by a thousand years—is to be regarded as a setter forth of strange ideas and extravagant fancies. Nevertheless, the teaching of Scripture upon this point is exceedingly plain and explicit. Probably many of those who will read these pages are already clear upon this distinction, but the sake of those who are not we must briefly outline the teaching of God's Word upon this subject, first quoting, however, from one whose writings have been justly esteemed by Christians of every shade of thought.

John Bunyan who was certainly a close student of the Divine Oracles wrote, "Now when the saints that sleep shall be raised thus incorruptible, powerful, glorious and spiritual; and also those that then shall be found alive, made like them; then forthwith, before the unjust are raised, the saints shall appear before the judgment-seat of the Lord Jesus Christ, there to give an account to their Lord the Judge of all things they have done; and to receive a reward for their good according to their labor. They shall rise, I say, before the wicked, they being themselves the proper "children of the resurrection," that is, those that must have all the glory of it, both as to preeminency, and sweetness; and, therefore, they are said, when they rise, to rise from the dead; that is, in their rising, they leave the reprobate world behind them. And it must be so, because also the saints will have done their account, and be set upon the throne with Christ as kings and priests with Him to judge the world, when the wicked world are raised."

But without citing human testimony any further, let us turn to the teaching of Christ and the inspired writings of His apostles. On one occasion the Lord said, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed if there is to be but one resurrection—a general resurrection of all the dead—then why did our Lord make the above distinction and qualification of "the resurrection of the just"? Again, in Luke 20:34, 35 we read, "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage." What can be the meaning of such words as "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead" if All the dead alike are sure of participating in an indiscriminate resurrection. Worthiness to obtain the resurrection from the dead certainly implies there will be some who are not esteemed worthy, and hence will not be partakers of the resurrection here mentioned; therefore, the conclusion is irresistible that there must be two distinct resurrections. That there will be is further seen from the language of John 5:28, 29 —"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which, all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Here the two resurrections are sharply distinguished both as to name and participants, and as we shall see, there is to be a long interval of time between them.

The testimony of the apostolic Epistles is in strict harmony with the teaching of our Lord recorded in the four Gospels. In 1 Cor. 15:21-23 we read, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." It is important to notice that the resurrection of the wicked is not

contemplated in this chapter at all, but is strictly limited to the resurrection of Christ and His saints. The words “all be made alive” are qualified by the clause which immediately precedes them. It has reference solely to those who are “in Christ.” Christ Himself is the “firstfruits” (the reference is to the type of Lev. 23:10) and the harvest that is garnered at His return are “they that are Christ’s.” Again, we are told that the people of God in Old Testament times who refused to accept deliverance from death at the hands of their persecutors, did so “that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35) which expression is quite meaningless if there is but one general resurrection in which saints and sinners shall alike participate.

One other Scripture yet remains to be considered, namely Rev. 20:4-6 “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Here we learn not only that the resurrection of the saints is quite distinct from that of the wicked, but we are also expressly told that an interval of a thousand years lies between the two. It were meaningless to speak of the resurrection of the “blessed and holy” as the first resurrection” if there is no second resurrection of the wicked to follow. The righteous shall all be raised before the Millennium begins, but the lost shall not be raised until its close. Thus we see that the uniform teaching of the New Testament respecting the resurrection of sleeping believers is in perfect accord with our Thessalonian Scripture—“The dead in Christ shall rise first.” None but the “dead in Christ” will come forth from their graves in response to the assembling shout of our descending Lord at the time of His second advent. But now consider,

3. The Translation of living believers.

"Then we which are alive and remain (on the earth) shall be caught up together with them (the resurrected ones) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." In connection with this statement we would call attention to another Scripture which at first sight appears to have no bearing upon it at all. We refer to the words of our Lord recorded in John 12:32—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." We hesitate to set forth our own understanding of this passage because it differs widely from the generally received interpretation of it. It is from no desire to pander to the modern and miserable craving for novel expositions of Scripture that we advance our own view, but simply because necessity is laid upon us. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me" _the word "men" inserted in italics has no equivalent in the original, and hence we must understand the "all" to refer to all believers. The question we would now raise is, What does the "drawing unto Christ" here have reference to? Personally, we do not think it has any reference to salvation, for where coming to Christ for salvation is in view it is the "Father" who is said to do the "drawing." This may be verified by a reference to John 6:44, where we read, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." Therefore we submit that our Lord's words here point to the catching up of the saints at the time of His return, that it is then He will "draw" them all "unto Himself." The words "I ** will draw all unto Me" correspond very closely with that other word of His which has reference to this same event—"I ** will receive you unto Myself" (John 14:3). We would further suggest that the reason why this "drawing" of all believers unto Himself at the time of His return is linked with His "lifting up" is to show us that this consummating blessing, like every other we enjoy, is based upon His cross-work for us. Finally; it is highly significant, and seems to corroborate our interpretation, that in the verse immediately preceding the one now under consideration, our Lord said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." It was then—"now"—at the Cross, that the Divine sentence was passed but it will not be until the Rapture that it will receive its execution. It is immediately following the "catching up" of the saints, their "drawing" to Christ, that God's "judgment" will fall upon "this world," as it is then also that its "prince"—"Satan"—will be "cast out" of his present domains (see Rev. 12:7-9). Who are the ones that shall be "drawn" unto Christ at that day? The answer is found in our Thessalonian Scripture—"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord of the air." We have already contemplated the resurrection of the sleeping saints, let us now say a few words concerning those believers who shall be alive on earth at that time.

It is often said, "There are many things in this life which are uncertain, but one thing is sure: we must all die; we must all pay nature's debt." Nothing is more common than to hear such affirmations as these which set death before the believer as his inevitable prospect. Such assertions are regarded as axiomatic. Frequently they are repeated from the pulpit. But not so do the Scriptures teach. The Word of God distinctly declares, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). So that instead of it being certain that all will die, it is absolutely certain that all believers will not die. A whole generation of Christians, namely, those that are alive upon the earth when our Lord descends from Heaven will be "changed in a moment," and without passing through death at all, shall be caught up together with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air.

The prospect which God's Word sets before every believer is the imminent return of Christ. Not a dread anticipation of death, but "looking for the Saviour" is to be our daily occupation. Translation to Heaven and not the grave is our goal. That is why it is termed "that blessed hope," and that is why we are said to be "begotten again unto a living hope"—a living hope in a dying scene. This hope was active in the hearts of the first-century saints. The Thessalonians

had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.” They were waiting for Christ not death. Observe that in our text the apostle includes himself among the number of those who might be alive on the earth at the time of Christ’s second advent—“Then we (not “ye”) which are alive and remain shall be caught up;” and again, “We shall not all sleep.” The beloved apostle was not looking the “the king of terrors” but for “the King of Glory.”

Lord, ‘tis for Thee Thy coming we wait;
The sky not the grave is our goal:
The rapture, not death, we gladly await,
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, O my soul.

A striking illustration and type of the removal to heaven of those believers which shall be on the earth at the time of our Lord’s return is found in the rapture of Enoch, “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him” (Heb. 11:5). Here was a man of like passions with us, who was raptured to Heaven without seeing death. Such is the blessed prospect which Scripture sets before the Christian as his present hope. We repeat, that all believers on earth at the time of our Lord’s descent into the air, shall altogether escape the gloomy portals of the tomb and be translated to Heaven to meet the Lord and be for ever with Him. This will be the fulfillment of our Lord’s promise “I will come again and receive you unto Myself.” Observe that our Lord does not say, “I will come again and take you unto Myself,” but “I will come again and receive you unto Myself.” The thought suggested by this distinction is exceedingly precious. “Taking” is an action confined to myself. I may enter an empty room and take a book from the table. But receiving is an action that brings in another. If I “receive” a book the necessary inference is that someone handed it to me. Exactly so will it be at the Rapture. The saints of God are not left alone in this cold wilderness-world. The “other Comforter, even the Spirit of truth” has come to take up His abode in the church, and it is from Him that the Lord Jesus will “receive” it. * And observe further that our Lord did not say “to Heaven,” or “to the Father’s House,” but “unto Myself.” The person of Christ is to be the Object before the eye and heart. Thus it was the martyr Stephen—“Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” Thus it was with the apostle Paul—“To depart and be with Christ which is far better;” and again, “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” The heart occupied with Him.

“To meet the Lord in the air. Why should the Church meet the Lord in “the air,” rather than on the earth? We would suggest a twofold reason. First, Because the Church is heavenly not earthly. It is heavenly in its origin (1 Cor. 15:48). It is heavenly in its calling (Heb. 3:1). It is heavenly in its citizenship (Phil. 3:20). It is heavenly in its blessings (Eph. 1:3). It is heavenly in its destiny (1 Pet. 1:4). Therefore will the Church meet its Head in the “air”—the atmospheric heavens. But second; I believe this joyous meeting between the Lord and His blood-bought people is to be in the air, rather than in the Heaven of heavens, for the purpose of privacy. The eyes of the world shall not gaze upon that holy scene, nor will even the angels (so far as Scripture indicates) witness that first moment when the Redeemer shall meet the redeemed.

“And so shall we ever be with the Lord,” which, as we have seen corresponds with His own blessed promise, “That where I am there ye may be also.” Wondrous privilege! Marvelous prospect! Truly, such love “passeth knowledge.” The place which is due to the Son is the same place which shall be accorded the sons. We are made “joint heirs with Christ.” His inheritance and blessedness shall be shared with His redeemed. He shall come Himself to conduct us to His place! But are we, shall we be, fit, to dwell in such a realm? The answer to this question leads us to consider,

4. The Transformation of each believer into the Image of our glorified Saviour.

In the beginning, man was made in the image and likeness of God, but sin came in and as the consequence that image has been defaced and that likeness marred. Has then the purpose of Jehovah been thwarted? Not so: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever" (Ps. 33:11). Therefore it is written, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). The time when this purpose and promise of God will be realized is at the Return of His Son. It is then that God's elect will be completely "conformed to the image of His Son." It is then that they shall "be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." It is then that "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." But to particularize.

In Rom. 7:24 the question is asked, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Part of the answer to this interrogation is recorded in Rom. 8:11—"But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." This Scripture has been the occasion of considerable controversy of late and some wild fancies have been indulged concerning it, yet is its meaning quite simple. The "quickening of our mortal bodies" does not refer to resurrection, nor to "healing," but to that "change" which shall take place in the physical beings of those believers on earth at the Redeemer's return. Here, as everywhere, the apostle has the "blessed hope" before his heart and he would interpose nothing between (not even death and resurrection) the present moment and the realization of that hope. The "quickening of our mortal bodies," the "changing" of them in a moment, is described in Phil. 3:20, 21 _"For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." These present corruptible bodies of ours shall be transformed into bodies like unto that glorious body now worn by our Lord. That is, like His body as it appeared on the mount of transfiguration —dazzling in its splendor; like unto His body as it appeared unto Saul as he journeyed to Damascus—scintillating with a brilliancy which surpassed the shining of the midday sun. What a glorious transformation that will be! Each saint will be given a body of glory fitted to and for the scene to which he shall go, as his present body is fitted to this earth. Scientists tell us that the little sparkling diamond which we admire so much, was once a piece of carbon, a fragment of charcoal which has undergone a marvelous transformation, converting the little piece of black charcoal into the resplendent jewel. This, perhaps, is Nature's type of the glorious transformation that awaits us, when the Saviour shall take our present mortal body and fashion it like unto His glorious body.

Physical transformation is not all that awaits the believer. At our Lord's return there will be a mental, moral and spiritual transformation too. In 1 John 3:2 we are told, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." The emphasis here is often thrown upon the wrong words. Some read this verse as though it had reference to present ignorance of our future condition, the clause "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," being understood to signify "We don't really know now what we shall yet be." But this is a mistake, for we do "know" as this very verse informs us—"we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him. The emphatic words are "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." What we are really going to be like awaits its manifestation till our Lord's appearing. Let us illustrate. I hold in my hand a small seed: it is unlovely in appearance and gives no promise at all of what it will ultimately become. It doth not yet appear what it shall be. But I plant that seed in the ground, and a few weeks later it has become a strong plant, and one morning I wake and find it covered with the most beautiful flowers. Now the potentialities of that little seed are fully

manifested. So it is with the believer. He looks at his own heart and wonders if after all he is a child of God. His body is just the same as the bodies of unbelievers, and viewed by the eye of sense he seems to be no different from them in anywise. No; because his real "life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:30—it doth not yet appear what he shall be, nevertheless he knows (by faith) that when Christ shall appear, he shall be like Him, for he shall see Him as He is.

"We shall be like Him." Who dare limit this exceeding great and precious promise? "Like Him" physically, for our vile body shall then be "fashioned like unto His glorious body." "Like Him" mentally! Today we are very unlike Him mentally: our minds now are often harassed with evil thoughts, they are clouded and darkened by the effects of the Fall, and are subject to many limitations; but when Christ appears that which is "perfect" shall come and then, no longer shall we see through a glass darkly and know in part, but we shall know as we are known. We shall be "like Him" morally and spiritually. Sin will be erased from our beings; every trace and effect of the Fall shall be eradicated from our persons. Then will God's predestinating purpose be fully realized. Then shall we be completely "conformed to the image of His Son." Blessed transformation! Glorious prospect! We shall be like Him.

"High in the Father's house above
My mansion is prepared,
There is the home, the rest I love,
And there my bright reward.
With Him I love, in spotless white,
In glory I shall shine;
His blissful presence my delight,
His love and glory mine.
All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away;
And I shall dwell with God's Beloved
Through God's eternal day."

5. The Examination and Rewarding of the believer's works.

"Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). If it is true that the general teaching of Christendom upon the subject of the Resurrection is unscriptural, the popular conception of future judgment is still more erroneous. It is generally believed that at the end of time saints and sinners shall all stand before the judgment-bar of God; that they will be divided into two great classes—"the sheep and the goats;" that those whose names are found written in the book of life will pass into Heaven, and that the wicked will be consigned to the Lake of Fire. For this conception (excepting the last clause) there is not a single verse of Scripture when rightly interpreted. So far as believers are concerned the Sin question has been closed forever, for their sins were all judged at the Cross where their Substitute died the Just for the unjust. Consequently, all who have believed in the Lord Jesus are forever beyond the Curse of the Law. This is clear from our Lord's own words —"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him sent Me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation," or as the Revised Version more correctly renders it, "shall not come into judgment" (John 5:24). How erroneous then the prevailing conception; and how absurd! Shall the apostle Paul, who has already been in Heaven for more than eighteen hundred years, yet have to appear before the judgment-bar of God, in order to ascertain whether he shall spend eternity in Heaven or in the Lake of Fire? How could this be, when we are distinctly told "There is therefore now no condemnation (judgment) to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Furthermore, observe that it is said of the sleeping saints they are raised in glory" (1 Cor. 15:43). How then could a glorified saint be consigned to the Lake of Fire? And if there is no possibility of him going there, then what need is there for any Assize to decide his eternal destiny? No; the judgment of the Great White Throne concerns the wicked only.

But are we not told in 2 Cor. 5:10 "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body; according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"? Yes, we are. Let us then examine this Scripture. First, it is to be remarked that the Greek word which is here translated "judgment-seat" is "Bema." At the time the New Testament was written the Bema was not a judicial bench upon which a judge sat, passing sentence upon criminals (an entirely different word was used for it), but was the throne from which the judge distributed prizes to the victors in the games. Such will be the Bema of Christ.

In the second place, the purpose of the appearing of believers "before the Bema of Christ" is not to test their title and fitness for Heaven, but in order that their works may be examined and their service rewarded. A Scripture which throws much light upon this is to be found in 1 Cor. 3:11-15, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day will declare it: because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Here we learn that the foundation of the believer's salvation is Jesus Christ Himself and that his subsequent works and service are likened to a building which he erects upon this foundation. The different kinds of works and service are likened to a building which he erects upon this foundation. The different kinds of works which the believer performs—good and bad—are regarded as two classes of materials which he employs in the building he is erecting. In the day of Christ's appearing his building is to be tested by fire, which means that his works will be examined and the motives which produced them carefully scrutinized. Those works which will endure the searching process will be rewarded, those which are worthless will perish, and in the latter instance, the individual, though

saved, will “suffer loss.”

When the Lord returns, every servant will be called upon to give an account of his stewardship. Notice will be taken of how our talents were employed and how our time was redeemed. The whole life of the believer will be examined in detail in the light of the Throne and his deeds measured by the Divine standard. Words spoken now and actions performed in this world, will then be weighed in the Balances of the Sanctuary. Things will then be seen in their true colors and labeled at their real worth by the impartial hand of the Omniscient Christ.

The difference between the two classes of materials mentioned in the above Scripture points to a most solemn truth. “Gold, silver, precious stones are of intrinsic value, whereas “wood, hay, stubble” are a natural growth. In Scripture “gold” symbolizes the Divine nature, “silver” Divine redemption, and “precious stones” the Divine glory. Those works of the believer which have issued from the Divine nature within us, are based upon Christ’s redemption, and have been performed for God’s glory, will receive reward; but those which were wrought by those who felt they must do something, those performed in the energy of the flesh, those done merely for self-aggrandisement will all be burned up. What a conflagration there will be in that day! What surprises there will be at the Bema of Christ! An hundred-dollar subscription, given to get a name, will be ashes in that day; while a dime given to help the poor for the Lord’s sake will receive an imperishable reward.

“Deeds of merit as we thought them
He will show us were but sin:
Little acts we had forgotten
He will tell us were for Him.”

No work done out of love for Christ will lose its reward. “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints” (Heb. 6:10). All that endures the test of that day will be publicly, abundantly and eternally rewarded. There, before His Father and in the presence of the holy angels, our gracious Redeemer will delight to say to the rewarded one, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will made thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt. 25:23).

The subject of rewards is a wide one and we can only deal briefly with it here. Four crowns are mentioned in the New Testament: the Incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25), which is the reward for faithful service; the crown of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), which is given to those who love Christ’s appearing; the crown of Glory (1 Pet. 5:4), which is reserved for faithful pastors who have tended the flock; and the crown of Life (Rev. 2:10), which is a special reward reserved for martyrs. Each crown is conditional, conditional upon faithfulness to an absent Christ. But to return now to 2 Cor. 5:10.

The prospect of our manifestation before the Bema of Christ is both joyous and solemn. It is “joyous” because it is then that everything will come out into the light and all misunderstandings will be cleared up; because everything which will not endure the Divine test will be “burned up;” and because every work which was done with an eye single to God’s glory will receive commendation from our blessed Lord Himself. It is “solemn” because then it will be seen how much of our work was nothing but “wood, hay, and stubble;” because we shall then discover how sadly we had failed to “redeem the time;” and because we shall “suffer loss.” Ah! my brethren it behooves us to live in the light of that day now so near at hand. Let our chief ambition be that all we say and do shall meet with the approval of our Lord at the Bema. Yes, the contemplation of the Bema is solemn and searching. He who has lived in selfish ease and carnal gratification will be the loser throughout all eternity. But he who has “denied himself” out of love for and gratitude to the Saviour, shall yet hear His “Well done” and enter into His joy.

6. The presentation of the Church by Christ to Himself.

When every saint of God shall have been made like Christ, made “like Him” physically, mentally, morally and spiritually, and after each individual’s life and works have been examined before the Bema, then is the Church publicly presented and Eph. 5:25-27 is fulfilled—“Christ also love the Church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” The word “present” here means “to set alongside of.” Christ is yet going to set the Church alongside of Himself. The Church will share His glory and reign with Him throughout the Millennium. As saith the Scriptures—“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne” (Rev. 3:21). The Church will then have been fitted for this exalted position, for observe that Christ presents the Church to Himself “a glorious Church.” In that day none of the defiling “spots” of sin shall be found in the Church, and not a “wrinkle”—the mark of age and corruption—shall mar its beauty, but with youth eternally renewed the Church shall then perfectly reflect the glory of Christ. Then shall He be able to say, “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee” (Song of Solomon 4:7).

Another Scripture which tells of the presentation of the Church is to be found in Jude 24 —“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” We believe the reference here to the “exceeding joy” is that of Christ Himself. This was “the joy” that was set before Him when He endured the Cross and despised the shame (Heb. 12:2).

Closely connected with the public Presentation of the Church is,

7. The Manifestation of the Church with Christ.

The last time the world saw the Lord Jesus He was alone—all alone in death. But when He returns to this earth He will not be alone. His saints will accompany Him. He is the "Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29), and when He appears again they will be with Him. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, bringing His sheaves with Him" (Ps. 126:6). Yes, that blessed One who humbled Himself to become the Sower shall return with "His sheaves"—"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 1:14).

"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:16-18). Observe that "the glory" here mentioned is to be revealed, and revealed in us; and further, that it is a glory which we shall share with Christ 'glorified together." When will this glory be "revealed in us" together with Christ? The answer is at the time of His return to this earth, for "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4)—"in glory" for before this, our present bodies will have been "fashioned like unto His glorious body." It is in connection with this appearing of Christ with His saints in glory that we read, "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:10). In that day the sons of God—whose life is now "hid with Christ in God"—will be manifested manifested with Christ in glory. Then will our Lord's prayer be fully answered—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, are in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou has sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:20-22).

"Soon shall come that glorious day
When, seated on Thy throne,
Thou shalt to wondering world's display
That Thou with us art One."

These are the Results of the Redeemer's Return as they affect the Church—results in part for the half hath not been told. The Lord Himself descends from Heaven with a shout, awakening the sleeping saints and translating them together with living believers, to meet Him in the air. Then, all are conformed to the image of God's Son and made "like Him." Next, the saints appear before the Bema that their works may be examined and their service rewarded. Finally, as Christ prepares to return to the earth, He sets the Church, now glorious within and without, alongside of Himself, and as He appears before the eyes of the world the Church appears with Him, to be the object of never-ending wonderment and admiration as it is seen what great things the Lord hath wrought for those who were by nature children of wrath and deserving of nought but eternal condemnation. In view of such a prospect must we not long for God to hasten the glad day of our Lord's return, and are we not compelled to cry "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus"!

Chapter Nine

The Worldward Results of the Redeemer's Return

In the last chapter we considered seven of the Churchward Results of the Redeemer's Return. We saw that the One who left His disciples almost nineteen centuries ago, is coming back again, that the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout; that this Shout will be heard by all the saints whether alive on the earth or asleep in their graves, and that at the time He gives this Shout our Lord will exert a miraculous "drawing" power which shall "catch up" His people unto Himself so that they meet Him in the air, after which they come before the Bema in order that their works may be examined and their service rewarded; subsequently, after an interval of seven years or more, the Lord returns to the earth accompanied by His people in glory. It is concerning the Interval which follows the Rapture and some of the things which shall occur during this period of time which are now to engage our attention. What is to take place on earth after the Church has been removed from it? What are the conditions that will obtain in this world during the interval which divides the two stages in the second advent of Christ? What is the course of events which shall culminate in the Return of the Redeemer to the Mount of Olives to usher in the long-promised Millennium? The Scriptures which make answer to these questions are exceedingly numerous and our chief difficulty is to select and classify.

What will occur on earth after the saints have been removed? In seeking to summarize the predictions which bear upon this time, we shall confine ourselves again to seven of the most prominent items, namely, the Consternation of the world at the removal of the Church, the Hopeless condition of those left behind, God's dealings with the earth in judgment, the character and career of the Antichrist, the situation of the Jews during this period, the Battle of Armageddon, and the Return of Christ to the earth itself. Before we study these seriatim, a further word or two is necessary to prepare the reader for what follows.

The length of time which separates between the secret coming of Christ to the air for the purpose of catching up His people and His subsequent and public return to the earth itself is not clearly defined in Scripture. It is certain, however, that this interval will last at least seven years and if, as the writer believes and an increasing number of prophetic students conclude, a goodly proportion of the Jews are to return to Palestine, if their Temple in Jerusalem is to be re-built, if Babylon is to be restored until it becomes again the metropolis of the world, then it will last much longer, possibly seventy years in all. For the sake of convenience we shall refer to this interval as the Tribulation period, though to be strictly accurate the "great Tribulation" is but three and a half years in length, the final three and a half years before the Lord Jesus returns to the earth.

Anyone who has given himself at all seriously to the study of Prophecy will immediately recognize the difficulty of seeking to arrange in chronological order the things which are shortly coming to pass. Concerning the exact sequence of details we cannot be absolutely dogmatic, but so far as the general outline is in question that is plain. With these explanatory remarks let us now turn directly to the subject before us. And,

1. The World's Consternation at the sudden and secret Removal of the Church.

One can better imagine than describe the awe-inspiring effect upon the world which will be occasioned by the secret removal of the Church. We say "secret removal" for we know of nothing in Scripture which intimates that our Lord's Shout shall be heard by any save His own people, and judging from the analogies furnished by the cases of the translation of Enoch and Elijah nothing will be known of the Church's rapture until after it has occurred. That the world will not witness the catching up of believers to meet their Saviour in the air seems to be further borne out by the fact that their translation and transformation will be so swiftly accomplished that it is all said to occur "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." We take it then that the removal of the Church will be both sudden and secret.

Some day in the near future, how near none can say, but probably in the lifetime of the present generation, the world will awaken to find that a most startling phenomenon has occurred. A large number of their fellow-men and women will have mysteriously disappeared, leaving no traces behind them! In many a home there will be more than one vacant chair. In many an office and store there will be vacant stools. From every walk of life there will be taken those who "Chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world: for they had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:25, 26). Possibly some seats in the Senate and some thrones will be vacant, for God's children are "scattered abroad" (John 11:52) in many spheres and callings. The phenomenon of the missing ones will be no local one, but earthwide in its range. It is highly probable that from every village, town, and city, in this land, there shall be taken those who are caught up to met the Lord in the air. Imagine then the amazement, the consternation, the commiseration of those that are left behind! Imagine the panic which shall seize their hearts. If they search, their search will be in vain. No trace of the missing ones will be forth-coming. Imagine again the dismay and the awe, as the news is received from other lands that his same mysterious phenomenon has occurred there too! Will it take the left-behind ones very long to find a solution to the mystery? Will it be very difficult for them to find an explanation which will account for the disappearance of God's people from the earth? We believe not. The imminent coming of Christ has been so widely proclaimed both by voice and pen that there are now comparatively few people who are in complete ignorance upon this subject. Today the wise of this world may sneer and scoff at the truth that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, but then, when it is too late to profit from the witness that is now being borne, it shall be seen that those who were looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ were no mere visionaries and fanatics, but sober men and women whose faith was founded upon the unerring Word of God. O what anguish will fill those who gave no heed to the faithful warning of their godly friends! And here we would pause a moment and ask, Reader, How is it with you? Suppose that Christ should come today—and He may- in which class would you be found? Would you be among the "wise" virgins who are ready for the Bridegroom's appearing, or would you be numbered among the "foolish" virgins who had made no adequate preparation for this great event? Pass not this question lightly by. It is now the most momentous question which can possibly engage your attention. You say, you hope you would be among those that are ready. But you cannot afford to be uncertain upon this matter, the issues are far too serious and solemn. Stop right here we beseech you and honestly examine yourself and see whether you be in the faith. Do you know within your heart that you are un-prepared, that all your efforts have been directed toward the securing for yourself a comfortable position in this world? Then, let us ask, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Do you say, I have already faced that question and I know now how to make the necessary preparation. Are you constrained to

ask, “What must I do to be saved?” Then the answer, God’s own answer, is ready at hand —“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Appropriate the provision which Divine grace has made for lost sinners. Flee to Christ while there is yet time. Turn away from self with all its resolutions and failures, its doings and its sins and cast yourself on the Lord Jesus. Heed that pressing word, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.” Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Tomorrow may be too late. Before tomorrow the Lord may have come, and then the door of mercy will be closed against you. And this leads us to consider,

2. The Hopeless condition of the left-behind ones.

What will happen when Christendom awakens to the solemn fact that the real Church, the Church of God, has been removed from this earth and taken to be with the Lord? Again we say, it is not difficult for our imagination to supply the answer. But we are not left to the exercise of our imagination; the Holy Scriptures contain a plain and full reply to our inquiry. The Word of God intimates that following the Rapture of the saints many of the left-behind ones will earnestly seek the salvation of their souls. Multitudes of men and women will, for the first time in their lives, all upon the name of the Lord and cry unto Him for mercy. But their cry will not be heard. Their seeking will be in vain, because they have delayed the all-important matter of their salvation until it is too late. The door of mercy will then be closed, for the Day of Salvation will have ended. Often had these left-behind ones been warned, but in vain. Servants of God had faithfully set before them their imperative need of fleeing from the wrath to come; knowing the terror of the Lord, they had sought to persuade their unsaved hearers to be reconciled to God, only to be laughed at for their pains. And now the tables will be turned. God will laugh at them, laugh at their calamity and mock at their fear. Listen to the solemn declaration of Holy Writ —"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then they shall call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. 1:24-31). Unspeakably solemn words are these—words which ought to be thundered forth from every pulpit in the land. Many the time had these same people heard the Gospel preached, but they had deliberately hardened their hearts. Many the time had they been urged to "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Is. 55:6), but they despised the invitations of Divine grace. Now they shall reap as they have sown. Hitherto they had mocked God; now God shall mock them. Hitherto Go had called to them, but they had refused to attend; now shall they call upon God and He will decline to answer them.

Parallel with this solemn declaration is the Old Testament Scriptures we find our Lord Himself testified, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye being to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are" (Luke 13:24, 25). These words contain an amplification of His utterance concerning the "foolish virgins"—"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matt. 25:11, 12). Whoever the "great multitude" of Rev. 7 may be, it is certain that none in Christendom who have rejected the Gospel during the present dispensation will be among that number. 2 Thess. 2:10-12 is equally explicit. The Anti-christ shall come "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that ALL might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Let it then be distinctly understood that, there will be no "second chance" for present-day Christ rejectors left behind on the earth after the removal of the Church, for when the Church goes the Holy Spirit, too, is taken away. Knocking and crying then will be useless. The door has been closed. The Day of Salvation is over. An angry God shall then mock those who have mocked Him. As it was with Israel of old,

so shall it then be with a God-forsaken Christendom—“Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them” (Ezek. 8:18). Unsaved reader, consider thy peril. The Lord is at hand, and if you are not among the number caught up to meet Him in the air, then your doom will be eternally sealed. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). But not only shall the left-behind ones seek the Lord in vain, but they shall be the objects of His wrath. This leads us to consider—

3. God's dealings with the earth during the Tribulation period.

The interval of time which separates the removal of the Church from the earth to the return of Christ to it, is variously designated in the Word of God. It is spoken of as "the day of vengeance" (Is. 61:2). It is called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). It is the "hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world" (Rev. 3:10). It is denominated "the great day of the Lord" (Zeph. 1:14). It is termed "the great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21). It is the time of God's "controversy with the nations" (Jer. 25:31). In Dan. 12:1 it is described as "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Our Lord referred to this same period when He said; "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation, which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days" (Mark 13:19, 20). As one reads these unspeakably solemn Scriptures the question naturally occurs to our minds, Why will this period be visited with sorer afflictions than any season which has preceded it since the commencement of human history? The answer is, Because this will be the time when the thrice holy God avenges the Death of His blessed Son. God has a "controversy with the nations," observe "the nations" not "nation" for the Gentiles, equally with the Jews, shared in the awful crime of the Crucifixion. It is written in Rom. 12:19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." And, as in everything, so here, the Holy One sets us a perfect example—"Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously"(1 Pet. 2:23). Yes, He committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously, and now the time will have come when His cause shall be espoused and when the righteous Judge shall exact full satisfaction for that awful crime perpetrated nineteen centuries ago. On the Cross, the Smitten One cried, "Pour out Thine indignation upon them, and let Thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents. For they persecute Him whom Thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of Thy wounded" (Ps. 69:24-26). Then will be the time when God answers that prayer.

Yes, my reader, you are living in a world which is stained with the blood of God's own Son, and which in the sight of Heaven now lies beneath the guilt of that terrible crime, a crime which each new generation since then has perpetuated by "Crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:6). Long have God's judgments been withheld. Long has His grace been displayed. But soon shall this dispensation of grace close, and then shall the Lord God make answer to His Son's cry and "pour out His indignation" upon the world which murdered the Lord of Glory. This "pouring out of God's indignation" is described in numerous passages. We read in Zeph. 1:14-18, "The great day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land." Again we read, "Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until He have done it, and until He have performed the intents of His heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it" (Jer. 30:23, 24). And once more we are told, "For, behold, the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the

Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1).

No less than thirteen chapters—6 to 19—in the last book of the Bible are devoted to a description of the terrible judgments which God will pour upon the earth during the Tribulation period. We cannot now review all of these chapters, but will confine ourselves to a brief examination of a portion of the sixth. "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Rev. 6:4). The symbolism here is easily interpreted. The "red horse" denotes blood-shed and slaughter. Peace is taken "from the earth" not merely from one country, or even from a whole continent, but from the earth itself. The fulfillment of this is yet future. But coming events cast their shadows before them, and the length of the shadows which are even now cast across the earth, shows how near we have approached to the dread reality itself. Today, the saints of God are "the salt of the earth," preserving the human race from going to utter corruption, and the Holy Spirit who is now here exerts a restraining influence upon the powers of evil. But in the day contemplated by Rev. 6 the Holy Spirit will have gone, the Church will have been removed, and then will the wildest passions of men be let loose and a time of mutual slaughter and universal carnage shall ensue.

"And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creators say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny" (Rev. 6:5, 6). The "black horse" symbolizes lamentation and mourning: the "balances" that which will be employed for carefully weighing out the cereals: the "penny" is a day's wage (see Matt. 20:2). Added to the horrors of universal war, depicted by the previous "seal" judgment, there will be an unparalleled scarcity of food, and the very necessaries of life will be sold at famine prices. For centuries God has blessed the earth with abundant crops, but His mercies have been received without thanksgiving. But in that day there shall be a general scarcity of food and multitudes will die of starvation.

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword; and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:8). As it was in connection with His plagues upon Egypt of old, so during the Tribulation period God's judgments will increase in severity. The "pale horse" signifies Death, and his rider is thus denominated. Death is accompanied by Hades: the former seizing the body, the latter claiming the soul. In this one judgment no less than a fourth of earth's inhabitants will be slain by God's avenging agents, while those that are left will be tormented by the pangs of hunger and terrified by wild beasts.

"And I beheld when he opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell upon the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (Rev. 6:12-14). In addition to the horrors of war, famine, and wild beasts, there will follow the most fearful convulsions of Nature. First, there is a "great earthquake," an earthquake unparalleled in the history of man, and beside which the destruction of Pompeii and the catastrophe at San Francisco will, by comparison, fade away into utter insignificance. God Himself terms this a great earthquake—great in its severity and great in its reach, for it will shake the entire earth and even the mountains and islands of the sea will be moved out of their places. Next, we are told that, to add to the sufferings of earth's afflicted inhabitants, the "sun" will be darkened, as though it were reluctant to shine upon such a scene of judgment and death. Furthermore; the moon will be transformed into an object of horror. Long had men despised the precious blood which the Lamb of God shed upon the Cross. But now the day will have come when God will compel all men to look upon blood. Now that it is too late

for the blood of Christ to save them, God will mock them by turning the moon into blood, so that it shall no longer shed its silvery light as hitherto, but will then cast a crimson glow upon the scene of God's judgments. As though this were not enough, the heavens will exhibit their wrath upon the earth which crucified their Creator, and will cast their stars upon it. All nature will be convulsed and all the earth will be encompassed by these unparalleled plagues.

A similar picture of the Divine judgments which will be inflicted at this time is furnished by the prophet Isaiah, "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate. And He shall utterly destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger" (Is. 13:9–13). These words are to be taken at their face value and understood literally.

What shall be the effect of all this? Let us return to Revelation 6 and read the Holy Spirit's own description of the consternation of mankind at this time. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And they said to the rocks and the mountains, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:15–17). A prayer meeting is convened—one unrivaled for size and earnestness, and one to which all classes and conditions of men assemble. Kings and rulers will be present. Hitherto they were more often found at Race-meetings than Prayer-meetings. all classes of men will be there. Many an opportunity for prayer had they missed in the past. Many the time they had lain down at night upon a pray-less bed. They had regarded prayer as a profitless occupation, as so much time wasted, as an exercise fit only for women and children. But now they fall prostrate on their faces. When prayer would have availed, they scorned it; now that it is useless they go at it with a will. Such is the pravity and folly of human nature. But note the object of their prayers! They pray not to the living God, but to the inanimate rocks and mountains. They cannot pray to the Lord God for they never learned how to address Him, and now it will be too late to learn for the Holy Spirit, who is the inspirer of all real prayer, has been "taken out of the way." They pray not to the Rock, but to the rocks. They had made material things their gods, and so to these they now address their petitions. Note, too, the burden of their prayers! They ask to be hidden from the face of God and from the wrath of the Lamb. When they had opportunity, they refused to acknowledge His Love, they slighted the overtures of His Mercy, so now they have to endure His wrath. To see God's face is the deepest longing of His people: to be "hid from His face" will be the one desire of those left behind for judgment.

Above, we have reviewed only down to the end of the sixth "Seal" judgment. There is a seventh which is itself divided into the seven "Trumpet" judgments, the seventh of which is again divided, divided into the seven "Vial" judgments. Little does the world dream of what is coming upon it. The present war with all its horrors gives but a faint conception of what will shortly come to pass on this earth. Not only will peace be entirely removed from the earth, not only will all Nature be convulsed by the outpouring of God's wrath, but the Bottomless Pit will be opened and out of it shall issue two hundred millions of supernatural locusts, having tails like scorpions and stings in their tails, and for five months they will "torment" those who have not been destroyed by the previous plagues. The torment inflicted by these infernal creatures will be so unendurable, that we are told "And in those days shall men seek death." But mark the still more awful sequel—"and shall not find it: and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from

them”(Rev. 9:6). At a later stage, earth’s inhabitants will be “scorched with great heat” and so terrible will be their suffering and so incurable is the wickedness of their hearts as it will then be manifested, that we read, “and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Rev. 16:9–11). Such will be a part of the “indignation” which God will yet pour out upon this guilty world as His response to that cry made by His beloved Son as he hung upon the Cross. But we must turn now and consider another prominent feature of the Tribulation period, namely,

4. The revelation and career of the Anti-christ.

Who is the Anti-christ?

Varied and wild have been the answers to this question. In pre-christian times there were many who regarded Antiochus Epiphanes as the one whom Daniel and the other prophets described. At the beginning of this dispensation Nero was looked upon as the predicted Man of Sin. After the Reformation the Papacy was selected as the fulfiller of the prophecies given through the Patmos seer. And in our day there have been those who consider the Kaiser to be the Son of Perdition. It cannot be denied that each of these infamous characters have manifested various characteristics which will yet be fully displayed by the Anti-christ, yet, they none of them match complete the delineation of the Man of Sin which is given in the prophetic word. There is one Scripture which is quite sufficient to prove that none of those mentioned above are the Anti-christ, a Scripture, moreover, which makes it certain that he has not yet been revealed, and cannot be revealed until after the Rapture of the Church. We refer to 2 Thess. 2:7, 8—"For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is One that restraineth now, until He be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the Lawless One" (R.V.). The One who now "restrains" is the Holy Spirit, and the time when He is "taken out of the way" is at the removal of the Church which is His "temple." Here then is a conclusive argument: the Anti-christ cannot be "revealed" or publicly manifested while God the Spirit is on the earth.

Who is the Anit-christ? Having shown who cannot have been the Anti-christ, let us now consider the positive answer to our question. In the first place, he will be a man, a real man, just as truly man as the Son of God was the Son of Man. The Anti-christ is termed "The Man of Sin" (2 Thess. 2:3). In the second place, he will be a Jew, if he were not he would be unable to make good his claims to be the real Christ; if he were not a Jew he could not deceive the Jews. That he will be a Jew, seems clear from Dan. 11:37. In the third place, he will be the Super-man, he will be a supernatural character, he will be the Son of the Devil. It is clear from Rev. 20:10 that there is an Evil Trinity, as there is the Holy Trinity. The Anti-christ will be the second person of the Evil Trinity as the Lord Jesus is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. As Jesus Christ was the God-Man, so the Anti-christ will be the Devil-Man.

There are at least three Scriptures which prove the super-human character of the Anti-christ. The first is found in Gen. 3:15. In this verse there is a double"enmity" spoken of: God says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman," that is, between Satan and Israel, for Israel was the woman that bore Christ (see Rev. 12); "And between thy seed and her seed." Observe particularly that two"seeds" are here spoken of, "thy seed" (the antecedent is plainly the "Serpent") and "her seed" the woman's Seed. The woman's "Seed" was Christ, the Serpent's "Seed" will be the Anti-christ. The Anti-christ then, will be more than a man, he will be the actual and literal Seed of that old Serpent the Devil, as Christ was, according to the flesh, the actual and literal Seed of the woman. "Thy seed," Satan's seed, refers to a specific individual, just as "her Seed" refers to a specific Individual.

The second Scripture which proves that the Anti-christ will be super-human, the offspring of Satan, is found in John 8:44—"Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." In the Greek there is the definite article before "lie"—the lie, "The Lie." There is but one other passage in the New Testament where "The Lie" is mentioned and that is in 2 Thess. 2:11 where again the definite article is found in the Greek, and here the reference to the Anti-christ is unmistakable. A threefold reason may be suggested as to why the Anti-christ should be termed "The Lie." First, because his fraudulent claim to be the real Christ will be the greatest falsehood palmed upon humanity. Second, because he is the direct antithesis of the real Christ who is

“The Truth” (John 14:6). Third, because he is the Son of Satan who is the arch-Liar. But to return to John 8:44—“When he (the Devil- speaketh (concerning) The Lie, he speaketh of his own.” His “own” what? His “own” Son—the remainder of the verse makes this very plain—“for he (the Devil) is a Liar and the father of it” i.e., of “The Lie.” The Lie then is Satan’s “Son”! The third Scripture which proves that the Anti-christ will be superhuman is even still plainer. In 2 Thess. 2:3 he is expressly said to be “The Son of Perdition.”

Who is the Anti-christ? He will be a man, a Jew, a supernatural being, the “Seed” of the Serpent, the Son of Perdition. Where is he today? It is possible that even now he may be on the earth, though personally we hardly think this is likely. But if he is not yet born then the unequivocal answer is, He is in the Abyss or Bottomless Pit (Rev. 11:7). This Scripture contains the first reference to “the Beast” in the Revelation. The question naturally arises, How did he get there? and when was he sent there? In answering this question we are well aware that we shall call down upon us the criticism and censure of brethren that we honor and love, yet, notwithstanding, we must again be true to our convictions and faithful in presenting what we believe to be the teaching of Holy Scripture on this solemn and mysterious subject. When was the “Beast” consigned to the Bottomless Pit? We answer, when Judas Iscariot died! The Anti-christ will be Judas Iscariot re-incarnated. The proof for this startling assertion (we may say, a by no means novel one, though our study of this point has been conducted independently) will now be humbly submitted to the critical attention of our readers.

Who was Judas Iscariot? He was the one by whom the Lord of Glory was betrayed. He was a “man” (Matt. 26:24). But was he more than a man? Let Scripture make answer. In John 6:70 we read, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a Devil?” It is hardly necessary to say that in the Greek there are two different words for “Devil” and “demon.” There are many demons but only one Devil. Further, in no other passage is the word “Devil” applied to anyone but to Satan himself. Now here in John 6:70 our Lord says of Judas that he is “ho diabolos” not “daimonizomai”: the definite article is employed—one of you is “the Devil.” Judas then was the Devil incarnate, just as the Lord Jesus was God incarnate. Christ Himself said so, and we dare not doubt His word. Again, in John 17:12 He said, “Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the Son of Perdition.” Here then is the answer of Scripture itself. Who was Judas Iscariot? He was the Devil incarnate; he was the Son of Perdition.

Now let us see how Scripture connects the Anti-christ with Judas and shows that they are one and the same person. In the first place, as we have already pointed out, the first reference to “the Beast” (the Anti-christ) in the Revelation is 11:7, where we read of “the beast that ascendeth out of the Bottomless Pit.” We asked, How and when did he go there? And we answered, at the death of Judas. Have we any Scripture which supports this assertion? We believe so. Mark the language used in Acts 1:25, “That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” Of no one else in all the Bible is it said that at death he went “to his own place.” Put these two Scriptures together—Judas went “to his own place,” the Beast ascends out of the Abyss. Again, in Rev. 17:8 we read, “The Beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the Bottomless Pit, and go into perdition.” This verse is generally understood to refer to the revived Roman Empire and with this interpretation we are in accord, but we believe it is a mistake to limit it to this. In the Apocalypse, the Roman Empire and its final and Satanic Emperor are very closely connected, so much so, that at times it is difficult to distinguish between them. But in Rev. 17 they are distinguishable. In verse 8 we are told that the Beast “shall ascend out of the Bottomless Pit,” and that he shall “go into perdition” In verse 11 we are told, “And the Beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” Now nearly all expositors are agreed that the Beast of verse 11—“the eighth (head, and form of government of the Roman Empire) is the Anti-christ himself; then why not admit the same of verse 8? In

both, the designation is the same—the Beast; and in both, we are told he "goeth into perdition." We take it, then, that what is predicated of "the Beast" in 17:8 is true of both the Roman Empire and of its last head or Emperor (the Anti-christ)—of the former, in the sense that it is infernal in its character. Viewing it now as a declaration of the Anti-christ, what does it tell us about him? Four things. First, he "was." Second, he "is not." Third, he shall "ascend out of the Bottomless Pit." Fourth, he shall "go into perdition." The various time marks here concern the Beast in his relation to the earth. First, he "was" i.e., on the earth. Second, he "is not" i.e. now on the earth (cf. Gen. 5:24, "Enoch was not for God took him," i.e. "was not," any longer on the earth). Third, he shall "ascend out of the Bottomless Pit" (where he now is) which agrees with 11:7. Fourth, he shall "go into perdition." We learn then from this Scripture that at the time the Apocalypse was written that the Beast "was not" then on the earth, but that he had been on it formerly. Further, we learn that in John's day the Beast was then in the Bottomless Pit but should yet ascend out of it. Here then is further evidence that the Anti-christ who is yet to appear has been on earth before! If this is not sufficient to prove that the Anti-christ will be a reincarnation of Judas our next Scripture ought to decide the matter. As we have seen in John 17:12 Christ termed Judas "the Son of Perdition" and in 2 Thess. 2:3 we find that the Man of Sin is similarly designated —"that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition." These are the only two places in all the Bible where this name occurs, is it not clear then that Judas and the Man of Sin are one and the same person? What other conclusion can a simple and unprejudiced reader of the Bible come to? 13

Who is the Anti-christ? We have dwelt upon his mysterious person, and we would now call attention to a number of passages in Scriptures (which the reader will do--will to look up and prayerfully study) in which he is variously denominated and described. He is the "bloody and deceitful man" of Ps. 5:6. He is the "man of the earth" of Ps 10:18. He is the "Head over many countries" of Ps. 110:7. He is the "little horn" of Dan. 7:20-27. He is the "vile person" of Dan. 11:21. He is the "proud man" of Hab. 2:5. He is the rider on the four horses in Rev. 6. He is the "fallen star" of Rev. 9:1. He is the "Beast" of Rev. 13:1-8. He is the "Lawless One" of 2 Thess. 2:8, 9.

As can be well imagined the Scriptures draw a sharp contrast between Christ and the pseudo Christ. It is remarkable how complete the antithesis is. We give a twelve-fold contrast between their various designations. The one is called the Christ (Matt. 16:16), the other the Anti-christ (1 John 4:3). The one is called "the Man of Sorrows" (Is. 53:3, the other "the Man of Sin" (2 Thess. 2:3). The one is called "the Son of God" (John 1:34), the other "the Son of Perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). The numerical value (the gematria) of the name Jesus is 888, the number of the Anti-christ's name is 666 (Rev. 13:18). The one is called the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the other the Seed of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15). The one is called the Lamb (Is. 53:7). the other "the Beast" (Rev. 11:7). Christ is called "the Holy One" (Mark 1:24), the Anti-christ is termed "the Wicked One" (2 Thess. 2:8). The one is called "the Truth" (John 14:6), the other "the Lie" (John 8:44). The one is called "the Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6), the other "the Profane Prince" (Ezek. 21:25). The one is called "the Glorious Branch" (Is. 4:2), the other "the Abominable Branch" (Is. 14:19). The one is called "the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11), the other "the Idol Shepherd" (Zech. 11:17). The one is called "the Mighty Angel" (Rev. 10:1), the other "the Angel of the Bottomless Pit" (Rev. 9:11).

Not only do the Scriptures point a complete contrast between Christ and the Anti-christ in their several names and titles but the same is true in regard to their respective characters and careers. Christ came down from heaven (John 3:13), but the Anti-christ comes up out of the Bottomless Pit (Rev. 11:7). Christ came in Another's name (John 5:43), but the Anti-christ will come in his own name (John 5:43). Christ came to do the Father's will (John 6:38), but the Anti-christ will do his own will (Dan. 11:36). Christ wrought in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke

4:14), but the Anti-christ will be energized by Satan (Rev. 13:4). Christ submitted Himself to God (John 5:30), but the Anti-christ will defy God (2 Thess. 2:4). Christ "humbled" Himself (Phil. 2:8), but the Anti-christ will "exalt" himself (Dan. 11:36). Christ honored the God of His fathers (Luke 4:16), but the Anti-christ will refuse to do so (Dan. 11:37). Christ cleansed the Temple (John 2:14-16), but the Anti-christ will defile the temple (Matt. 24:15). Christ ministered to the needy (Luke 4:18), but the Anti-christ will refuse to do so (Zech. 11:16). Christ was rejected of men (Is. 53:3), but the Anti-christ will be accepted by all the world (Rev. 13:4). Christ "leadeth" His flock (John 10:3), but the Anti-christ will "leave" his flock (Zech. 11:17). Christ was slain for the people (John 11:51), but the Anti-christ will slay the people (Dan. 11:44). Christ glorified God (John 17:4), but the Anti-christ will blaspheme God (Rev. 13:6). Christ was received up into Heaven (Luke 24:51), but the Anti-christ goes down into Hell (Rev. 19:20).

The remarkable career of the Anti-christ is sketched in a number of different Scriptures, some of which we shall now briefly consider. In Daniel 7 the prophet is given a vision of the four great world-empires—Babylonish, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman—which are symbolized by as many "beasts." The fourth beast is described in verse 7—"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces (referring to the conquests under the Caesars), and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it (entirely different in its form of government); and it had ten horns." In verse 24 these "ten horns" are said to be "ten kings that shall arise" which corresponds with Rev. 17:12 where the Roman Empire revived and in its final form is again in view. In Dan. 7:8 we read, "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." The "little horn," which occupies a prominent place in this chapter, symbolizes the Anti-christ who will be the Head of the revived Roman Empire. The part that he will play is described in verses 20 to 26 in this same chapter. "And of the ten horns that were in his head (i.e., of the beast which represents the Roman Empire), and of the other (the Anti-christ) which came up, and before whom three fell (three of the kings); even of that horn that had eyes (symbol of intelligence), and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most high; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom (which looks forward to the Millennium). Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on earth (i.e., the fourth universal kingdom after the Times of the Gentiles had begun), which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns are ten kings that shall arise (in the Tribulation period): and another shall rise after them: and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the Saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they (the "times and laws") shall be given into his hand until a time (a year) and times (two years) and the dividing of time (half a year—three and a half years in all). But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Here we are told, first, that the Anti-christ will "have a mouth speaking very great things: which we know from 2 Thess. 2 refers to his audacious claim to be God Himself. Second, that he will "make war with the saints." These "saints" are the godly Jewish remnant which will refuse to render him homage and in consequence will be slain (cf. Rev. 20:4). Third, he will "speak great words against the Most High" which clearly identifies him with the Man of Sin. Fourth, he will "think (purpose) to change times and laws," the reference being to the religious feasts and festivals of Israel which the Anti-christ will abolish, for everything which bears testimony to God he will seek to destroy. Fifth, his

“dominion” shall be taken away from him, for at the close of the Tribulation period he will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20).

In Daniel 8 the “little horn” is mentioned again. Many regard this “little horn” as symbolizing a different personage from the one brought before us in the previous chapter, and this, because here he is said to arise out of the third kingdom (Greece), whereas in chapter 7 he is seen coming up out of the fourth (the Roman Empire). But this we regard as a mistake. To us, this method of interpretation appears very much like the reasoning of the Jews who of old denied that their Messiah could come out of Nazareth because it was written that He should be born in Bethlehem. Or, to make these two “little horns” separate characters seems to us like the device of the ancient Rabbis who taught there would be two Messiahs, the one suffering Messiah and the other a triumphant Messiah. No; rather do we regard each of the “little horns” as representing the same person, but viewing him in different connections and relationships. That each of the “little horns” do point to the Anti-christ seems clear from a comparison of what is predicted of them with what is said of the Anti-christ in other places.

To quote now from Daniel 8: “And out of one of them came forth a little horn which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land (Palestine). And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground and stamped upon them (probably a symbolical reference to his deposing of certain rulers, corresponding with the plucking up of the “three kings” in the previous chapter). Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away (which action clearly identifies him with the Anti-christ), and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced and prospered” (vss 9-12). Here again the Anti-christ is seen subduing governmental powers and enlarging his own kingdom. Here again we see him inflated with egotism—“magnifying himself,” which is a characteristic mark of all the prophecies which describe the Anti-christ, a mark by which we are enabled to identify him. And here again we see him opposing the Jews, and destroying that which bears witness to God—“taking away the daily sacrifice.”

In Dan. 11:36-45 we have another prophetic picture of the character and career of the Anti-christ. We do not quote the whole of this passage but merely the first two and last verses of it. “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself (the last two words showing that he is the same character as symbolized by the “little horn”—compare 8:11) above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods (cf. 7:25). and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” Here we are told the Anti-christ will be a “king.” He will be king of the Jews and king over the restored Roman Empire in its ten-kingdomed form. He will be a king of kings. His blatant impiety is pointed out in the words “he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself against every god.” The words “Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers” call attention to his Jewish nationality. “Nor the Desire of women” (cf. Haggai 2:7) is a Hebraism for the Messiah. The birth of the Messiah was the great hope of Israel and every Jewish maiden desired above everything else to have the honor of being the mother of the promised One. The Anti-christ then will deny both the Father and the Son (see 1 John 2:22). The closing verse refers to his destruction.

In 2 Thess. 2 we also read, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day (the day of Christ—the Millennium) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is

called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. ** For the Mystery of Iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth (restraineth) will let (restrain), until He (the Holy Spirit) be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (to the earth itself) even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and will all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, they that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the Lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vss. 3, 4, 7-12). Incredible as it may seem, Satan will be permitted to travesty the miracle of Bethlehem. Observe that the incarnation of the Son of God is termed "the mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16) while, above, the incarnation of the Son of Perdition is styled "the mystery of iniquity." Satan is going to send forth his own son into this world, born under supernatural circumstances and combining in his person the human and Satanic natures. The daring blasphemy of the coming Anti-christ is also mentioned again. He will "sit in the Temple" a re-built Temple in Jerusalem "shewing himself that he is God." He will assume the place and prerogatives of the true Christ, will in fact claim to be Christ Himself. His audacious claim will be supported by imposing credentials, for he will work miracles by which he will deceive the whole world, Apostate Christendom, previously "spued out" by Christ (Rev. 3:16) will be given over by God to believe the Lie, that is, they will be completely deceived and will readily accept the Anti-christ as the Lord Jesus. But his end is sure. The Lord shall "consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming."

One other Scripture must suffice. In Rev. 13 we read, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the Dragon (the Devil) gave him (the Anti-christ) his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the Beast. And they worshipped the Dragon which gave power unto the Beast: and they worshipped the Beast, saying, Who is like unto the Beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (vss. 1-8).

The last quoted Scripture is a case in point where it is difficult to distinguish between the kingdom and its king, the empire and its emperor. The "beast" which is here seen rising out of the "sea" symbolizes the revival and restoration of the old Roman Empire and corresponds with Daniel's fourth beast. In Scripture the "sea" figures the restless nations away from God. Revelation 13 contemplates a time of political upheaval and social disturbance. Out of revolutionary conditions will issue the revived Roman Empire, the last head of which will be the Anti-christ. Many students of prophecy regard the head of this Empire as another person than the Anti-christ. It is supposed there will be two men on earth at this time, the one controlling political affairs, the other dominating the religious realm. But we fail to see anything in Scripture which justifies this distinction. On the contrary, it seems most in accord with analogy to believe that just as the Lord Jesus will yet combine these offices and functions, so the pseudo christ will fill this double role. 14 It is true there will be two Satanic characters on earth during the

Tribulation period and the second of these if brought before us in the second "Beast" of Rev. 13. This second Beast we regard as the "False Prophet" of Rev. 19:20; 20:10. He is the third person in the Trinity of Evil. That the Second Beast of Rev. 13 is Satan's parody of the Holy Spirit (the Third Person in the Holy Trinity) rather than of Christ Himself, seems clear from what is here predicted of him. Just as the Holy Spirit "speaks not of Himself" (John 16:13) but is here to glorify Christ, so the second Beast causes men to worship the first Beast. And just as the advent of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by the descent of tongues of fire (Acts 2:3), so this second Beast "maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men" (13:13). Finally, that the second Beast (and not the first) is the "False Prophet" is abundantly clear from Rev. 19:20 where we are told, "And the Beast was taken, and with him the False Prophet that wrought miracles before him with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the Beast, and them that worshipped his image." The marks of identity here are so plain that it seems impossible to mistake them. In Rev. 13 it is the second Beast that "deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the Beast;" and here in Rev. 19 it is the False Prophet that is said to have "wrought miracles before him" with which he deceived the Beast's worshipers. Hence we unhesitatingly affirm that the False Prophet is the Second Beast of Rev. 13.

We do not now attempt a full interpretation of the symbolical description of the Anti-christ contained in what is said above of the first Beast, a hint here and there is all we shall essay. The Anti-christ will combine in his personality the characteristics of the leopard (beauty and subtlety) of the bear (strength and cruelty), and of the lion (boldness and ferocity). He will be vested with full power and authority from Satan as the Lord Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit. He will compel the admiration of the whole world and will be universally worshipped. He will be a warrior of international renown and none will be able to resist his terrible power. But his career will be cut short: after his rise to full power only forty-two months, or three and a half years, will be allowed him by God.

Putting together the various Scriptures at which we have little more than glanced, we learn that the Anti-christ will be a supernatural being—the Son of Perdition; that he will be revealed subsequent to the departure of the Holy Spirit from the earth (which occurs at the Rapture of the saints); that he will be the greatest soul-destroyer that has ever trod this earth. He will be the Super-Man for whom the world is already looking. He will personify all the godless culture of the last days, and will be endowed with a supernatural wisdom. He will be the consummation of vileness—"the Wicked One;" he will be the personification of evil—"the Man of Sin;" he will be the incarnation of the Devil—"the Son of Perdition." He will pose as the Christ of God and will substantiate his claims by performing wonderful miracles. He will be welcomed and cordially received by all Christendom. He will utterly deceive the majority of the Jews who will hail him as their long-expected Messiah. He will rule over a restored Roman Empire thus travestying Christ who, in the Millennium, will sit as a priest upon His throne. He will be a warrior of world-wide renown, a statesman of unrivaled skill, a man of transcendent genius, before whom the exploits of Caesar, Charlemagne and Napoleon will appear trifling. Kings will be his toys and thrones his playthings. Toward the close of his reign he will throw off his mask, no longer assuming to be the real Christ, but standing forth in his own colors he will deny both God the Father and God the Son, will seek to exterminate the Jews and everything else which bears witness to the living God; will set up his own image in the rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem, and under pain of death will compel all to worship it and receive his mark upon their bodies. But he will meet with summary judgment at the end, as we shall yet see. We turn now to consider,

5. The Situation of the Jews during this Period.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the declarations of Holy Writ make it very clear that Israel will yet be restored to God's favor and be rehabilitated in Palestine. But before that glad time arrives, the Jews have to pass through a season of sore trouble and affliction, during which God severely chastises them for their sins and punishes them for the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah. Fearful indeed have been the past experiences of "the nation of the weary feet" but a darker path than ever yet lies before them. Their cruel bondage in Egypt, their captivity in Babylon, and their grievous handling by Titus, were but faint foreshadowings of what they shall yet be called upon to undergo. In Jer. 30:4-7 we read—"And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the Time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." This Time of Jacob's Troubles was described in part when, in answer to His disciples' question concerning the end of the age, our Lord said, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end (of the Tribulation period which terminates the Age), the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:9-13).

It has also been pointed out that considerable numbers of the Jews have recently turned their faces Zionward and returned to the land of their fathers, but before the revelation and rise of the Anti-christ to temporal power, many others will also have returned to Palestine. This is clear from Dan. 9:27, where we learn that Anti-christ (the "prince" or head of the restored Roman Empire) will ratify a treaty with Israel for seven years, under which he guarantees them protection and allows them to rebuild their Temple and restore its ancient ritual. It is to this Covenant between Anti-christ and the Jews that Is. 28:18 refers, "And your covenant with Death (a title of Anti-christ, in contradistinction to the true Christ who is "the Life") shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it (probably a reference to Zech. 14:1, 2).** For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, He shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act." It is to be noted that this "Covenant" between Anti-christ and Israel is established during the early part of his reign, or certainly, at the very commencement of Daniel's seventieth week (see Dan. 9:24-27—a most important passage), while he is posing as the true Christ and before he throws off his mask and denies both the Father and the Son. It is in the midst of this final seven years that he openly defied heaven and earth, breaks his covenant with the Jews in Palestine, causes their sacrifices to cease and in their place demands that they shall set up an image to himself which, like Nebuchadnezzar and his image, he will require to be worshipped by all under pain of death. It is to the setting up of this "image" in the Temple that our Lord had reference when He said, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation (for the meaning of "abomination" see 1 Kings 11:5-7—it is an "image" to a false god), spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whose readeth, let him understand). Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: For then shall be (the) great Tribulation such as was not

from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh he saved: but for the elect's sake (i.e. for the sake of the godly Jewish remnant) those days shall be shortened." The above Scripture is a warning from our Lord to the godly Jews who will be on earth subsequent to the Rapture of the Church, and who are informed that when they see Anti-christ's image set up in their re-built Temple then let them know the time for the outpouring of God's wrath is at hand. The part of wisdom for them in that day will be to flee from Jerusalem lest they share its judgment. Be it noted it is those who read—i.e., the Holy Scriptures, and particularly Daniel and the Revelation who will "understand." Following this timely warning--by which, doubtless, many godly Jews will profit in that day—our Lord continues, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false christs and false prophets (observe false "prophets" as well as false christs; and note the order—false christs which is headed up in the Anti-christ the first "beast" of Rev. 13, and "false prophets" which is headed up in the False Prophet the second "beast" of Rev. 13!), and shall show great signs and wonders (even make the "image" speak, see Rev. 13:15; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect (but it will not be possible, for the elect will "read" and "understand"). Behold, I have told you before" (vss. 23-25).

A small minority of the Jews (typified by the three "Hebrew children" in the days of Nebuchadnezzar), a godly remnant, will refuse to receive the Beast and worship his image and, in consequence, will be subjected to fierce persecution. This pious "remnant" forms the subject of numerous Old Testament prophecies. We single out but one—"In that day (the Tribulation period) shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against Me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of My holy mountain. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies (profess allegiance to The Lie): for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid"(Zech. 3:11-13, and cf. Is. 10:20, 21; Joel 2:32; 3:1, 2 etc.). Many of the Jews who comprise this remnant will be slain by the Anti-christ, but at least 144,000 of them (see Rev. 7) will be miraculously preserved by God. Jehovah will undertake for them as He did for the three "Hebrew children" of old. Then it shall be seen that "He that dwelleth in the secret place (compare Rev. 12:6!!) of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Then will they find the Lord their "refuge" and "fortress." And then will be fulfilled His promise—"Surely He shall deliver thee from the Snare of the Fowler (the Anti-christ), and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust." And then will they behold with their eyes and "see the reward of the Wicked One" (see the whole of Ps. 91). Many of the Psalms record the experiences and prayers of the godly Jewish remnant during this period: see Psalms 10 (which vividly pictures the Anti-christ), 37 (which contains words of admonition and encouragement for them; see especially verse 10!) 43 (note verse 1!), 44 (which reveals their hope in God, 55 (and note particularly verses 20, 21!), 74 (and note verse 10!), 80 (their cry for deliverance, etc.) We may add that many of the later Psalms view Israel in the Millennium.

It is during the Tribulation period that Elijah the prophet returns to the earth and Mal. 4:5, 6 is fulfilled—"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming the the great and dreadful day of the Lord (i.e. before the final three and a half years); and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." Doubtless Elijah is one of the "two witnesses" of Rev. 11 who testify for God twelve hundred and sixty days in Jerusalem; after which they are slain, resurrected, and translated to heaven. At the close of the Tribulation period Anti-christ marshals his forces and goes up to besiege Jerusalem, and this leads us to consider,

6. The Battle of Armageddon.

The Battle of Armageddon! What extravagant speculations have been indulged concerning it! What unscriptural theories have been entertained respecting it! To begin with; this appears from the term employed. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of "The Battle of Armageddon." The Scriptural expression is "The Battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). This Battle of the great day of God Almighty will bring the Tribulation period to a close and will witness the return of Christ to the earth to usher in the Millennium. This "Battle" is the subject of numerous prophecies, several of which we shall briefly examine.

The Battle of that great day of God Almighty will terminate the most blatant movement of all in the impious career of the Anti-christ. After he has thrown off the mask, denied both the Father and the Son and openly defied Heaven, he will seek to exterminate everything which either directly or indirectly witnesses to God. His first effort in this direction is brought before us in Rev. 17:16—"And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the Beast (the "ten kings" vs. 12), these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire"—in other words, completely abolish her. Who this "whore" is we learn in the previous verses. It is "Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (vs. 5). It is the Papacy, which before this time will have succeeded in gathering within its fold the whole of apostate Christendom. After the Rapture of the Church, the whole of Christendom will render allegiance to the Pope who will still claim to be Christ's "vicar" on earth. Then it is that "the whole" of the three measures of meal will be completely leavened (Matt. 13:33). At first, Christendom (the "Whore") will be supported by the Beast (Rev. 17:3), but at the end he will turn against her and cause his ten satellites to bring about her destruction. Having accomplished the destruction of the one system in Europe which still professed the name of Christ, the Son of Perdition will then turn his attention toward Palestine where the last witness of God on earth will be found. The godly remnant of the Jews will still refuse to worship him. This enrages the Beast and he gathers together his forces and leads them against the Holy Land in a determined attempt to annihilate those who dare to defy him, in fact it would seem from several Scriptures that the Gentiles headed by the Man of Sin will aim at the complete destruction of all of David's descendants. Unknown to himself, however, he will be but carrying out the eternal purpose of God—"Now also many nations are gathered against thee (the daughter of Zion), that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion, But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel, for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor" (Micah 4:11, 12). The time for God to take vengeance on the nations who have flocked to the banner of the Anti-christ has come, and He employs the Beast to concentrate his forces so that He may pour out His wrath upon them—"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy might ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down: for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more" (Joel 3:9-17).

But to go back a little. Unknown to himself, it is the Lord, who shall cause the Anti-christ to

assemble his forces in Palestine where they shall both meet their just doom. But at first the evil project of the Beast will appear to succeed. He besieges Jerusalem and captures it—"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished: and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (Zech. 14:1, 2). Jerusalem falls and its people are led forth captives. The success of the Anti-christ seems complete. The last witness against the Beast now appears to be silenced. But his triumph will be short-lived. As the above prophecy continues, "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem" (vss. 3, 4). The Anti-christ has now to meet One with whom he cannot cope, yet, incredible as it may appear, he will make the attempt. Just as of old, Pharaoh gathered his chariots together and went forth against Israel, though he knew that Jehovah was with them, so shall his great Anti-type gather his forces to "make war with the Lamb" (Rev. 17:14). The last desperate movement of the Beast will be a determined effort to prevent the Lord Jesus returning to the earth itself. It is to this Psalm 2 refers—"Why do the nations tumultuously assemble, and the people meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Christ, saying, Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (vss. 1-6). God is about to set His King upon Mount Zion, and the Anti-christ will gather all of his forces together in the vain attempt to frustrate the Divine purpose. At the head of his armies, the Beast marches forth in open hostility against God—"And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:16) which is explained in Rev. 19:19—"And I saw the Beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army." The daring challenge of the Beast is accepted. The heavens open and Christ appears in flaming fire (cf. Matt. 24:27) ready to take vengeance. As it is written, "In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open Mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem (i.e. the "residue" of 14:2); and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (Zech. 12:3, 4, 6-9). How all this will be accomplished we shall see under our last heading, namely,

7. The Return of Christ to the earth itself.

If to-day the presence of the Lord on earth is urgently needed, how much greater will be this need at the close of the Tribulation period! The Anti-christ in full power, openly blaspheming and blatantly defying God! All the world worshipping this Son of Perdition and branded with his mark on their foreheads or in their hands as token of their allegiance to him! The godly remnant of the Jews in the very last extremity and crying, "Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still O God. For, lo, Thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones (the remnant in the "secret place" of Ps. 91:1; the "prepared place" of Rev. 12:6). They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent; they are confederate against Thee" (Ps. 83:1-5! All the forces of the Beast gathered together in a last daring effort to prevent the Lord Jesus coming back to this earth and entering into His inheritance! But now has struck the appointed hour of retribution. Now shall the Lord come "with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14:15). Yes, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

A full length picture of our returning Lord is found in Rev. 19, a picture awful in its solemnity and fearful in its vividness. Let us sit down before it and study it in detail. "And I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11). Every word here calls for close attention.

Our Lord comes seated upon a "white horse."

The Greek word intimates a-war-horse or "charger." Note its color. In Scripture, colors are used emblematically. Here, "white" is the fitting emblem of the Rider's spotless purity and unsullied holiness. Everything in the passage we are now examining is in marked contrast to our Lord's first Advent. Then He was seen, meek and lowly, seated upon the back of an ass. But now He is coming back to the earth for a different work from that which He performed when He was here before. He returns now for the purpose of subduing wickedness, to destroy evil doers, to overthrow Anti-christ and to remove Satan from these scenes. Hence, in keeping with His mission, He appears seated upon a white war-charger! "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the scepter of Thy Kingdom is a right scepter" (Ps. 45:3-6).

He Comes as the "Faithful and True."

This is in vivid contrast from the abounding unfaithfulness of men. He comes now faithful to His promises and true to His threatenings. To-day, men may single out those parts of His teachings which accord with their own sentiments, and reject and deny His solemn threatenings of judgment against the unbelieving; but, in that day, it shall be seen that He is Faithful and True to every word He uttered, whether of promise or of threatening.

He comes back again as "Judge."

Here we have another striking contrast. When he was here before, wicked men dared to arraign Him. He was brought before the judgment-bar of Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod. But now the tables shall be turned. He Himself shall be the Judge. God hath "appointed a day in the

which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). And now the appointed "Day" (the Millennium) has dawned; the ordained Man is at hand. Observe it is said, "In righteousness He doth judge" (Rev. 19:11). This also points a contrast. He was judged un-righteously. No charge could be preferred against Him. He was guiltless; even His judge had to acknowledge "I find no fault in Him;" and yet he sentenced Him to death! How un-righteous! But in marked contrast, our Lord shall judge "in righteousness:" nought but Justice shall He dispense.

He comes to make war!

Ah! once our blessed Lord ministered to the needy, fed the hungering multitude, healed the sick, gave peace to the burdened conscience. Beforetime, He invited the heavy-laden to come to Him for rest. But here all is changed. Now He comes seated upon a war-charger, and with the express purpose of making war. At the Red Sea, where Jehovah destroyed Pharaoh, and his hosts, Israel sang "The Lord is a Man of War" (Ex. 15:3), and now has struck the hour when this shall be demonstrated as never before. He returns to earth with the deliberate design of shedding the blood of His enemies.

"And His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called the Word of God" (Rev. 19:12, 13).

He comes with flashing and flaming eyes.

When He was upon earth before, those eyes had oft-times shone with tenderness, as when the children were attracted to Him; had glowed with compassion, as when a single look upon guilty Peter melted his heart and caused him to go out and weep bitterly; yea, they had been filled with tears, as when He stood by the graveside of Lazarus and when He wept over the Jerusalem which had rejected Him. But here they flash and flame like fire. Now shall they be seen as the eyes of One who is thoroughly aroused with holy indignation. But not only do those flaming eyes express His anger, they also show forth His omniscience. Those flaming eyes shall pierce through every veil of hypocrisy and scorch into the very soul of His enemies. They will act as a veritable searchlight, penetrating to the thoughts and intents of the heart.

He comes with head decked with many crowns.

This, again, is in vivid contrast to the days of old. Once that holy brow was covered with sweat of agony so intense that it was as it were great drops of blood. Once that head was crowned with thorns—the symbol of the Curse. But here it shall be crowned with glory and honor. He comes forth now, not as the lowly Sufferer, but as the victorious Conquer vested with complete authority. "Many crowns" observe, for in that day He shall be King not only of the Jews, but King of the Gentiles as well—King of kings. All the world shall then be compelled to bow before Him and submit to His universal sovereignty.

He comes with a Name known to none save Himself.

In Scripture names express nature—what a person or thing is. So here. Christ has a name which no creature can fathom. That is to say, His Person is incomprehensible; there are mysterious depths in Him which no finite mind can grasp.

He comes with a vesture dipped in blood.

At first sight this seems to suggest a comparison rather than a contrast, but the verses which follow show that it is another of those sharp antitheses with which this passage abounds. Once His raiment had been crimsoned by the flowing of His own blood, but now, alas! it is from the blood of others. He was lifted up that men might shed His blood, but now He descends that He might shed their blood.

He comes, denominated the Word of God.

We are told this so that there may be no possibility of mistaking Him. This title serves to identify Him and connects the two Advents. He is here designated by His Eternal and Divine

name. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). He is no longer called by His name “Jesus” which means “Saviour,” but is termed “the Word of God” which points to the dignity, majesty, and glory of His Person. The use of this Divine title in the present connection is deeply significant. When He was here before He came in weakness and shame: it was His Humanity that was most prominent; but when He comes back again to this earth, He shall return in irresistible power and great glory, and His Deity will be most conspicuous.

“And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:15, 16).

He comes to smite the nations with a Sword that goeth out of His mouth.

Here again we have another contrast. When He was here before, He spoke words of blessing and cheer: He came not to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. But now all is changed. The “Sword” which proceedeth out of His mouth is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). Throughout the centuries of this Dispensation He has sent forth His Word that it may slay sin in men, but in that day He shall send His word that it may slay men in sin. In the days of His humiliation, His mouth was opened to bless men, now it shall be opened to curse and slay them. It is the fulfillment of Isaiah 11:4—“And He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.” It marks the ease with which He performs His purposes: he speaks, and it is done; He gives the command, and it is accomplished. Something of this was pre-intimated on the occasion of His arrest in the Garden (John 18). When the soldiers came to take Him, He said, “Whom seek ye?” and they replied, “Jesus of Nazareth,” and we read, “Jesus said unto them. I am** and as soon as He had said unto them I am, they went backward and fell to the ground”! If so mild an utterance prostrated His enemies then, what will it be when He girds Himself for judgment!

He comes to rule the nations with a Rod of Iron.

How different this is to the popular conception of the “Gentle Jesus”! Human sentimentality has pictured our blessed Lord as being so tender that He will never find in His heart to punish sin and slay the workers of iniquity. For the most part, the world today hears from the pulpit only a one-sided presentation of the character of God—that side which is most agreeable to man in his fallen condition. But God is not only Love, He is Light; not only is He Merciful; He is Holy and Righteous. Because He is holy He cannot ignore sin, yea, “He can by no means clear the guilty.” The claims of His Throne must be maintained, even though a thousand worlds be destroyed. Long has God dealt with our race in wondrous grace and infinite patience, and evilly have men repaid Him. But when Christ returns to the earth, the Dispensation of grace will have ended and He comes back, no longer inviting voluntary allegiance, but to compel obedience. The insignia of the returning Lord shall be the Iron Rod. Iron was the symbol and emblem of the Roman Empire, and stood for restless power, rigid rule, and indomitable government. History shows us what it meant to be crushed beneath “the iron heel of the Romans.” And “iron,” the Iron Rod and rule, will be the fitting emblem of Christ’s government in that day when He returns to crush the head of the Serpent, subdue His enemies and put down all opposition.

He comes to tread the Winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

This is the fulfillment of the prophetic word of Isaiah—“Who is this that goeth from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore are Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like Him that treadeth the winepress? I have troden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me: for I will tread them in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all

My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and the year of My redeemed is come.** And I will tread down the people in Mine anger, and make them drunk in My fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth" (Is. 63:1-6). Unspeakably dreadful will be the carnage for we are told, "The winepress was trodden without the city (Jerusalem) and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horses bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs" (that is, 200 miles!) (Rev. 14:20). Yes, terrible shall be the slaughter, but who shall say it was not fully merited and demanded. Mercy had been slighted and abused. A "murderer" had again been preferred above the Lord of life. God Himself was being openly blasphemed. And now the Executioner steps forth. This is the hour promised Him by the Father, that His enemies shall be made His "footstool" (Ps. 110:1)!

He comes followed by "armies."

"And the armies which were in Heaven followed Him upon white horses clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. 19:14). The "armies" that follow the Divine Warrior will be made up by both the Old Testament and New Testament saints. Those armies are not "angels" as some teach, though these "armies" will certainly be accompanied by angels as we learn from 2 Thess. 1:7. That the "armies" are not angels appears from Jude 14, where those who accompany the Captain of their salvation are denominated "saints" a term which is never applied to angels; and also from Rev. 17:14, where those that are "with Him" are styled "called and chosen and faithful"—language which is applicable to none save the children of God. The saints who are one with Christ, then made "like Him," will fully share His feelings and participate in His victory, though He alone will do the fighting.

He comes to overthrow the Anti-christ and his legions.

The issue of this battle, the Battle of that great day of God Almighty (popularly but unscripturally called "Armageddon") is never in doubt. Its issue is fore-announced. A call is given to the fowls of the air to devour the carcasses of the slain before the battle begins—"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of Kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great" (Rev. 19:17, 18). It is to this same terrible event the prophet Ezekiel bore witness, "Thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto the feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to My slaughter that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God. And I will set My glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward" (Ezek. 39:17-22). But to continue, and complete our review of Rev. 19.

"And I saw the Beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the Beast was taken, and with him the False Prophet that wrought miracles before him, and with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the Beast, and them that worshipped his image. Those both were cast alive into the Lake of Fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Rev. 19:19-21). Comment is needless. The Anti-christ and the False Prophet are both cast into the Lake of Fire where, a thousand years later, Satan shall join

them. 15 The awful but richly deserved fate which overtakes the armies of the Anti-christ is dramatically portrayed in Zech. 14—“And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour” (vss. 12, 13). Thus will end the present Age. What a termination! What a climax! What consummation of wickedness! This is the goal—now so near at hand—toward which all our boasted enlightenment, progress, and civilization is headed. The end will witness all Christendom (minus the Body of Christ, previously raptured) in organized and open revolt and rebellion against Almighty God, to be utterly destroyed at the Redeemer’s Return.

Chapter Ten

The Consummation Of The Redeemer's Return

or

The Millennial Reign

It should now be evident to every unprejudiced reader that there are two distinct stages in the Second Coming of Christ:—His coming to the air, and His coming to the earth; His coming for the saints, and His coming with the saints. The first great purpose before Him in connection with His return is to receive His people unto Himself. Just as of old God translated Enoch to Heaven before He sent the Deluge upon the ungodly, so will the Church be removed from this earth before the vials of His wrath are poured out upon it. The second great purpose before the Lord Jesus will be to return to the earth itself, there to set up His Kingdom and reign in righteousness, and it is the nature, the scope, the blessedness, and the duration of this Kingdom-reign which is now to engage our attention.

In popular parlance the era of the Messiah's reign is referred to as the "Millennium" which is a compound word signifying a thousand years. From the remotest antiquity men have longed for and talked of a Golden Age, of an age in which righteousness and peace should prevail, and oppression and war should cease. Poets have sung of it, politicians have dreamed about it, and inspired prophets have described it. This era of blessedness is variously denominated in the Scriptures. It is termed "the Regeneration" (Matt. 19:28); the "Last Day" (John 6:40); the "Times of Refreshing" (Acts 3:19); the "Times of Restitution" (Acts 3:21); the "Kingdom" (1 Cor. 15:24); the "day of Christ" (Phil. 1:6); the "Dispensation of the Fullness of Times" (Eph. 1:10).

There are more Scriptures which treat of the Millennium or Kingdom-age than perhaps any other one subject in the Bible. The difficulty is to classify them all. For purpose of simplification we shall now consider the Millennium under seven heads, namely, the Millennium in relation to Satan, to Christ, to the Church, to Israel, to the World, to Creation, and to Sin.

1. The millennium in relation to Satan.

In our last chapter we saw that Christ descends from Heaven to find an organized effort to prevent him coming back to the earth. Under the leadership of Anti-christ, the kings of the earth with their armies assemble together at Armageddon with the express purpose of making war upon the Lamb (Rev. 17:14). It is in connection with this impious revolt that we read, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" (Ps. 2:4), laugh at their folly and madness, "The Lord shall have them in derision." As well might a worm seek to resist the tread of an elephant as the creature hope to succeed against the Almighty. As well attempt to roll back the ocean as aim to frustrate the counsels of the Most High. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed and who shall dis-annul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Is. 14:27). A short work will our Lord make of the proud rebels—"And the Beast was taken, and with him the False Prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the Beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into the Lake of Fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:19). This accounts for two of the persons in the Trinity of Evil. But one other still remains to be dealt with. Before the Messiah's Kingdom can be set up, the great Usurper must first be cast out.

There can be no thousand years of righteousness and peace on earth while the great Enemy of God and man is at large. Post-millenarians, who expect the Kingdom to be brought in by the preaching of the Gospel and the activities of the Church, and Peace-idealists and Social-reformers who look for a Golden Age to be brought about by legislation and civilization, all leave out of their schemes and considerations one dominating factor, namely, the Devil. Behind all anti-christian systems back of all the inveterate opposition to the Gospel, beneath all the evil and wickedness which stalks rampant through the earth, is that old Serpent, the Devil. And nothing finite can remove him. Nothing human can disturb him. None on earth can bind him. Man is incompetent to cope with his mighty adversary. Legislation cannot reach him, and the Church is powerless to rid the world of his awful presence. The only One who is mightier than he, is God—the Almighty, and there can be no Golden Age, until the Son of God Himself returns in person and removes and imprisons the Arch-Foe.

The removal of Satan from this earth is described in Rev. 20:1-3, "and I saw an angel 16 come down from heaven, having the key of the Bottomless Pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the Dragon, that old Serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the Bottomless Pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfilled." Satan will be "bound" which is the fulfillment of our Lord's word in Matt. 12:29—"How can one enter a "strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." The "strong man" is our , the Devil' his "house" is the children of this world, in contradistinction to the children of God who are the "House" of Christ (Heb. 3:6); the "binding" of the Strong Man is described in the Passage quoted above from Rev. 20; the "spoiling of his house" is the delivering of his captives (see Is. 42:7). Satan will be "cast into the Bottomless Pit" which is the fulfillment of Is. 14—"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the Pit" (vss. 12-15). Satan will be shut up in the Bottomless Pit and a "seal" shall be set upon him, which is God's answer to that which we read of in Matt. 27:66, "So they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch—what he has sown that he also reap. Thus will terminate that struggle which has lasted for six thousand years, a struggle which has

been waged for the dominion of the earth.

At last the “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8) will have been overcome, overcome by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The Man with the bruised heel will have crushed the Serpent’s head, and the word spoken in Eden will then be fully accomplished. And who can describe or even imagine the blessed consequences! No more shall the brethren be accused before God (Rev. 12:10). No more shall the daughters of Abraham be “bound, lo, these eighteen years” (Luke 13:16). No more shall satan tempt and try, harass and hinder the saints of God. For a thousand years the earth shall be rid of the Evil One and in his place there shall come “Times of Refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” And this leads us to consider,

2. The Millennium in relation to Christ.

It has been divinely ordained that our Lord should fill three great offices—the Prophetic, the Priestly, and the Kingly. As Prophet, He acts as God's Spokesman: revealing God's mind, communicating God's will, unveiling God's heart. As Priest, He acts as Mediator between God and men, and by means of His atoning sacrifice He reconciles believers to God, represents His peoples' interests before God, interceding for them and pleading their cause. As King, He will reign over men, enforcing God's laws, and upholding on earth the claims of His Throne. It is of Christ as King we shall now speak.

Toward the close of David's reign, the word of the Lord came to Nathan, bidding him go to the king and, among other things, tell him, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His Kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. 7:12, 13). At a later date, in one of the great Messianic prophecies, it was announced concerning our Lord that "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Is. 9:6, 7). Hence it is that the very first verse of the New Testament reads, "The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, (thus linking Him with Israel's throne) the son of Abraham."

Just before our Lord was born, an angel appeared unto Mary and said, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever: and of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:30-33).

Sometime during our Lord's infancy certain wise men, who were led by a star, came to Jerusalem (the royal city), asking, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" (Matt. 2:2). Our Lord, then, was born King of the Jews, but as the inspired Word informs us, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Israel would not own Him; instead, they cried, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). And when Pilate wrote an inscription and placed it over the Cross—"This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," they desired him to alter it and substitute, "He said I am King of the Jews" (John 19:21), which is further proof that the Jews had rejected Him as their King.

It was announced then, in Old Testament prophecy, and confirmed by the angel to Mary, that our Lord should occupy the throne of David. In order to the fulfillment of this our Lord, according to the flesh, sprang from one who was a lineal descendant of David, and therefore, He was born "King of the Jews." But as we have seen, Israel rejected their King and crucified Him. And what we now desire to emphasize is, that, Jesus Christ has never yet assumed the Kingship! On the contrary, He taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come." Furthermore, He said, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom, and to return.** And it came to pass that when He was returned, having received the Kingdom" etc. (Luke 19:12-15). Christ's receiving of the Kingdom and His return synchronize (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1). Christ, then, is not King today, for He has not yet received the Kingdom, nor has He yet occupied the throne of His father David. Nowhere in the Epistles do we find Him denominated "The King of the Church." Jesus Christ is Saviour of the Church, Lord of the Church, Head of the Church, but He is not King of the Church, for He has not yet entered upon His Kingly office, and He will not do so until the beginning of the Millennium. In the Millennium Christ will rule and reign over the earth, not only as King of the Jews, but as King of kings and Lord of lords. It is

then that the prophecy of Zechariah shall be fulfilled ‘ “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day (a yet future day—see the context) shall there be one Lord, and His name one” (Zech. 14:9). Our Lord’s Kingship over all the earth leads us to the consideration of another important line of truth.

When Adam was created God said, “Let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion.” At the beginning, earth’s scepter was committed into the hands of man (see Ps. 8:4-8). But right on the scene of his creation came one who disputed Adam’s right to earth’s sovereignty, and who succeeded in wresting the scepter from his hands. Satan brought to bear upon him a diabolical temptation: Adam succumbed, and falling, he forfeited his dominion over the earth. As the consequence, Satan became “The Prince of this world,” and as such approached our Lord in the temptation, when he took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and “sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:8, 9). But on the Cross, the Lord Jesus re-gained the scepter which Adam lost; and here is the key to Rev. 5.

In the fifth chapter of the Apocalypse a remarkable scene is brought before us. The beloved apostle sees a book—“written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals”—in the right hand of Him that sat on the Throne. Then he hears an angel saying, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” Next we are told, “And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.” Many have been the conjectures concerning this mysterious “book,” but by comparing Scripture with Scripture we think there can be no doubt as to what is here in view. In Jer. 32:6-15 we read of a field being bought, and the receipt (the “evidence”) of the purchase is termed a “book,” and this book was “sealed.” It is to a similar transaction that Rev. 5 refers. The book seen by the apostle contains the title deeds to this earth. These title deeds which Adam lost have been recovered by Christ. They have been recovered by “purchase,” and the price paid was the precious blood of the Lamb. In Matt. 13:44 we read of a Man who “goeth and selleth all that He hath, and buyeth that field” and in verse 38 of the same chapter we are told “The field is the world.” Hence it is that the apostle was told, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev. 5:5). What is seen in vision in Rev. 5 becomes actual fact when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth. It will be at that time the “purchased possession”—the earth—is “redeemed” (Eph. 1:14). Hence, when He comes back, His first act will be to eject Satan from it, establish His Kingdom upon it, and exercise “dominion” over it.

Another Scripture which throws light upon the Millennium in relation to Christ is 1 Peter 1:13. Here the second coming of our Lord (to the earth) is termed, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” This is in contrast to the first advent. When He was here before, His Divine glory was veiled and much of His power and majesty were concealed. But when He comes back again His Divine glory shall be fully manifested. Instead of appearing as the gentle Lamb, He will come as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Instead of standing before human tribunals to be judged of men, He will summon all nations before Him and sit in judgment upon them. Instead of appearing in humiliation, weakness, and shame, He will be revealed in regal power and majesty. Instead of coming to be the Victim, He will return as the Victor, to sit upon the Throne of His Glory. So, then, the Millennium is the time when our Lord enters into the exercise of His Kingly office, when He will reign in power and exercise dominion over all the earth, and when His personal Glory shall be fully manifested. We turn now to consider,

3. The Millennium in relation to the Church.

As we have seen in previous chapters, it is at the first stage of Christ's second coming that the Church is removed from earth. At the Redeemer's descent from Heaven, the Church, like Enoch and Elijah, is miraculously caught up, caught up to meet the Lord in the air and evermore shall it be with its glorious Head. Therefore, when the Saviour returns to the earth, the Church will accompany Him. This is clear from Col. 3:4 and Jude 14, so often quoted in these pages.

Exactly what part the Church will play during the Millennium it is not easy to say. Few details are revealed. A moment's reflection will show why this is the case. It is in the Old Testament that the Millennium receives the fullest consideration, whereas the Church is the subject of New Testament revelation. Moreover, we must remember that the Millennium is the time when God's Kingdom is revealed on earth, whereas the Church is a Heavenly creation, and has a heavenly citizenship and destiny (Phil. 3:20; 1 Pet. 1:4). Nevertheless, one or two things are sure. The Church will be with Christ throughout the Millennium, and not only so, the saints will reign with Him—"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on (or "over") the earth(Rev. 5:9, 10). And again we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years"(Rev. 20:6). Who can picture the blessed accomplishment of this promise! For two thousand years the saints have (more or less) lived as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Many of them have been maligned, ostracized, persecuted and martyred. They went forth unto Christ "without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13). But now shall they be richly rewarded. They suffered "with Him" and now shall they be also "glorified together" (Rom. 8:17). And then will it be fully manifested that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

In the Parable of the Pounds we have a Scripture which sets forth one aspect of the reward which shall be enjoyed by the faithful in that day. "And He (Christ) said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou has been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17). This Scripture seems to intimate that during the Millennium the saints will occupy a prominent part in the government of the world. Yes, it is written, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2). Ah! how different things will then be. The first shall be last, and the last first. Positions shall be completely reversed. Today the children of God (that is, those who really walk as such) are despised and hated by the world, but they shall yet be placed in authority over the world. This is the promise of our Lord: And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father" (Rev. 2:26, 27). Yes, Christ's position, Christ's power, Christ's prerogatives, shall be shared by His people, for He and they are one.

Again; it is during the Millennium that the unity of the Church—in contradistinction to the innumerable sects in Christendom which now divide believers—will be fully manifested, and our Lord's prayer of John 17:22, 23 fulfilled—"And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." Not until the "Day of Christ" will the world "know" these things, for then it is that we shall all have 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 fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Yes, and then it is, also that Christ shall come "to be glorified in His saints and admired in all

that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10). In that day, the Church will be an object of beauty, wonderment, and admiration to all the world. It will then be fully seen what great things the Lord hath done for His Church, in giving it a higher place—a place nearer to Himself than that which even the holy angels will occupy. We turn now to consider,

4. The Millennium in relation to Israel.

"And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land" (Gen. 15:17, 18). Here the two great periods of Israel's history was made known to Abram in figure. The vision of the smoking furnace and the burning lamp intimated that the history of Abraham's descendants was to be a checkered one. It was a prophecy in symbolic action; and like all prophecy was to have a double fulfillment. The order was first the sorrow and suffering, and then the glory and joy. There was first the smoking furnace of Egyptian bondage, and then the burning lamp which typified the brilliant reign of Solomon. After which there was the furnace, again, the furnace of the Babylonian captivity, and since Israel crucified her Messiah the furnace has been seven times hotter than ever before. Yet is it written, "For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (Is. 62:1).

A remarkable statement is found in Deut. 32:8 which antedates the actual history of the Jews. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Israel is here seen to be present before the mind of God six hundred years before they had any national standing in the earth, and two hundred years before the birth of their father Abraham. Yet, even at that remote period, God assigned to the descendants of the then scattered sons of Adam, their position in the earth according to the number of that people which was not then born. Here, then, we learn God's purpose concerning the chosen nation—Israel is God's earthly center.

In Gen. 13:14, 15, we read "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever." And again in Gen. 15:18 we are told, "In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." The land of Palestine has been given unconditionally to Abraham and his descendants, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). But these Divine promises have never received anything more than a partial fulfillment. The patriarchs themselves were but sojourners in a strange country, so much so, they needed to purchase a burying ground in it for their dead. It is true that in the days of Joshua, Israel entered into possession of the Promised Land, but it is to be particularly noted that they entered Canaan under the Covenant of Law (see Deut. 27:1-3, 8-10; 28:1 etc.), and hence their continued tenure of it was conditioned upon their obedience to Jehovah. But, as is well know, they failed to walk in the Divine statutes, and turned aside after false gods. And long did Jehovah bear with their waywardness. Prophet after prophet was sent unto them, calling them to forsake their sins and return unto the Lord and He would abundantly pardon. But in vain. Ultimately the point was reached when God's patience became exhausted, and in judgment upon them He sent them into captivity, from whence nothing more than a remnant has ever returned to their own land. It was to the descendants of this remnant that the Lord Jesus came. To the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" He was sent (Matt. 10:5-7; 15:24). But He received no better treatment at their hands than did the prophets who were before Him—"He came unto His own and His own received Him not." He was despised and rejected of men, and Israel disowned their King and put Him to a shameful death. While their Messiah was hanging upon the Cross, "All the people said, His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25), and God took them at their word! A few years later Jerusalem was besieged, captured and destroyed by the armies

of Titus; hundreds of thousands of Jews were slain, and the remainder of them carried away into captivity. Since that time they have been a homeless nation, and wanderers on the face of the earth. Literally has the prophecy of Hosea been fulfilled, "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king" (Hosea 3:4). And yet, in spite of all, they have preserved their national individuality, and have never been absorbed by the other nations.

Now, it is evident that the nation of Israel has been preserved for a purpose, and what that purpose is, God's Word makes known. A marvelous future yet awaits these descendants of Abraham. Jerusalem is not trodden down of the Gentiles, but it is only to continue thus "Until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The tabernacle of David, now fallen down, is to be restored (Acts 15:16), and the one who has been for so long the sport of the nations shall yet become its "head" (Deut. 28:13).

The restoration of Israel occupies a most prominent place in the Scriptures of truth and three things should be particularly noted in connection therewith. First, the restoration of Israel cannot take place until after the Church has been removed from the earth. Second, the restoration of the entire nation will be a gradual one. Third, restored Israel will occupy a much more exalted and glorious position than any it has held in the past, not excepting the reign of Solomon. The first of these three statements is based upon Acts 15:14-17 where we are expressly told that it is not until "after" God has taken out of the Gentiles a people for His name that He will return and build again the tabernacle of David. The second and third statements, above, will now be considered at more length.

In Zech. 12:9, 10 we are told, "And I will pour upon the House of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Here is the starting-point of Israel's moral restoration, namely, the repentance of Judah. Be it noted that this prophecy contemplates the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem only, for it is not until a later date that God deals with the Ten Tribes. With the above Scripture should be linked 2 Cor. 3:15, 16—"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it (Israel) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." One of the first consequences of Judah's turning unto the Lord in repentance will be the removal of the veil now upon their heart.

The restoration of the Ten Tribes is brought before us in Ezek. 34—the whole chapter should be read—"For thus saith the Lord God; behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God" (vss. 11-15). The Ten Tribes restored to Palestine shall be united to the House of Judah and the two Houses become one again—"Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the Children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land: And I will make them a nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one King shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so they shall be My

people, and I will be their God. And David My Servant shall be King over them; and they all shall have one Shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land which I have given unto Jacob My Servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and My Servant David shall be their Prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and will multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 37:21-28).

With the restored and re-united twelve tribes God will make a new covenant—"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:31-45; cf. 32:37-40; Is. 59:20, 21).

Early in the Millennium Jerusalem will be rebuilt: "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own little hill, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof" (Jer. 30:18, cf. 31:38-40). Furthermore, the Temple itself will be re-built, built under the immediate supervision of the Lord Himself—"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the Temple of the Lord: Even He shall build the Temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both** and they that are far off shall come and build in the Temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent Me unto you" (Zech. 6:12-15). This Temple, which is fully described in Ezekiel 40 and 41, will be an imposing structure of vast dimensions, upwards of a mile in extent. The Shekinah Glory shall enter it and from it radiate the whole earth—"And, behold, the Glory of the God of Israel (i.e., the Shekinah Glory, see 11:23), came from the way of the east: and His voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with His glory" (Ezek. 43:2). The Old Testament ritual (with a few minor modifications) will be employed in this re-built Temple—see Ezek. 46 etc.—and as of old the sacrifices and feasts were anticipative, so those offered up and celebrated in the Millennium will be commemorative.

During the Millennium the land of Palestine will be apportioned equally among the Twelve Tribes—see Ezek. 47 and 48—and upon thrones shall sit the twelve apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel—"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me; in The Regeneration (i.e., the Millennium) when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). Apparently, it was to this Isaiah referred to when he wrote—"Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Is. 32:1).

Many are the passages which describe Israel's millennial glory and blessedness. The last six chapters of Isaiah are occupied more or less with this theme, and from them we quote a few portions. After speaking of the Redeemer's return to Zion (Is. 59:20, 21), the prophet cries

—“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Is. 60:1). The prophet continues—“And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of they rising.** Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in My wrath I smote thee, but in My favor have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.** The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.** Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified” (Is. 60:3, 9-12, 14, 15, 20, 21). The Lord shall “appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of Righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves” (61:3-6). And again; “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah (My delight is in her), and thy land Beulah (Married): for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married” (62:2-4).

Not only will Israel enjoy glorious blessings themselves, but, in the Millennium, they shall be a blessing to “all families of the earth” (Gen. 12:3). Then will be fulfilled that word, “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Is. 27:6). And further we are told, “And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass” (Micah 5:7).

We turn now to consider,

5. The Millennium in relation to the World.

The Millennium will be the time, when, instead of Satan being the world's "Prince," the Christ of God shall be its King. The form of His government will be theocratic not democratic—"And the Lord shall be King over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9). The scope or range of His government will be world-wide. All nations will be subject to His rule, and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be possessed by Him. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall be before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Sheba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him" (Psalms 72:8-11). This is what is in view in Rev. 11:15—"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

Perhaps at this point it would be well if we endeavored to meet a difficulty which many inquirers experience in connection with the Millennium. It may be stated thus. If the saints are all caught up to meet the Lord at His descent into the air, and the wicked are all destroyed during the Tribulation period, who will be left to inhabit the earth during the Kingdom age? The answer is simple. It is a mistake to suppose that all who are left behind at the Rapture will be subsequently destroyed by God's judgments. It is true that "the slain of the Lord will be many," yet the earth will not be entirely depopulated. This is evident from Matt. 25:31. It is also true that "all" who now believe not the truth will "perish" during the Day of God's vengeance—2 Thess. 2, yet many of the children of these unbelievers will be spared. Not all of those who will be gathered together for the battle of that great day of God Almighty will be slain, as is clear from Is. 66:19, where we read of "those that escape." The slaughter at Armageddon will be inconceivably dreadful, for from that battlefield will flow a river of blood two hundred miles in length and several feet in depth, yet we know from Zech. 14:16 that a "remnant" will be spared —"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts." Finally; there will be a Jewish remnant miraculously preserved by God (Rev. 12) and these together with their resurrected brethren who were slain by the Anti-christ (Rev. 20:4) will form the nucleus from which will spring the Millennial Israel.

The seat of Christ's government will be Jerusalem, the royal city, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is. 2:3).

The character of Messiah's government is brought before us in Is. 11:3-5, "And He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins." During the Kingdom age—in contradistinction to the present dispensation of Grace wherein God endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction—wickedness shall be promptly dealt with and evil doers will meet with swift judgment: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve Me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within My house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in My sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked-doers from the city of the Lord" (Ps. 101:5-8).

We turn now to some of the results of Christ's government. During the Millennium our Lord

will rule as “The Prince of Peace.” For the first time since the flood, the earth will be completely delivered from the horrors of war. Then it will be seen that “He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth” (Ps. 46:9). The Kingdom age will be a time of universal peace—“And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Is. 2:4).

During the Millennium there shall also be universal blessing. An exceedingly sublime picture of the conditions that will then obtain is to be found in Is. 35:5-10, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land “springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

At the beginning of the Millennium there shall be a universal worship of Christ—“And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 14:16).

What a glorious time the Millennium will be for our poor sin-cursed earth! Universal righteousness, universal peace, universal blessing, and universal worship! Surely we have reason to pray “Thy kingdom come.” And now,

6. The Millennium in relation to Creation.

The blessings which will be brought to the world upon the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom will not be confined to the human family but will be extended to all creation.

As we have shown in earlier chapters, the Curse which was pronounced by God upon the ground in the day of Adam's fall, and which resulted in a creation that has groaned and travailed ever since, is yet to be revoked. Creation is not to remain in bondage for ever. God has set a hope before it, a hope, which like ours, centers in the personal return of Christ. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope; that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-21 R.V.). A passage closely connected with the one just quoted is found in the ninety-sixth Psalm—"Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. Before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (vss. 11-13). These verses picture the joy of all Nature consequent upon the advent of its Creator to the earth.

One striking effect of Creation's deliverance from its present bondage is described in Is. 30:26—"Moreover the light of the moon shall be (in the Millennium) as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." An illustration of the Curse being removed from the "ground" is found in Is. 35:1. When the Times of Refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord then shall "the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose." This is further amplified in Isaiah 41:17-20—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."

Not the least of the beneficent changes introduced during the Millennium will be the restoration of the animal kingdom to its Edenic state. The present ferocity of the wild beast is abnormal and due to the fall of man. It is very clear from Genesis 2 that, originally, man had full dominion over all the animal kingdom, but this was forfeited when he rebelled against his Maker. In the kingdom age—the Times of the Restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets—the fierce nature of the beasts will be subdued, for in that day, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw as the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of an asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:6-9).

By comparing Scripture with Scripture it would appear that, during the Millennium, there will be no earthquakes, no tornadoes, no storms at sea, but all Nature will be at rest and share in the general blessing which the personal presence of Christ shall bring. And yet, there will be droughts and plagues upon the rebellious and disobedient (see Zech. 14:18, 19), which leads us to consider,

7. The Millennium in relation to Sin.

In spite of the fact that Satan will have been removed from the earth, and that Christ reigns in person over it, yet conditions here will not be perfect even in the Millennium.

Unregenerate human nature will remain unchanged. Sin will still be present, though much of its outward manifestation will be restrained. Discontent and wickedness will not be eradicated from the hearts of men, but will be kept beneath the surface by means of the Iron Rod. Multitudes will yield to Christ nothing but a "feigned obedience" (Ps. 18:44, margin). This "feigned obedience" will be the product of power not grace; it will be the fruit of fear not love. In Psalm 72, which gives a graphic picture of millennial conditions, we read, "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust" (vs. 9). Again, we are told in Psalm 110:2 that the Lord shall rule in the midst of "enemies." In Psalm 149, wherein the children of Zion are bidden to "be joyful in their King," we are told that His saints shall "execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Praise ye the Lord" (vss. 7-9). In Micah 5, where we have another description of the judgments which the remnant of Jacob will execute upon the Gentiles, we are told, "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off" (vss. 8-10). These verses do not conflict with those Scriptures which speak of great blessings, spiritual as well as temporal, coming upon the Gentiles during the Millennium, but warn us that the Kingdom age is not the Perfect State, and that while most if not all will worship outwardly, yet at heart many are still the enemies of the Lord.

At the close of the Millennium Satan will be temporarily released from his prison in order to test humanity: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went upon the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (Rev. 20:7-9). Thus will be fully and finally demonstrated the incurable evil of the human heart. Even a thousand years of millennial blessedness, with Satan away from the earth, will not effect any change in man. Let Satan be loosed and allowed to go forth once more and deceive the nations, and it shall be seen that the carnal mind is still enmity against God, and prefers a Murderer to the Lord Jesus. Nothing avails short of a new creation. Miracles, a beneficent environment, temporal blessings—nothing without, can alter fallen and depraved human nature. "Except a man be born of water (the Word) and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The final revolt of man under the leadership of the Devil will meet with swift judgment—"And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Rev. 20:9). What follows is told us in few words. Satan himself is cast into the Lake of Fire where the Beast and the False Prophet are, and all of the unsaved dead from Cain onwards will be raised from their graves, to stand before the great white Throne and be judged according to their works. The purpose of this judgment is to determine their respective sentences, for there will be degrees of punishment among the lost, as there will be degrees of glory among the redeemed. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of Fire" (Rev. 20:15). Oh, my reader, is your name written in the book of life? If it is not, there is nothing before you but a hopeless and endless eternity of suffering, of suffering so fearful that no human pen or tongue can adequately depict it.

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the Lake of Fire.” Unsaved reader, what an awful prospect is thing! The day of reckoning fast hastens on. God is yet going to call you to account and take full satisfaction to His justice. Long have you defied Him, but soon He will put forth His power and deal with you in judgment. What He has threatened that will He most surely perform. The Lake of Fire! Eternal suffering! Tormented day and night for ever and ever! Such a portion will be unendurable, and yet it will have to be a endured by every Christ-rejector, and endured for ever and ever. “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it” (Ezek. 22:14).

Following the great white Throne judgment and the casting of the host into the Lake of Fire, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, “when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. And when all things be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:24, 25, 28; and see further Rev. 21:1-5).

Conclusion

As we take up our pen to write these closing paragraphs, we do so conscious that we have merely skimmed, here and there, the surface of a vast ocean of truth. Though upwards of five hundred Scriptures have been referred to in these pages, yet, hundreds more could have been cited in support of the positions which we have advanced. An exhaustive classification and examination of all the passages which are connected, directly or indirectly, with the subject of the Redeemer's Return, would necessitate many volumes rather than one. Our opponents greatly err who suppose that pre-millennialism rests upon a few doubtful and obscure passages. The texts upon which we rely are neither few nor ambiguous, and their testimony is neither scanty nor uncertain. No other doctrine of Scripture can produce a larger, more distinct, and more vigorous testimony in its favor. The Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is a theme which pervades the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It is the central burden of prophecy. It is the grand solution to the mystery of Divine Providence. It is the one great hope of the Church, of Israel, and of creation.

The personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom on the earth and reign over it in power and glory is no novelty of a feverish age, no hasty conjecture caught up at random without consideration and unsupported by reliable evidence. It is no fable of romance, but sober, Scriptural reality, though far beyond what fancy ever painted. It is no creation of a disordered mind, but the Golden Milestone of Scripture to which all lines of prophecy are rapidly converging. It is no pet theory of certain religious fanatics, but the approaching Climax of all history. It is no mere dream of idealists, but the promised consummation and glorious issue of all the confusion and change, the sin and sorrow, the disease and death which have desolated the earth for six thousand years. It is the divinely ordained Remedy for those deep and manifold evils under which humanity now groans and which men are so earnestly, yet vainly, seeking to cure.

Had we followed the inclinations of our own heart, we should have devoted a chapter to the history of Millennarianism. We might have quoted from the early Church "fathers" and shown that during the first three centuries of the Christian era it prevailed universally, its only opponents being the Gnostics. We might have referred to the writings of the Reformers, and shown how they one and all looked for the imminent coming of Christ. We might have inserted citations from modern authors whose piety and scholarship are unquestioned. But we had no desire to buttress our position by human authority even of the most ancient and honorable kind. Let not our faith stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Unless our theses can be unequivocally maintained from Holy Scripture, it were vain to call in human witnesses however numerous or however venerable.

The saddest thing of all in connection with our subject is that Christian theologians have divided into opposite camps. And yet it need not surprise us that the Second Coming of Christ is a controverted doctrine—what doctrine of Scripture is not? Nevertheless, it is the bounden duty of every lover of the Lord's appearing to pray earnestly that it may please God to lead out a greater number of His children into the light, and that there may be a more harmonious and united testimony borne to this most important of all truths. We fervently trust that one result of our humble labors will be that many who read these pages will go forth crying "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." That the masses will give neither heed nor credit to the alarm is only to be expected. When Lot warned his sons-in-law of the impending doom of Sodom "he seemed as one that mocked"(Gen. 19:14). When Israel's prophets clamored for those who would speak unto them "smooth things" (Is. 30:10). And when our Saviour

announced the destruction of Jerusalem His words fell upon ears which scepticism had closed. But, notwithstanding, our duty is plain. Results belong unto God; our business is to sound the alarm and "to exhort one another: and so much the more, as we see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

Brethren, the end of the Age is upon us. All over the world, reflecting minds are discerning the fact that we are on the very eve of another of those far-reaching crises which make the history of our race. Their sense of justice tells them that the unbridled lust, the increasing oppression, the unparalleled bloodshed, have defied Heaven long enough and that the Judge of all the earth must soon rise in His wrath to make "a short work" (Rom. 9:28) of it all. Those who look out on present conditions are forced to conclude that the consummation of this dispensation is at hand. But it is only they who give diligent heed to the study of the prophetic Word that have "understanding of the times" (1 Chron. 12:32). Let the believer ask, Watchman what of the night: and the infallible answer is, "The night cometh"! And it never appeared so nigh. Everywhere the shadows are gathering, gathering deeper and broader, lengthening out and falling with ominous gloom all over the earth. The world's night is at hand.

The sands in the hour glass of this Day of Salvation have almost run out. The Signs of the Times demonstrate it. "But," it may be asked, "Have not other ages, as well as the present, been crowded with signs of distress?" Undoubtedly. We read, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time" (Ecc. 1:9, 10)! Many of the Signs which now appear in the sky have been visible to former generations, yet, today, they shine out more clearly and more prominently than ever before. "But," it may be objected, "Have there not always been pessimists who interpreted gloomily the events of their day? Have not others, again and again, written in similar strain, only to be shamed and discredited?" Be it so. But were they not wise men who took the earliest alarm, even though their fears were not immediately realized! They read evil in the Signs of their Times and gave utterance to their convictions so that their fellow-men might be aroused; and surely that was not folly. They unduly magnified the evil, and erred in their calculations, yet it cannot be denied that their warning was beneficial in its results even though it was premature. But today, the Signs are so plain they cannot be mis-read, though the foolish may close their eyes and refuse to examine them. What these Signs are we have shown at length in Chapter Six and if the evidence there furnished has not convinced the reader that the Lord is at hand, then there is little hope that any further arguments drawn from Scripture will do so. Notwithstanding, we digress for a moment in order to call attention to one other Sign entirely different from those previously mentioned. In Nahum 2:3, 4 we read, "The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of His preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." What an accurate description of the conditions which now prevail in every city and along every public high-way throughout the land! The enormous increase in the number of automobiles, so that such a congestion of street traffic is produced it may literally be said "They jostle one against another in the broad ways;" their flaming torches;" and their high rate of speed so that they "run like the lightnings," are here accurately depicted. What is to be particularly noted is that this phenomenon is peculiar to this present generation, and that we are expressly told it is to be a characteristic of "The Day of His Preparation."

"But," it may be asked again, "Why is it that so few of our religious leaders and teachers are heralding the approach of Christ?" The answer is, Because many of them are blind themselves —"blind leaders of the blind." As the Word declares, they are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). It is greatly to be feared that the majority of our

preachers are following the traditions of the elders rather than studying the Scriptures for themselves. Their prophetical views were formed under Seminary interpretations of eschatology and the Seminaries, in turn, are committed to some system of theology, a system formulated in most cases by men who lived centuries ago. While the Church is deeply indebted, under God, to such men as Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Whitefield, yet, it must be borne in mind that they lived in an age when Prophecy was almost entirely neglected. It was not until last century that the Holy Spirit stirred up the people of God to the deep importance of studying prophetic and dispensational truth: Previous to the nineteenth century all teaching which had reference to the Second Coming of Christ was, with very rare exceptions, merely traditional, that is to say, it was nothing more than what had been handed down from one generation to another, it was merely the reciting of the dreams of others who had gone before. We say "the dreams," for after the Hope of the Redeemer's Return was lost—while the Bridegroom tarried—all the virgins slumbered and slept, and while they slept they dreamed, and wild and weird were their dreams. They dreamt that the Church was to conquer the Devil and that the Gospel would win the world to Christ. This dream captivated the minds of theologians of every shade of religious belief. Each succeeding generation recounted this dream in still more glowing language, until the climax was reached some four years ago. How much we heard of religious progress, of the march of civilization, and of the "good time" that was coming! The horrible arts of war were to be nothing more than humbling memories of the past. The labors of our politicians and the activities of the Church would soon produce an era wherein the universal rights of mankind were freely recognized, when tyranny and injustice would be overthrown, and when culture and virtue would reign supreme. Christian and secular philanthropists congratulated each other in view of the Golden Age which their joint efforts were hastening on. But the happenings of the last three years have rudely dissipated this dream. The dreadful War has shown that much which went under the name of civilization was nothing but veneered barbarism. The battle fields of Europe bear witness to the fact that the optimistic and jubilant spirit which possessed our church leaders a few years ago was nothing more than Laodicean self-complacency, saying "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," when in reality Christendom was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). The blood-soaked earth of today exposes the utter vanity of the delusive hope cherished by the post-millenarians and gives fulfillment to God's Word which declares "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (1 Thess. 5:3).

Unless men had been strangely blinded, the analogy of the past ought to have corrected the blind optimism of which we have just spoken. Every previous dispensation has ended in human failure and Divine judgment! The Edenic dispensation saw the fall of man and his expulsion from the garden of Eden. At the close of the Noahic dispensation "God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. 6:12, 13). The Patriarchal dispensation, when the sword of the magistrate was committed into the hands of man, witnessed the revolt and overthrow of the Tower of Babel and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven. The Abrahamic dispensation ended with the people of God in the iron furnace of Egypt and with the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea. The dispensation of the Wilderness wanderings terminated with the disobedience and death of Moses. The dispensation of the Judges closed with "every man doing that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). The dispensation of the kings ended with God selling His apostate people into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. The dispensation of the Diving Incarnation closed with the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory. Why then should this dispensation prove an exception to the general rule? Why is it that men are so loath to acknowledge that under man's pilotage

everything drifts to shipwreck? Why, except for the pride of the human heart! According to the inspired declarations of Holy Writ, this dispensation, so far from closing like a brilliant sunset in a sky from which every cloud shall have passed away, will expire in a storm-burst of Divine fury, in which the brightest hopes of the flesh will perish like cobwebs in a flame.

Unspeakably sad have been, and still are, the pernicious effects of the post-millennial teaching. Instead of listening to the voice of Divine truth many of the profest followers of the Lamb have heeded the siren voices of the earth which have drawn them into entangling alliances with the world, deceiving them as to their prospects here and persuading them to substitute carnal policy for spiritual energy and time-serving expendiencies for self-denying faith. O that the children of God would hold themselves aloof from the world's plans of social amelioration and political aggrandisement, and take up their cross and follow their despised and rejected Lord, remembering that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4). Christ has not left His Church here to "make the world a better world for the natural man to live in, nor to make the natural man a better man to live in the world" (Haldeman). No; Christ has left His Church here to preach a Gospel which shall result in the formation of a new man, a "perfect man" made meet to live in the world to come. So far as this world is concerned, nothing awaits it but Divine judgment. Men may busy themselves with their own plans and think to evolve a lasting good and peace out of the present confusion and strife, but their hope of setting the world right is built upon the sand. Yet, as we have seen there will shortly be manifested a pseudo Prince of Peace who will inaugurate a false millennium and thus deceive the whole world. This Impostor will gain the confidence of and obtain dominion over all Christendom. History records how in a few short years a young lieutenant rose out of comparative obscurity and had Europe at his feet, and in Napoleon Bonaparte we have a foreshadowing of what is yet going to be when God's time is ripe.

"But ye, brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:4). No; the things which are hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed to babes in Christ. As the humble believer marks with what readiness educated people accept the most absurd crudities offered to them in the name of religion; as he observes on every side, thrones and republics creaking and crumbling; as he gazes upon immorality which has come in like a flood that is ever swelling and widening in its course; as he beholds the increasing numbers of those who have a form of godliness but deny its power; as he looks in vain for any deep sense of sin, for courageous faith, for an unworldly walk, in the majority of those who bear the name of Christ; as he takes knowledge of the despised Jew coming into remembrance, and the nations of the earth taking more and more notice of this strange people; as he hears men of the world, who pay no heed to the Word of God, acknowledging that present conditions cannot continue much longer, and predicting that a momentous crisis is at hand; and, as he is painfully conscious that there is much to show that the Holy Spirit has already begun to retire from the earth,—he lifts up his head, knowing that his redemption is nigh at hand, yea, that the Redeemer Himself is at the door.

At the door! What a prospect! To look at the present frailty, suffering, and groaning of our vile bodies, and then to anticipate the moment when they shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; to read the histories and biographies of the apostles, of the early Christian martyrs, of the spiritual giants of the Reformation, of the choicest saints of the ages, and then to anticipate the time when we shall meet them, converse with them, and gather together around our blessed Lord; to anticipate that glad hour when everlasting joy shall be upon our heads and when sorrow and sighing shall flee away; when the joy of meeting shall be spoiled by no fear of separation, and the beauty of holiness shall be defiled by no stain of sin—this is a hope which may well endure all trials and stay the heart in these days of tragedy and anguish. Amidst the increasing darkness and gathering storms of these last days, we do not stand bewildered and

dejected. But, with the blessed promise “Surely, I come quickly” ringing in our ears, love responds, “Come out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth; put on the robes of Thy imperial majesty; reach forth Thy hand and grasp the scepter of universal sovereignty, for the voice of Thy Church calls for Thee, and all creation sighs to be renewed.”

“The dawn of day is breaking,
Behold! it streaks the sky,
And hearts for Him are waking,
Who soon shall fill each eye;
Soon! Soon! in brightness beaming,
“The day-star” shall appear,
With glory round Him streaming,
His joyful shout we’ll hear.
Our eyes are looking onward,
To see the One we love;
Our feet are pressing forward,
To tread those courts above;
Our hearts do leap with pleasure,
As nearer comes the day
When love, beyond all measure,
Shall beckon us away.
There “face to face” beholding
The One who came to die,
His glory all unfolding
Before each raptured eye,
With nothing there to hinder
The hearts deep full employ,
But all to call forth wonder,
And ceaseless bursts of joy.
There on His bosom resting,
Oh! deep and full repose,
No more a time of testing—
No more to meet our foes;
But there, in brightest glory,
To gaze upon His face,
And ever tell that story—
“The glory of His grace.”

Appendix

2. “All the world” wonders after the first Beast, Rev. 13:3. Compare 2 Thess. 2:11, 12—“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned” etc.

3. The first Beast is “worshipped”Rev. 13:4. Compare 2 Thess. 2:4—“he as God sitteth in the temple of God.”

4. The first Beast has a mouth “speaking great things” Rev. 13:5. Compare 2 Thess. 2:4 —“who** exalteth himelf above all that is called God.”

5. The first Beast makes war upon the saints Rev. 13:7. Compare 2 Thess 2:4—“Who opposeth **all that is called God,” that is, he will seek to exterminate and obliterate everything on earth which bears God’s name.

From these five points of analogy it seems clear that the first Beast of Rev. 13 and the Man of Sin of 2 Thess. 2 are one and the same person.

In the fifth place, that the second “Beast” is not“the Man of Sin” appears from the fact that the second Beast causeth the earth to worship the first Beast (Rev. 13:12), whereas the Man of Sin “exalteth himself”(2 Thess. 2:4), and compare Dan. 11:36—“And he exalteth himself.”

Again,; it has been generally recognized by prophetic students that our Lord referred to the Anti-christ when He said, “I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye wlll receive” (John 5:43). If the one here mentioned as coming “in his own name” is the Anti-christ then it is certain that the second Beast of Rev. 13 cannot be the Anti-christ for he does not come “in his own name.” On the contrary, the second Beast comes in the name of the first Beast as is clear from Rev. 13:12-15. Just as the Holy Spirit—the third person in the Holy Trinity—speaks “not of Himself” (John 16:13) but is here to glorify Christ, so the second Beast—the third person in the Evil Trinity—seeks to glorify the first Beast, the Anti-christ.

If it should be objected that the second Beast is represented as working miracles (Rev. 13:13, 14) and that as the Man of Sin is also said to come “after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9) therefore the second Beast must be the Anti-christ, the answer is, This by no means follows. The power to work miracles is common to each person in the Trinity of Evil. Just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, each perform miracles, so does the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. Three things are said in connection with the second Beast which correspond closely with the work of the Holy Spirit. First, “he maketh fire come down from heaven” (Rev. 13:13), compare Acts 2:1-4. Second, “he had power to give life unto the image of the Beast” (Rev. 13:15), compare John 3:6 —“born of the Spirit.” Third, “he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads” (Rev. 13:16), compare Eph. 4:30 —“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Finally; the second Beast is clearly subordinate to the first Beast. But would the Jews receive as their Messiah and King one who was himself the vassal of a Roman? Was not this the very reason why the Jews of old rejected the Lord Jesus, i.e., Because He was subject to Caesar and because He refused to deliver the Jews from the Romans!

In the sixth place, as we have seen, in Dan. 11:36 the Anti-christ is termed “the king” and if a king he must possess a kingdom, and can there be any doubt as to the identity of this kingdom? Will not Anti-christ’s kingdom be the very one which Satan offered in vain to Christ? namely, “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them” (Matt. 4:8). That the kingdom of the Anti-christ will be much wider than Palestine appears from Dan. 11:40-42—“And at the time of the end shall

the king of the south push at him (the Anti-christ) and the king of the north shall come against him (the Anti-christ) like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he (the Anti-christ) shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He (the Anti-christ) shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his (the Anti-christ's) hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon (compare other Old Testament prophecies concerning these three powers). He (the Anti-christ) shall stretch forth his hand upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape." From this Scripture it is also clear that the Anti-christ will be at the head of a great army and therefore a political ruler as well as a religious chief.

In the seventh place, it is generally agreed among those students of prophecy who belong to the Futurist school that the rider upon the four horses of Rev. 6 is the Anti-christ. If this be the case then we have further proof that the Anti-christ and the Head of the revived Roman empire is one and the same person. This may be seen by comparing three Scriptures. In Rev. 6:8, of the rider on "the pale horse," we read, "His name that sat on him was Death and Hell followed with him." In Isaiah 28:18, those who will be in Jerusalem during the Tribulation period are addressed by Jehovah as follows: "And your covenant with Death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand." What "covenant" can this be except the one mentioned in Dan. 9:27 where we read of the Roman Prince (the Head of the revived Roman empire) confirming the covenant with the many for seven years. Now reverse the order of these three passages, and what do we learn? In Dan. 9:27 we learn that the head of the Roman empire makes a "covenant" with the Jews. In Isaiah 28:18 this "covenant" is said to have been made with "Death and Hell." While in Rev. 6:8 the rider on the pale horse (which it is generally admitted is the Anti-christ) is named "Death and Hell." Hence, from whatever angle we approach the subject it is seen that the Anti-christ is the Head of the fourth world-kingdom.

Finally, we wish to call attention to the employment of the definite article in connection with the two "Beasts" of Rev. 13. Wherever we read of the Beast, it is the Anti-christ who is in view. In 13:1 we read, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy"—this is the empire itself with its seven mountains and ten kings (see 17:9, 12). But from 13:2-8 it is always "the Beast," the Head of the empire, the Anti-christ. So in 19:20 and and 20:10. The Anti-christ is termed The Beast in contradistinction to Jesus Christ who is denominated "The Lamb."