

OUR LORD COMETH
By
WILLIAM J. ROWLANDS
1939

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FOREWORD

We accord this excellent work our whole-hearted and unreserved commendation, and exhort our friends to give it a wide circulation.

Those who have read the first edition will wish to obtain this revised and enlarged one. It forms a handy reference book to the subject. The style is simple and readable English, printed in clear type, nicely arranged. Problems are faced with a sweet Scriptural reasonableness and without any asperity when opponents are answered.

Outstanding passages such as Luke 21:20, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, Revelation 3:10 are helpfully dealt with and Matthew 24 and 25 fully so. By this production the Truth will be served and we may expect God's blessing on it.

J. HUNT LYNN.

GEO. H. Fromow.

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PREFACE

A Second Edition of Our Lord Cometh having been requested, the whole has been carefully revised and articles added on important phases of this momentous subject. This has necessitated some slight re-arrangement of the book in order to avoid undue repetition.

The Scripture references are from the Authorized or Revised Version of the English Bible: mostly from the Revised, on account of its greater uniformity in translating keywords.

Wm. J. Rowland

CHAPTER I.

General Examination of the Two-Stage Theory.

THE theory of the two-stage coming of the Lord is indeed very dear to the hearts of many of God's people, who feel that if their belief in a secret, any moment rapture of the church were taken from them, the value and power as well as the joy of the Blessed Hope would be lost. This, however, was not the view of Messrs. Geo. Muller, Jas. Wright, Horatius Bonar, D. D., and others like Robert Chapman, Dr. Bergin and Dan Crawford, who have been used to carry the gospel to the dark places of the earth, and whose works do follow them; and my own experience, as one who held the two-stage theory for about twenty years, is that the hope of the second coming is to me brighter and clearer, as prophesied events are seen to be steadily moving toward His appearing. By this I do not mean that we have in Scripture a detailed prophetic history running from our Lord's first coming to His second coming, but that Scripture does very clearly foretell the general marks of the age and also delineates certain specific events, some now fulfilled and some still future, to precede the Lord's return. The idea that the church has been for 1,900 years expecting an any-moment coming, that may still be today or many years hence, is vague and unsatisfying. It has given room for the Lord's enemies to say "Where is the promise of His coming?" and, since some have asserted that "the church's hope waits on no sign," there is, in this theory, no relief, until the longed-for moment arrives. I write sympathetically; for I write for those whom I love in truth. Every prophesied event for this age, connected with the Jews or Gentiles or the church of God, precludes the thought that the church at Pentecost expected an any-moment coming, and if we expect what they could not expect, our hope is different from theirs. The Lord foretold *the Coming of the Spirit at Pentecost*, with the subsequent witness; He said, "Before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles"—His disciples were to be His witnesses from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the earth. (*Has this yet been reached?*) Peter was to be martyred as an old man; Jerusalem and the temple were to be destroyed; apostasy would rise and spread; the

leaven would work in the meal until the whole was leavened. These and other prophesied events forbid the thought that the church at Pentecost was looking for Christ to come without intervening events. Yea, the very Paschal discourse declares that "the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2) (thus foretelling the death of apostles before Christ's coming), and contains a program needing time for fulfillment, just as surely as Matthew 24 and Luke 21; "These things must needs come to pass first, but the end is not immediately" (Luke 21:9, R. V.). Christ has Himself warned us, "Take heed that ye be not led astray; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am He, and, *The time is at hand. Go ye not after them*" (ver. 8).

The Lord's own words are, "*After a long time*, the Lord of those servants cometh." After many years of careful study I am convinced that there is no Scripture statement that the Lord is coming secretly for His church; or that there will be a period of years between His coming for, and with, His saints; or that He may come at *any moment*, or before the reign of Antichrist and the unequalled tribulation.

If we state abundantly in our writings and preaching that which Holy Scripture *nowhere states*, we are building on a sandy foundation. It has been said that the teaching against which we protest is the general teaching of Scripture; but how can doctrine be according to the whole trend of Scripture when its advocates cannot (when asked) show it clearly even in one verse?

All foundation doctrine of Scripture is abundantly *stated, and could be taught by us in the very words of Holy writ, without human addition or explanation*. Why could not this doctrine be so declared? The true answer is that it rests only upon inferences and theories of men! e.g. I have been told: "If I held your theory it would make me miserable and would unfit me for service, and that is enough to show me that it is not true." But, firstly, it can be replied, "If you have never held the view we hold, you cannot know how it would make you feel." Secondly, who is to judge the value of truth by his imagination of the effects it ought to have, or would have, on his mind? Is our happy frame of mind the great test of truth? Was not our Lord Himself the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief? Did He not even say, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be

comforted"? Did the Old Testament prophecies always give a happy feeling as evidencing their truth? Did not Jeremiah, Daniel and John become as dead men, under the weight of prophetic truth, divinely revealed? And while they found the little book sweet to their taste, yet it brought an inward bitterness, for it brought them into collision with the doctrines of men. Even so it is now, in degree, with those who receive from God's Book these precious instructions.

All the prophets foretold a glorious hope for the redeemed; but all foretold the sorrow that should come first.

The "Jewish" Theory.

This teaching against which we protest has, we believe, caused its adherents to reject the Plain meaning of clear Scripture *statements*.

It has led some to reject, for their own guidance, the teaching of our Lord in Matthew as being, they say, for the Jews and not directly for the church; a conclusion that would deprive us of the true value of the fourfold Gospel of Christ, for Matthew cannot be separated from Mark, Luke and John.

It has led to intimations that need the addition of words not found in the text, e.g. "My *Jewish* brethren" in Matthew 25; enough in itself surely to discount *for ever* the Jewish theory.

The last plain command in Matthew 28 is often relegated to a past or future dispensation. It virtually, to many people, makes Paul the church's foundation instead of Christ. Neither is their Paul the Paul of Scripture, but the product of their own distortion. Is not this the very thing of which the apostle Peter warns us in his second epistle? (2 Pet. 3:16). It has even been questioned by *professed* teachers whether our Lord preached a full gospel, or even preached the gospel at all.

It has led to extravagant dividing of Scripture under the plea of "rightly dividing," but the very words warn us against wrongly dividing, and of putting asunder truth that God has joined together. One terrible result of this ultra-dispensational teaching has been the "dividing" of many saints of God, the fearful consequences of which have spread even to the far-distant mission field.

The Gospel of Christ-Only One.

Are there three Gospels or one? Did Paul preach the very same Gospel as the Lord and all the other Apostles? or did he receive a new Gospel, and a new revelation as the church's hope?

In Luke 4:18-21, at the beginning of His public ministry, our Lord declared that, in accordance with Isaiah 61:1, 2, He was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit: to preach the gospel to the poor ... to preach deliverance . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. In Luke 20:1, at the end of His ministry, His enemies found Him in the temple "preaching the gospel." His earliest recorded discourse is probably that to Nicodemus in John 3, before John the Baptist was delivered up. We have seen from Scripture that Christ did really preach the gospel. What gospel then did He preach? He surely only preached one gospel.

First of all we find that He preached the gospel of God's grace to a ruined people; ruined by the fall; and needing nothing short of new birth. In Paul's words we need to be "Created anew in Christ Jesus." Our Lord taught Nicodemus (what as the teacher of Israel he should have known) that only birth from above would bring him into the "kingdom of God." In Paul's words, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel"(* See Rom. 9:6-8). Christ taught that "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

*Is this not the Gospel of the grace of God? Eternal life by faith in the crucified Redeemer; in verse 18, No condemnation to those who believe. Yea, all the truth of the gospel as epitomized in Romans, chapters 1-8 is here in John 3 Eternal life—"Ye must be born again." Eternal love—"For God so loved." Eternal light—"Light is come into the world." Can any deny that this chapter is the gospel of the grace of God? Yet it is also the gospel of the kingdom, for it tells us the only way of entrance to God's kingdom. It is distinctly stated that our Lord "preached the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; and Luke 4:43): and He declared this to be the gospel His disciples were to preach in the whole world, *for a testimony unto all the Nations* (Matt. 24:14). Yet is it not indisputably*

clear that our Lord preached the gospel of the grace of God to Nicodemus, and in Matthew 11:28; Luke 7 and 15? Yes, truly, Christ preached the gospel; not two gospels but one.

The Gospel Paul Preached The Same.

Paul was converted after he had "persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6). He did not confer with those who were apostles before him, but went to Arabia, and "far hence" preaching to "Jews and Gentiles" (Acts 20:21). After fourteen years or more he conferred at the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2) with those who were apostles before him, and the perfect agreement of their teaching was declared.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-11, after telling us the gospel he had preached, how that Christ died ... was buried ... and raised according to the Scripture, he names the other apostles and early witnesses and says, "Whether it were I or they, so *we preach* and so ye believed" (ver. 2). Could words be found to put it plainer? Would he have pronounced accursed, any one, either man or angel, who preached any other gospel, if the other apostles had not yet received the gospel of the grace of God? If Paul received a new gospel, then the church must have had another before his day, and as he did not confer with the other apostles until about seventeen years after his conversion, it would have meant two gospels being preached. Surely the very statement of such a thing refutes the theory.

In Acts 20:24 we read, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God*": but lest this should be misconstrued he continues: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, *among whom I went about preaching the Kingdom* shall see my face no more" (ver. 25).

Acts 20:24 is the only place where the expression "Gospel of the grace of God" occurs. Why then is it made the plea for assuming another gospel in the face of the fact that many times in Acts, Paul says he "Preached the things concerning the Kingdom of God" and that many other expressions, viz. "Gospel of the glory of the blessed God ...Gospel of peace," "Gospel of God," "Gospel of Christ," "Gospel of His Son," "Gospel of your salvation," are used to set forth the one eternal glad message in its many phases of beauty and excellence.

In, Acts 8:12 (see R.V. and Newberry, also Englishman's Greek New Testament) we read of a Spirit-filled preacher, "but when they believed Philip preaching the *good tidings concerning the Kingdom of God* and the Name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Surely this is a clear statement that Philip preached (*euaggelizomeno*) *the Gospel of the Kingdom*, and by it souls were added to the church. Later in the same chapter, the same Philip, guided by the same Spirit, opened his mouth and preached "Jesus" from Isaiah 53, and the eunuch was saved.

These facts cut away the very foundation of the theory that requires and teaches that, whereas the Gospel of the *kingdom* has been preached in the past, the gospel of the grace of God is for the present *dispensation*, and that *after the Church has been taken up*, the gospel of the *kingdom* will again be preached. Since it is one and the same gospel, that assertion of distinctions loses all weight. Grace and truth came (not firstly by Paul) but by Jesus Christ, and Paul himself declares with mighty emphasis to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:2-4): "These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ... he is proud, knowing nothing." Surely the "*Words of Grace* which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22) were exactly equivalent to the "*Gospel of Grace*" as declared by Paul. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard." *The whole gospel preached by Paul can be found in the words of Christ.*

The Secret Rapture Theory Contradicts Plain Scriptures.

Psalm 110:1 states that "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand *until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool*," and continues clearly to show that Christ's session of waiting ends only when He comes to "put forth the rod of His strength" and to rule in the midst of His enemies (ver. 2).

To this agree the words of the Holy Spirit through Peter (Acts 3:21), "Even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive *until the times of restoration of all things*, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets...." Scripture says that Christ will sit at God's right hand until it is time for Him to put His feet upon His foes; but the theory of the two-stage coming teaches that He will leave that throne (which would be in opposition to

Jehovah's will expressed in Ps. 110:1) at least seven years before the appointed time, and that Antichrist, His greatest earthly foe, will arise after He has so come forth. Acts 3:21 declares that the times of restoration follow His coming, but this theory says it is then the great tribulation will come.

The apostles and elders of the church (including Paul) were in perfect agreement at the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:14), when James said "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, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." Can words be plainer than this? Is it not a clear and simple statement, taught by inspired apostles, and confirmed as the teaching of inspired prophets, that after this "people for His Name" has been gathered from among the Gentiles, *Israel's restoration is to take place*? Is not this very different from saying that the period of their worst tribulation is then about to come upon them?

Romans 11:25-27 says, "that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness 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; for this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

Here again the gathering of the "Fulness of the Gentiles" will be followed by the conversion and forgiveness of Israel, and not by the tribulation.

Plain Deductions Lead Us to the Same Conclusions,

e.g. in Matthew 28 our Lord said "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations . . . and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." This word assures us, therefore, that the Spirit of Christ will be with the church in her witness to the *Nations* until the end of the age; it follows that the Holy Spirit cannot be "taken out of the way" before the end of the age, and the church will not be removed until the end of the age, but is to be left on earth until then, not with a different gospel, but "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It is therefore taught in the final command of our only Lord and Teacher,

that the same church will preach the same gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit, all the days even unto the end of the age. The Lord Himself defines the end of the age as the "Harvest" when He Will send forth His angels to gather the tares and wheat, i.e. true and false professors of the Name of Jesus.

"Let both grow together until the harvest" precludes the taking of the true church, years before the tares are reaped.

The Two-Stage Theory Duplicates Many Things.

Paul says the bodies of all the saints will be changed "In a moment [not any moment], in the twinkling of an eye, at the *last trump*, for the trumpet shall sound, etc." Many attempts have been made to prove that this *last trump* is not the last trump spoken of in the only series of prophetic trumpets in Holy Scripture, but whether it be explained away as the Roman or Greek army trumpet, or the silver or ram's horn trumpet, it still remains that if this *last trump* is not the *last trump*, but seven are to sound after it, then it follows that there are two last trumpets, or that the trumpet here spoken of by the inspired apostle as the *last* is not the *last*. The thought that the Book of Revelation was written years after the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians presents no difficulty, inasmuch as Paul was a prophet.

We are asked to believe that in the New Testament there are two gospels or more; two distinct comings with years between (the advocates are not yet agreed whether it will be 3-1/2 years or 7 or even 40 years); two *first* resurrections, and two ends of the age. I have even heard it stated that: "The eternal gospel is not a gospel, for we are told there is no gospel in it"; and that "it is not eternal, because it will only be proclaimed for a little while." People are said to be eternally saved and made heirs of the kingdom because they have been kind to the *Jewish* brethren, or because they refuse the mark of the beast. Can anything be more disastrous than these false interpretations which undermine the very foundations of the gospel? Will any one ever be saved except by the grace of God through the merit of the precious blood of Christ?

Saving faith is always shown by works. Because they were saved by faith, Daniel and his friends braved the tyrant's torture. Because the sheep

of Christ are saved by grace through faith, they do of necessity show it in kindness to each other for Christ's sake.

"In that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister" (Heb. 6:10).

No Resurrection of the Saints before the FIRST.

God teaches us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the departed saints are to be raised at Christ's coming: "They that are Christ's at His coming." In Revelation 20:5, 6, we are told of a resurrection that is called in Scripture the first resurrection. "This is *the first* resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." But again, this is explained away with a zeal that causes deep regret. This *first* resurrection is not to be understood in all simplicity as being *the first* resurrection, but as a part of the first resurrection. Is this because the verses include those "which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands"? If this is really *the first* resurrection, there cannot be a resurrection seven years or more before it, and as this *first* resurrection includes those who have suffered under Antichrist, it proves that the *first* resurrection comes after the tribulation, and that there is none before it. 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, therefore, must refer to this same first resurrection and not to a resurrection that precedes the first resurrection.

No Resurrection before the Last Day of this Age.

Our Lord has taught us in John 6 that "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day (ver. 39), and this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (ver. 40).

"No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him; and I will *raise him up at the last day*" (ver. 44).

"Whose, eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (ver. 54).

Four times in this one discourse our Lord has plainly told us that the resurrection of the redeemed will be at the last day. In Revelation 20 we see that those who have part in the *first* resurrection will live and reign with Christ the 1,000 years; therefore, this last day must be the *last* day of

this age. The order of these verses is very instructive; beginning with the giving of the church by the Father to the Son; then the seeing and believing for ourselves; then the fact of Divine operation having drawn us to Christ; then the Lord becoming our satisfying portion.

So had Martha been instructed, for she confessed, "I know that he (Lazarus) shall rise again in the resurrection at *the last day*."

It is impossible that any future revelation given to Paul disagrees with this tremendous fact. Paul, in Acts 24:15, declares that the Jews allowed that there should be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, thus showing that Old Testament teaching was clear on the subject even to them. Daniel 12:2 connects the resurrection from the "*dust of the earth*" with the glorification of the redeemed in heavenly glory, when they that be wise shall *shine as the brightness of the firmament*, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Their portion being "eternal life" and eternal heavenly glory.

[The Church's and Israel's Victory Linked.](#)

Paul connects the saints' resurrection with the time of Israel's forgiveness: the fulfillment of Isaiah 25 (see specially ver. 8), "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it." Shall we believe that the period of greatest tribulation will immediately follow this? Our Lord said of the tribulation that "Except those days should be shortened, there should *no flesh* be saved." Shall we be asked to believe that it will come and consume its myriad's, *after death is swallowed up in victory*?

Paul says, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *then shall come to pass the saying that is written*, Death is swallowed up in victory." This saying is to be found in Isaiah 25:8, in a chapter which speaks distinctly of Israel's restoration and of the veil removed from the nations. Shall we say it does not come to pass *then*, but that a period of tribulation and delusion for Israel and the nations must be expected instead? Again I ask, shall death swallow up its myriad of saints *after* it has itself been swallowed up in victory, the victory given us by our Lord Jesus Christ? (1 Cor. 15).

The Coming "For" and "With."

Scripture declares plainly an interval of 1,000 years between the two resurrections, but no Scripture can be cited as stating a period of years between His coming for and with His saints. It is suggested that He cannot come with us unless He has previously come for us, and that therefore, the passages referring to His coming with us must be speaking of a different event; but even if this were true, it would not prove an interval of years: it could all be on "*one day* which is known unto the Lord" (Zech. 14).

The chief passage usually cited as if it spoke of a coming of the Lord for His church in contrast to other Scriptures telling of His coming with us, is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. But the 14th verse of this very passage precludes any such distinction by stating it to be a coming with us. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Speaking as he is to the living saints concerning the departed ones, the apostle, when he says "them also" must mean them as well as ourselves; thus teaching here that when our Lord comes, all the saints, both the living and the sleeping ones, "will God bring with Christ." His next two verses are written expressly to show how this will be, for, says the apostle, both will be caught up together to meet Him. Thus He comes for us and with us at one second coming and not at two distinct comings separated by any period of years.

"Will God Bring with Him."

These divine words are explicit. They rebuke at the very outset, any attempt to interpret this Scripture as a coming for His saints in presumed contrast to His coming with them. Concerning love of the brethren, Paul says they needed none to write unto them (ch. 4:9), nor concerning the times and the seasons (ch. 5:1, 2); but in this passage which lies between, he says, "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope . . ." They indeed had the blessed hope (ch. 1:10), but ignorance concerning one fact connected therewith was causing them over sorrow: hence this passage was written to them so that true knowledge of that hope as it concerned the dead in Christ, resulting in true comfort, should be their enjoyed portion. The words—even so them also that are fallen asleep in

Jesus will God bring with Him—were to assure them that all the saints, both the living and the dead, will together be brought with Him; for, says the apostle, both will be caught up to meet Him in the air when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and so be forever with Him. Thus they were assured that the sleeping saints will miss nothing of the glory of that day, but that it will be enjoyed by the united church of God.

It has been seriously declared that we are to look for the blessed hope, and not the glorious appearing, and that these words speak of two events, separated by years. But "and" is a conjunction, conjoining "the blessed hope and appearing of the glory" (R.V.) and can no more be divided than we can divide "Our great God and our Saviour" in the same verse, or "God and our Father" (1 Thess. 1:3).

In Ephesians 1:1 we read, "To the *saints which are at Ephesus* and to the *faithful in Christ Jesus*." Would any one assert that Paul was addressing two sets of people, and that the "Saints at Ephesus" were one and the "Faithful in Christ Jesus" another?

In 1 Timothy 6:14 we are exhorted to "keep the commandment without spot, without reproach, *until the appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ." How could we keep the commandment *until the appearing*, if we were to be removed from the earth years before the appearing? In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul says "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me but also to all them that have loved His *appearing*."

The Corinthians were commended in 1 Corinthians 1:7 (R.V.), because they "come behind in no gift; waiting for the *revelation* (Greek, Apocalypse) of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:7 says that proved faith will "be found unto praise and glory and honour at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ." In chapter 1:13 we read "set your *hope perfectly* on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ" (R.V.).

The two-stage theory, therefore, offers us a delusive hope alleged to take place before this revelation or appearing; but if our hope is "set perfectly" it will be set on that for which the apostles hoped, viz., the *glorious appearing or revelation* of our Lord.

The rewards for faithfulness are to be given: at Christ's *manifestation*

(1 Pet. 5:4, R.V.); at the *revelation* (1 Pet. 1:7, R.V.); at the *appearing* (2 Tim. 4:8); at His *coming* (1 Thess. 2:19), which proves they are not different events, with years intervening.

Inconsistencies of the Pre-Tribulation Theory.

The supposed interval of years between our Lord's coming for and with His church, involves its adherents in insurmountable difficulties.

It is said that the church may be translated at *any* moment; the Holy Spirit going up with the church; the world being left to believe the *lie*, and lawlessness to be allowed to develop without restraint. *No more Gospel preaching*; the Spirit who alone can regenerate a soul will have gone, and the church (i.e. all believers) gone.

But these same persons proceed to tell us that when the church is taken up, the Jews will go forth and again the gospel of the kingdom will be preached: and the sheep in Matthew 25 are said to be those who have been kind to these Jews. Yea, thousands will be saved.

Such is the teaching, but first it contradicts itself. No more Gospel preaching; Jews preaching Gospel of kingdom! World left to delusion; Thousands saved! How can both be true? If all believers are removed from the world (as removed they *all* will be) at His coming, then only unbelievers will be left; and if Israel has so terribly failed during this age of the Spirit, how will they evangelize the world when they are in the hour of their own darkest apostasy? Besides, we have seen that the distinction drawn between the Gospel of the kingdom and Gospel of the grace of God, is superficial and unscriptural.

According to this theory, the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place in heaven, and the great tribulation takes place on earth during the end of this very interval; hence our gracious Lord is supposed to have arranged to celebrate the hour of His highest joy in heaven at the very time when "a number that no man can number" are enduring the period of greatest tribulation on earth. Note, too, that they are saints who stand accepted before God, through the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, "the Lamb is their Shepherd" (Rev. 7:9-17, R.V.), and they are described in *exactly the same language* (ver. 9) as the redeemed around the throne in Revelation 5:9, viz. "Men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation"; Revelation 7:9 reads:

"A great multitude . . . of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues." Revelation 19:2 declares that Babylon has been judged before the time, for the marriage supper of the Lamb comes (19:7).

It is said by these brethren that when the church has been removed, the Lord will resume His dealings with Israel, and the last of Daniel's 70 heptads will then run its course, ending in the glorious appearing of Israel's Messiah, to convert and deliver the nation.

Now Antichrist is to "make a covenant with the many for one heptad," therefore he must be alive and in power to make that covenant at the time when the heavenly people are, according to this theory, translated; thus showing that even if it were true that a seven years' period intervene between the alleged coming for and with the saints, an any-moment coming would be an impossibility. Antichrist will arise from the Grecian portion of the Roman empire (Dan. 8) and rule over all, including Judea, therefore the revival of the old Roman empire in its ten kingdom form must at that time be a fact accomplished, and the making of the covenant for seven years would then coincide with the alleged secret coming.

These and many other considerations lead us to cleave to the plain statements of Holy Scripture, and to believe that: Our Lord is coming again once, and that in *manifested glory* (Heb. 9:28 and Luke 9:26), personally (Acts 1:2), visibly (Rev. 1:7), gloriously (Titus 2:13), unexpected by the world (Luke 11:35), with His holy angels (2 Thess. 1:7), after the tribulation referred to in Matthew 24:29, to receive His own (John 14), to judge the wicked (2 Thess. 1:8), not secretly (1 Thess. 4:16; Matt. 24:26-27), His coming will be preceded by signs, specially during the last 3-1/2 years of the age (Matt. 24:29, 30; Luke 21:29-31).

He comes forth "when His foes are made the footstool of His feet"; at the "times of restoration of all things" "when the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled" "after the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"; "immediately after the tribulation"; "to build again the tabernacle of David." Chapter 2 Thessalonians 1:7, where we read that the church of which Paul and the Thessalonians form a part, will get rest from "persecution and tribulation" (ver, 4), "*when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels inflaming fire taking vengeance*" (ver, 7).

Tribulation is Not Wrath.

But we are often told, Surely the Lord would not let the saints of this dispensation go through the great tribulation, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The church cannot endure this period of wrath. Why cannot the church suffer as much for Christ as those who are supposed to be in a place of lesser light and privilege? Is it deemed right that the very bride of Christ should be deprived of the privilege of witnessing for her Lord in the days of Antichrist when the adorable Name by which she is called is most blasphemed? Tribulation is not strange to the people of God, and it is specially noticeable that in the Paschal discourse, after saying, "Let not your *heart* be troubled," our Lord declares, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Paul says, "We glory in tribulation," and "through *much* tribulation we must enter into the kingdom."

We all naturally shrink from suffering. Few have learned to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials," or to "glory in tribulation also," but if times of persecution come because of the Word, it will not be true, I trust, of the true children of God, "straightway they stumbled." Many will find, like Daniel of old, a *wonderful presence* and power both to sustain and deliver. Every one knows without me laboring to prove it, that tribulation is not the same thing as condemnation or wrath.

2 Thessalonians 2:7.

One of the chief arguments used against the belief we hold is that in 2 Thessalonians 2 we read, "He who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way, and then shall be revealed that lawless one." It is frequently alleged that "He that letteth" is the Holy Spirit who rises with the church and leaves lawlessness to develop unhindered.

This allegation contradicts Matthew 28:20, where Christ promised to be with His church in her witness to the nations *until the end of the age*. Neither the Spirit of Christ nor the church will therefore be removed before the end of the age—the harvest.

(*Scripture cannot be broken.*) It also conflicts with plain Scriptures like Joel and Revelation 11, which latter tells of two *Spirit-filled* men, "sons of oil," witnessing in power against Antichrist's delusions.

The Restrainer of Lawlessness.

Truly, the Restrainer of lawlessness is God. But the words under discussion are, "until he be taken out of the way." Is a Divine person to be "taken out of the way"? Is such language used anywhere in Scripture of the Holy Spirit? No! It is within the power of any intelligent Bible student to look up the actual Greek words used, and to find their simple and universal meaning. "*Ek*" out of, "*mesou*" the midst, "*genetai*" to become. *Genetai*, *ginomai* and its cognate words, generation, genesis, *genos*, offspring, etc., indicate "bringing to the birth," and, therefore, could not possibly refer to the Holy Spirit. The Lord is restraining the leavening process of lawlessness, and will continue so to do, until out of the midst it arises as a fully ripe system with the Antichrist as its head. The secret of lawlessness will thus give place to the revelation of lawlessness.

Mr. B. W. Newton shows (Notes on Greek of Rom. 1, page 89, and Prospects of the Ten Kingdoms, 2nd Edition, pages 290-291) that in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 there is no thought of "*removal*" out of the midst implied in *ek mesou*, nor does any word in the context demand it.

Dr. Strong's Concordance confirms Pastor J. Hunt Lynn's statement that "*genetai*" is connected with birth, and could not, therefore, refer to the Holy Spirit (see Strong's Concordance, 1079). Dr. Strong connects it with 1074, 1078, birth, *genesis*, *genea*, also with "*genos*" offspring, from "*ginomai*" 1096, "a prolonged and middle form of a primary verb" to cause to be "generate," reflex "to become," "to come into being." The only occurrences of the English word "birth" in the New Testament are as follow:—

"And as He passed by He saw a man blind from his birth" (John 9:1; Gk. *genete*).

"The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise" (Matt. 1:18; *genesis*).

"And many shall rejoice at His birth" (Luke 1:14; Gk. *genesei*).

In vain does any one read into this verse the removal of the church, for the church is not even mentioned. Neither can we plead for the words, "taken" and "way," for there is nothing equivalent to them in the Greek of the text.

In Dr. Young's Analytical Concordance he shows that in the Authorized Version, *mesou* is translated "midst" 37 times; "among" 6 times; "in the

midst" 4 times. *Ginomai* is mostly "be" or "become," and this Dr. Young always gives as the literal meaning of the word.

Revelation 3:10

Is often quoted as proof that the church will be removed to heaven before the tribulation. Firstly, it is claimed by such writers that the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2 and 3) are a prophetic history of the church; that we are now in the Laodicean period; that the other letters have had a wonderful fulfillment during the past 1,900 years; and that the Lord will come during this said Laodicean period. If this be so, then it breaks in at once on the any-moment theory; for, if our Lord, in these seven letters, prophesied through the apostle John, the whole course of Christendom; the rise of Clericalism, the development of Romanism; the Protestant reformation; the turning of a remnant to the Name and the Word, occurring about one hundred years ago; and now the widespread blindness and self-satisfied worldliness of the professing church; if He foretold all these things during John's lifetime, then they were sure of fulfillment though requiring centuries, for the Word of Christ cannot be broken.

If, therefore, we are told that the church, when rightly instructed, has expected Christ to come at any moment, for the last 1,900 years, and that "between us and His return to receive His bride there is nothing; no event that must transpire; *not a sheet of tissue-paper placed between us and His return*" (*From The Coming Bridegroom and the Waiting Bride, by Ritchie, of Kilmarnock.)—then we reply, How can any one teach such things, in the face of this alleged prophetic program of the age? or of the 1,900 years of waiting that have already passed? Mr. J. Ritchie has himself written an exposition of Revelation for young people, in which he teaches about these seven stages. How then can he logically talk of an any-moment coming being what the Lord set before the church in John 14 and Acts 1:2? specially when he admitted long ago in the question column of the Believer's Magazine that Acts 1:2, primarily referred to Christ's coming to the earth, when His feet shall touch Mount Olivet?

I personally reject this exposition of the seven letters, but have simply sought to show that, if true, it refutes the "any-moment" theory of those who hold it.

The Whole Prophetic Program Precluded the Idea of an Any-Moment Coming.

Peter was to be martyred as an old man (John 21:18-19, and 2 Pet. 1:14); Jerusalem was to be destroyed and Israel scattered (Luke 21:20 and 19:41-44). After Paul's *departure* grievous wolves and false teachers would come, and "*after a long time*" Christ was to come; to say nothing of the events which some assert will take place after the so-called "rapture" of the church.

Can the promise to keep the church in Philadelphia from an hour of universal trial be proved to mean the removal of the church of God from the earth? Do not the same writers continually tell us that "The great tribulation is Jewish"? that it is the "time of Jacob's trouble, and he shall be saved out of it"? Is not this one of the arguments they use against us? How then can it be the same as "the hour of trial which shall try *them that dwell upon the earth*"? Again, "to be kept from" is not the same as to be "taken away from."

In John 17, the identical words are used, "Keep them from the evil," but our Lord says in the very same verse, "I pray *not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world.*" The word used is "*ek*," i.e. from or out of not "*apo*" away from.

1 Thessalonians 4.

1 Thessalonians 4 is said by some to be the first revelation of the church's true hope. The circumstances are said to be "so different in every particular" from the coming with His saints.

"Here He comes to the air; there He comes to the earth."

"Here He comes with a shout that is only to be heard by the church; there He is seen and heard by all."

"Here He comes to receive His bride; there He comes to judge the world."

But if Paul was the first to receive instructions concerning the "blessed hope," what about the church before Paul's conversion? Did not the church which Paul says he "persecuted," have knowledge of the blessed hope before Paul's day?

What were the other apostles teaching? Paul declares that he received his apostleship direct from the Lord Jesus; that he did not confer with those who were apostles before him, but went away into Arabia, and after

seventeen years went up to the council at Jerusalem, where his teaching was approved as being the *same as theirs*. How could this be if he had received a new gospel and a new hope for the church?

And as to the idea of secrecy alleged to be taught in 1 Thessalonians 4: do the words "*shout*," "*voice of archangel*," "*trump of God*" denote secrecy? Will the redeemed myriad's in transfigured bodies surround their glorified Lord, in the air, and the world see nothing and know nothing of it? The Lord whose countenance shone as the *sun*, and whose raiment was white as the light: the Lord whose appearance to Paul, near Damascus, was above the brightness of the noonday sun. Is this to be a secret affair, that the people of the world will find the train rushing on and the Christian engine driver gone, and such like things as are *imagined* in The Twinkling of an Eye, by Sydney Watson?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 cannot be Disconnected from Chapter 5:1-11.

In these verses, Christ is spoken of as the Lord seven times, surely indicating that the apostle is speaking about the day of the *Lord*. And the whole context clearly depicts in the strongest terms, a coming of the Lord in power and great glory. So much so, that if one were requested to quote a verse that set forth our Lord's coming as being in majesty and glory, the first to come to one's mind would be that which begins: —

"For the LORD Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . ."

In a later part of this book I have taken up more fully the alleged differences between the coming as described in this passage and in other parts of Holy Scripture, with the firm conviction that it is one and the same coming, —one coming—taking place on one day, "one day known unto the Lord" (Zech. 14:7).

Revelation 4 and 5.

As we constantly find in Scripture, Revelation 4 and 5 give the broad outline, later chapters fill in detail. In these chapters we find all the seals opened (chapter 5:5); the saints reigning in heaven and redeemed Israel reigning upon the earth (vs. 9, 10), and in verse 13, "every creature which is in *heaven*, and on the earth, and under the *earth*, and such as are in the *sea* . . . heard I saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

This certainly will not take place before the millennium.

"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" (Jas. 5).

May the patience with which the great Husbandman waits for His harvest, inspire our hearts with that which the inspired apostle Paul calls "*patience of hope*" (1 Thess. 1).

CHAPTER II.

THE OLIVET PROPHECY, JEWISH OR CHRISTIAN?

Two days before our Lord was delivered up to be crucified, He left the temple, after pronouncing woes on the rulers of Israel, and having uttered those memorable words:—

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not I Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 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. 23:37-39, R. V).

With these words He led His disciples out to the Mount of Olives, after having further emphasized the coming demolition of the temple, Having presented Himself to Jerusalem, according to Zechariah 9:9, He had been formally rejected by the rulers of the nation, who were compassing His death, He had therefore, pronounced woes upon them for leading Israel to her ruin, and foretold those desolation's which were soon to come upon the land, beginning with the destruction by the Romans in A.D. 70 and continuing throughout the age until He shall appear in glory, to save the stricken ones of Israel who will be spared in the latter days, and to convert and forgive them.

He had spoken of two things in particular, viz., the desolation of Jerusalem and of His own coming. They therefore asked Him privately

about these two things, in a question that refers both to the time and to the signs.

"Master, when therefore shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass?" (Luke 21:7, R. V.).

"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3. See also Mark 13:4, R. V.).

The Lord's reply, therefore, embraces these two events, giving the sign by which His disciples should know when the coming desolation of Jerusalem was at hand (recorded specially in Luke 21:20) and also the signs by which they should know when His coming was nigh even at the doors (Matt. 24:15 and 29 to 33).

By many of the Lord's people, during the last century, it has been maintained that this prophecy is entirely Jewish, that it was given to Jewish apostles as representatives of the nation, that it deals with Jewish desolation's and troubles, and finally with the coming of their Messiah, according to Old Testament promises, to gather the spared ones of the nation; affirming that although all Scripture is for our instruction, this prophecy does not directly concern the church.

This statement has always been questioned by those among us who hold the earlier teaching, for we believe that this prophecy, given by our Lord, two days before He was betrayed, does directly concern the church, both as to her present path of service and witness and her blessed hope.

It is clear that Jerusalem is the center of this prophecy, but its circumference is worldwide, speaking as it does of international upheavals, witness of the gospel among all nations, and culminating in a coming that is universal as the flood, when angels shall gather together God's elect, from the uttermost part of earth to the uttermost part of heaven. (Mark 13:27).

The terms Jewish and Christian are not so diametrically opposed as some would think. Paul was a Jew. Was he not also a Christian? Our Lord Himself, according to the flesh, was of the tribe of Judah: but have we no part in Him? He is to us our Lord Jesus Christ, and is not Christ but the Greek word for the Hebrew Messiah? We are spiritual children of the Old Testament saints, for we read, "They which be of faith, the same are sons

of Abraham " (Gal. 3:7, R. V.). "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29). We are, by faith, children of the Jerusalem that is above . . . which is our mother" (Gal. 4:26, R. V.).

It is remarkable that while we so often hear it said Matthew is Jewish, the same Matthew is the only writer who in the gospel mentions the word "church" (Matt., chap. 16, chap. 18); again it is in Matthew 18:20, that we read, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," and this is the acknowledged ground of our gathering.

"With Jesus in the midst,
We gather round the board;
Though many, we are one in Christ,
One body in the Lord."

Again, it is in Matthew 13 that we have the parables setting forth the work of the "Sower who went forth to sow," resulting in the harvest to be gathered at the end of the age; and in Matthew 28 the marching orders of the church; "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you ; and lo, I am with you alway (lit. all the days) even unto the end of the age."

ALL Power ... ALL Nations ... ALL Things ... ALL the Days."

The Olivet prophecy is recorded in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21; so that if the term Jewish is applied to Matthew, it must of necessity apply, to the other two, and if to the first three gospels, how can we treat John differently, seeing that he also heard the prophecy and was one of the four disciples (Mark 13:3) who asked the question, "Tell us when shall these things be"? This will become more apparent when we consider the relation of this prophecy with that spoken two days afterward and recorded in John, chapters 14 to 16.

Relation of Olivet Prophecy with Paschal Discourse.

The time when this Olivet prophecy was uttered is clearly stated in Matthew 26:1-2 and Mark 14:1, where we read:—

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these words, He said unto His disciples, Ye know that after two days, the Passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified."

The Paschal discourse was given on the night of the betrayal. We note, therefore, that the promise of John 14:3 was given to the same apostles within two days of Matthew 24. Both were given privately (see Matt. 24:3 and Mark 13:3). Both concerned Christ's promise to come and receive an elect people.

The word *paralambano* used in John 14:3, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself," is used in Matthew 24:41, and Luke 17:34 and 35, and translated "taken" in the words "One shall be *taken*, the other shall be left." It is important to note that in the two illustrations used in this connection by our Lord, viz., those of Noah and Lot, those taken (*paralambano*) were the saved ones, those left were for judgment. Noah was "received" into the ark and Lot was "taken" from the overthrow. Those "left" were the doomed ones. When it says "the flood came and took them all away" an entirely different word is used. Whether *paralambano* is translated "receive" as in John 14:3 or "taken" as in Matthew 24, makes no difference to the significance of the word and the connection between the two passages. In the Epistles it is always translated "receive".

The Olivet discourse describes a coming in glory.

John 14 gives no detail whether in glory or otherwise. Should we read secrecy into the words, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" when there is no suggestion of it in the text? Did our Lord give them, up to two days before His betrayal, full teaching about the coming in glory with which they were acquainted from the Old Testament Scriptures, and of which He had spoken to them on many previous occasions; at the signs of which they were to "lookup," and without any explanation give them *two nights afterwards on the eve of His crucifixion* in one brief sentence, *a different hope?* Especially when this one brief sentence, "I will come again and receive you unto myself," contains no hint of secrecy; no hint of being a new revelation; no hint of being anything else than a simple reference to the coming of which He had already so fully instructed them! If they received John 14 as apostles of the church, why not Matthew 24?

Both discourses are prophetic, and deal with conditions pertaining to this present age in which these very apostles took a prominent part, and any attempt to rule the church out of the Olivet discourse (e.g. on the ground that it was given them before the day of Pentecost) would equally apply to John 14 and to the words of Acts 11 "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go." Indeed, it is clear that this principle would rule the church out of all the teaching of our Lord as recorded in the gospels. What then becomes of our Lord's command "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded"?

Relation of the Olivet Prophecy to the Church.

It is clear that the Lord spoke to the apostles as members of a body of people, for He spoke of *corporate* hope and interest, just as in Amos 2:10 God said to Israel "I brought *you* up out of the land of Egypt and led *you* forty years in the wilderness." So also the Lord instructed the apostles, not as if they would themselves live right through the age and see all the things He foretold, but as members of a body of people that will so continue, and as such will be acting in the very circumstances He described, and profiting by the very warnings that He uttered. Now the question comes: What body is it? Is it His body the church, or Israel the nation? The first must be the correct reply, because the nation had just been "left desolate" and would remain so until the hour of their national conversion, which will take place at the glorious coming of Christ. During this age Israel as a nation are unbelievers and Christ-rejecters, and therefore could not be one with the apostles in their hope. Believers are not, by God, reckoned one body with unbelievers, nor do they represent unbelievers. The Olivet prophecy was, according to its own distinct statement, addressed to the "disciples" of the Lord, and being disciples, they were not the representatives of those who are the reverse of being His disciples.

The nation will continue in its course of unbelief until He comes in glory, and could not therefore use these warnings of Christ to His apostles, for when Christ has come and a remnant of Israel has been spared alive (then to be converted and forgiven by the Lord) all the events of this prophecy will be past history. The idea that He addressed the four disciples as representative of the nation Israel cannot hold good, for they were not the representatives of Israel, but were four Galilean fishermen,

who were destined to suffer at the hands of the rulers and representatives of Israel as described in the Acts of the Apostles.

In Matthew 23 the Lord spoke *of* the scribes and Pharisees as "those who sit on Moses' seat" and *to* them as "blind guides" pronouncing woes against them for persecuting His witnesses, and for leading unbelieving Israel to her ruin. The woes of Matthew 23 were received by the rulers and representatives of Israel, but the instructions of Matthew 24 and 25 were received by the apostles as part of the body of redeemed ones.

Nothing could be more emphatic than the contrast between the representatives of Israel who had just received those words, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell," and the beloved apostles who had followed Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. And when in Christ's parting words to Israel He said "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," He definitely did leave them—left them until the end of the age—left them until His glorious appearing. These prophetic instructions in Matthew 24 and 25 are, therefore, not for those whom He had left desolate, but for those to whom He said two days later, "I will not leave you comfortless."

Of Israel we read, "but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:16), but when they have passed through the fires of Jacob's trouble, the Lord will spare a very small remnant: these He will convert and forgive, and it is they who will say at that great day, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." When that day comes, the events of the Olivet prophecy will have been fulfilled.

When and Through Whom was the Inspired Witness given as Foretold in this Prophecy?

In the Olivet prophecy our Lord foretold an inspired witness to be given through certain of His suffering servants, before the Jewish and Gentile rulers. He said:—

"But take ye heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for My sake, for a testimony unto them. And the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations. And when they lead you to judgment, and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it

is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost" (Mark 13:9-11, RV.; Matt. 24:9; Luke 21:12-15).

Were not these things fulfilled to and through the apostles and those directly associated with them, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles? The inspired witness could only apply to them, for who else could rightly claim to speak by direct inspiration? "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11). In Acts 5:40, 41 all the apostles were beaten and went from the council "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name."

In Acts 12, James, the brother of John, was martyred by Herod, and Peter was cast into prison. These are three of the four disciples who asked the question, "Master, when shall these things be?"

In Acts 14:19, Paul was stoned at Lystra; at Philippi he and Silas were beaten and imprisoned, and almost every chapter of the Acts tells us of the suffering witness of the apostles before kings, rulers, and governors for Christ's sake.

Who were to be Hated for His Name's Sake and Whose Love can Wax Cold?

The four men, Peter, James, John and Andrew, who asked the question that drew forth this Olivet teaching, are spoken of as disciples (Matt, 24:3 and Mark 13:3), and our Lord in His reply said, "Take heed that no man lead you astray ... Ye shall hear of wars ... see that ye be not troubled . . . Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation ... Ye shall be hated of all the nations for My name's sake." Who can be hated for His Name's sake but those upon whom His name is called? (1 Pet. 4:14, R.V.).

"When therefore *ye* see the abomination of desolation...flee. Then if any man shall say unto *you*, Lo, here.... believe not."

It follows, therefore, that the persons addressed throughout this chapter as *Ye* and *You* are disciples of Christ, which the nation, as such, decidedly are not, for a hardening in part hath befallen Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in (Rom. 11:25 R. V.). Again, who can be hated of all men for His Name's sake but those upon whom His Name is called? Israel truly suffers much affliction from the Gentiles throughout this age. But as they nationally reject the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, they positively do not suffer for His Name's sake. But, and if he suffer as a Christian let him

not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this Name, says one of these four disciples in 1 Peter 4:16, R.V., see verse 14 also.

We see, therefore, that it is the Lord's disciples throughout this age who are addressed in this prophecy and as such are instructed, first as to those things which mark the *general current* of the age and secondly as to the *specific signs* for which they asked. Wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution of Christ's followers, increasing power of delusion and lawlessness. These mark the general trend of the age. "And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold . . ." (Matt. 24:12, R.V.). This must refer to Christians, born again ones, for "He that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God;" and only in those who have love, can love wax cold. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8). "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil."

Are Signs Jewish or Christian ?

It is often objected, that signs are Jewish, but our Lord said to the Jews, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet": i.e. the first sign for Israel is Christ crucified, buried, and risen; and until they receive that sign, there is no other for them. As in everything else Paul teaches the same thing, for he says, "Jews ask for signs . . . but we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:22-23, R. V.).

Our Lord says, "Behold the fig-tree and *all the trees*; when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass; know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh" (Luke 21:29-31). If the budding fig-tree is alleged to mean Israel nationally reviving, the Lord's further words "and all the trees" could only mean (on this principle) similar reviving of all nations; as if our Lord had said in effect: When ye see the revival of the world (Jew AND Gentile) ye know that the kingdom of God is nigh. But this is clearly not His meaning! In this passage (Luke 21:29-31) our Lord gives us the most simple illustration of the fact that just as trees budding surely indicate the near approach of summer, even so will the signs He had just foretold clearly reveal to watchful saints when the kingdom of God is nigh, even at the door.

Our Lord had spoken principally of two events, and the disciples asked 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 age?" (Matt. 24:3, R. V.). "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" (Mark 13:4 and Luke 21:7, R. V.).

He therefore gave them the specific sign that would prelude each event.

The sign of Jerusalem's destruction (fulfilled in A.D. 70) is given in Luke 21:20. "But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. Then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains and let them that are in the midst of her depart out and let not them that are in the country enter therein."

The sign of the approaching coming of the Lord is a period of unequalled tribulation, followed *immediately* by signs in heaven. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:29-31, R. V.).

The sign preceding the tribulation of those days is stated in ver. 15. "When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation ... standing in the holy place ... flee."

The immediate sign of Christ's coming, therefore, is the image set up in the temple and the shortened period of unequalled tribulation, from which Christ's disciples are commanded to flee (a period elsewhere defined as a "time, times, and half a time," "forty-two months" or "twelve hundred and sixty days," i.e. three and a half years), then the signs in heaven, earth and sea immediately followed by the appearing of the Lord.

[Who used the Sign in A.D. 70 and Fled to the Mountains? and Who will use the Sign of the Idol in the Latter Day Temple?](#)

The sign of Jerusalem's overthrow in A.D. 70 was an army surrounding the city. Who were the people who understood and obeyed our Lord's

command and fled to the mountains of Pella? They were Christians. Nor could it have been otherwise, for only believers on the Lord Jesus Christ would value His Word and obey it.

Here we are on sure ground for we have both prophecy and fulfillment; and we know that, for some humanly unaccountable reason, the Roman general, after approaching Jerusalem, withdrew his troops for awhile, during which time all the Christians fled to the mountains of Pella, and though the Jews as a nation were slaughtered by the thousands, there is no record of a single Christian being killed in the overthrow. Referring to this event in his Many Infallible Proofs, pages 66-67, Dr. A. T. Pierson says:—

The fact is remarkable enough, that in such universal slaughter not one disciple should perish; but more remarkable that it was after the besieging army should surround the city that they were to have opportunity to withdraw. What a strange signal for flight, when the hosts were cutting off every escape! And yet this was Christ's token to His faithful followers that desolation was nigh, imminent. They should yet have chance to flee; if done with haste; there would be opportunity, but it would be short. Hear again the Jewish annalist: "Cestius Gallus, after beginning siege, mysteriously withdrew, and without any reason in the world, and many embraced this opportunity to depart, a great multitude fled to the mountains." At this crisis, as we learn from church historians of the first century, all the followers of Christ took refuge in the mountains of Pella, beyond the Jordan, and there is no record of one single Christian perishing in the siege! As soon as the armies returned, the city was surrounded by a wall and all hope of flight was now cut off.

We have seen, then, that the Spirit-inspired witness foretold in this discourse was fulfilled in Acts through the apostles of the church. Now we see that the divinely guided flight from Jerusalem was the flight of Christians. Thus far the prophecy has had much, yea, very much to do with the church, first as to her witness and persecutions when the apostles were with her, leading the van; and secondly, when they had passed to heaven, by those who were left to follow in their steps. What shall we find concerning those, who in the future, living in Judea, flee for their lives the moment the idol is set up in the latter day temple? They will certainly be disciples even as those who asked the question, "Master, tell us"; they will

be disciples even as those who witnessed for their Lord in Acts before kings and governors. They will be disciples even as those who in A.D. 70 fled from Judea to Pella, for they are connected in this discourse by the same corporate "Ye," and only disciples believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, only disciples "read and understand" the prophecies of Daniel and of Christ.

"None of the Wicked shall Understand."

It is sometimes objected that those who will flee in that coming day will be the Jewish remnant who are to be spared to be the nucleus of the forgiven nation; but this is impossible, for that remnant will be refined by going through the very fires of this great tribulation in Judea, and cannot, therefore, be the company commanded to escape from it by fleeing to the mountains.

The Old Testament Scriptures give much teaching about this spared remnant of Israel, e.g., Zechariah 13:9. "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried": cp. Ezekiel 22:17-22.

Those who are spared alive of the nation will be converted and forgiven by the Lord at His appearing when "they shall look unto Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son." Till then they are not believers on the Lord Jesus and could not use Christ's prophetic word. The people who flee from Jerusalem will be Christians, whereas the spared ones of the nation who suffer in Judea will not be converted till the Lord comes. Then the unbelieving generation of which our Lord said, "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished," shall indeed pass, and the spared ones shall be born in a day. Then will be fulfilled the promise to Israel of which Scripture is so full, viz., that "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness," and "Thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever" (Isa. 1:27; 60:21).

We see, then, that Christian disciples, the fruit-abiding of the apostles' union with Christ the true Vine, will be here on earth, obeying our Lord's instructions, until the "end of the age" when He comes in glory.

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and Lo, I am with you all the

days, even unto the end of the age" (*suntelia*, i.e. full end, see Young's Analytical Concordance). Here Christ plainly states that the same church will be on earth to teach the same things He had taught and He would be present with her in this work all the days until the end of the age.

Will the Coming of Matthew be for Israel or the Church? Who are the Elect?

It is clear that a period of unequalled tribulation, shortened for the elect's sake that lives might be spared, precedes the coming of Christ.

Its greatest intensity is evidently to be in the region of Judea, else the disciples would not be commanded to flee therefrom. Jerusalem is its centre, and so urgent is the need for escape that flight must be instantaneous. We have seen that those who thus escape must be those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who know His Word, value it and obey it. They are those who read Christ's Word and Daniel's, for "Let him that readeth understand." They may be Jewish or Gentile by birth, but must be Christians (disciples) by religion. It has been objected that the mention of Sabbath shows they are Jews by religion, but if Israel in unbelief occupies Judea, they, the unbelievers of Israel, will keep Sabbath, observing it with all the rigidity of the Pharisees of old, and any one breaking it by taking such a journey will be open to persecution. The safety of those who thus flee is the thought of the passage, for no religious scruple could arise to saving one's life on the Sabbath. The mention also of winter and the tender infirmities of motherhood shows the Lord's gracious concern for these refugees. Christ says "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." I wonder how many of us have obeyed Him? We may, personally, be far from Canaan at the time, even if still alive on the earth, but shall we have no concern for those of the Lord's disciples whose duties or circumstances may cause them to be there at the time?

Unconverted Israelites will be in the land, offering their morning and evening oblation because they do not believe in the Lamb of God once slain. They will be in covenant relationship with Antichrist and will be deceived until he puts up his own idol and himself "sitteth in the temple of God setting himself forth as God." (It is clear that the Antichrist is not the head of the Romish Church, for great and unscriptural as are his claims, he does not exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped. He teaches the deity of Christ, claiming to be His vicar,

professing to lead all the faithful in the worship of God and Christ. Neither does he sit in the temple of God for that will be rebuilt at Jerusalem. The Vatican at Rome is not the temple of God.)

Their house being still "left . . . desolate" by the true God, the temple will have no shekinah glory, else neither Antichrist nor any other desecrator could enter its holy of holies and live; but being still "desolate," he, the desolator of Israel, will sit in that holy of holies as the professed shekinah, or in mockery thereof.

Some Israelites will refuse to worship him. Some will be slain. Jews in those parts will go through the terrible fires of affliction and will also suffer wrath at the hand of God, but part of them will be spared alive, and these (though not until the Lord has come in glory for their deliverance and dealt with their terrible foe) will be humbled and contrite. The testimony of the two witnesses in Jerusalem will probably have helped this, together with the fearful plagues that will descend on their persecutors. The story of Pharaoh and the oppression will be reenacted; with plagues on persecutors from which Israel's remnant will be sealed and delivered, just as it was in Goshen when God set a division (lit. a redemption, Ex. 8:23) between them.

Finally, the last great Pharaoh will see the visible glory of Him who appeared of old in visible glory in the pillar of cloud and fire, and Antichrist, Israel's last oppressor, will face the host of heaven as our Lord comes forth with all His holy angels. "Whom the Lord shall slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming." Hallelujah!

The words "Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together," are a hint that the coming will bring judgment and death to the foes, even while (as at the Red Sea) it brings salvation to others. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb, which comes after the downfall of Babylon and Babylon's king (see Rev. 19:1-2, R.V.), represents the Festal joy of Christ and His redeemed. The "supper of the great God" represents the awful destruction of Antichrist's hosts.

No Coming Before the Coming in Glory.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened ... and then shall they see the Son of man coming (Matt. 24:29-30).

To this agree the words of the apostle in 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10. R. V. "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure ... if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you; and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus."

Both these passages teach the same thing, viz. that the Coming of Christ by which all His redeemed ones get release from their affliction and persecution is at the apocalypse with His holy angels rendering vengeance on His foes.

No Scripture states that the Lord is coming for His church before the tribulation.

"They shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:30-31).

"Then shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then shall He send forth the angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mark 13:26).

This is not the gathering of Israel to Palestine. It is a gathering "from the uttermost part of earth to the uttermost part of heaven." It is here spoken of as a gathering together of, rather than a Coming with, the elect. Who are these elect? Scripture alone will supply the answer.

Many are called but few are chosen (*eklektos*), i.e. Those who are both "called and chosen" are God's elect. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Rom. 8:33), therefore His elect are His justified ones. "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God" (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

In the New Testament the word *eklektos* is always translated by the word "elect" or "chosen," and refers to the Elect One or His redeemed people, or when so stated, to the unfallen angels. The *eklektos* are the "called and chosen ones," the *ekklesia* (trans., church) the "called out ones." The correspondence is readily seen. It is, then, the "gathering together" of His redeemed ones, "from the uttermost part of earth to the uttermost part of heaven."

"Some from earth, from glory some;
Severed only till He come."

How will Israel be Gathered?

This will not be Israel's gathering to Canaan from all parts of the world. That will be after the Messiah has appeared to the remnant in Judea and "converted them." Many Scriptures tell us how the dispersed of Israel will be gathered, e.g. Isaiah 11 and 12. It will not be by sending forth His angels to gather them, but as it is written: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth ... And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with His scorching wind shall He shake His hand over the River (i.e. Euphrates), and shall smite it into seven streams, and cause men to march over dry-shod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people, which shall remain, from Assyria; like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt. And in that day thou shalt say, I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me" (Isa. 11:11 to chap. 12:1, R. V.).

Again, in that glorious chapter that begins "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," we read: "Surely, the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far" (Isa. 60:9). Also: "And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an offering unto the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots,

and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord" (Isa. 66:20, R. V.).

These and other passages tell us how God will appear in His glory for the salvation of those in Judea, and will cause the nations to bring back the outcasts of Israel and Judah; using the Gentiles' facilities, ships, dromedaries, and wealth to expedite the return and establishment of His people Israel in the promised land.

The passages quoted above, with their immediate contexts, show that it is when Israel has been forgiven and the Lord is visibly "in her midst," "her glory," and her "salvation," it is then that they will: "Declare His doings among the peoples" (Isa. 12:4).

It is then, and not before His coming in glory, that Israel will be the evangelists among the nations and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Not in an hour when the world is left to believe the lie. Not in the hour when Israel is in covenant relationship with the Antichrist.

Not in the hour when Jewish and Gentile apostasy is at its worst.

Not in the hour when the Antichrist is using Satanic power to blot out the very name of Jehovah and Christ.

Not in an hour when the Holy Spirit is supposed to have been removed from the earth, and the gospel of the grace of God will no more be preached because all believers have gone, and there is no one left to preach.

But it is then, that certain teachers would have us believe that a humbled, persecuted, sorrowing, and stricken remnant, not having the light we have, nor being children of God as we are, not being really born again by the Spirit, but still seeking in dim twilight, and crying and sighing for God to rend the heavens and come down—we are asked to believe that these will go forth, not with the gospel of the grace of God, but with the gospel of the kingdom, and myriad's will be saved; and these converts are supposed to be the "number that no man can number" from all nations, who stand before the throne of God, ascribing their salvation to God and the Lamb in Revelation 7.

The very statement of this impossible theory should be enough to condemn it. I would only ask one question, viz., If the gospel of the kingdom was indeed different from the gospel of the grace of God (which it is not), how could any souls be saved except by grace?

We see, therefore, that Israel will be forgiven when Christ appears in glory and she subsequently receives Him.

The elect, who are to be gathered from the uttermost part of earth to the uttermost part of heaven, must, therefore, be the company that God is now gathering out to His Name from all nations.

"Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 28:20).

"They shall gather together His elect" (Matt. 24:31)

We see first the "gathered together" ones on earth.

We see next the "gathered together" ones meeting the Lord in the air. Whereas in Matthew 23:37, we see Jerusalem not gathered. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. . . ."

Matthew 24 speaks of Christ's coming as being in glory, with all His holy angels, public and swift as the lightning; it will be judgment on His foes and deliverance for His redeemed; it will be a time of mourning among the tribes of the land (Israel) to be followed by the conversion of the spared remnant; but above all it will be the time when He who suffered shame and reproach before, will Himself appear in glory, having all heaven's power and glory at His visible command.

"O blessed hope with this elate,
Let not your heart be desolate.
But strong in faith, in patience wait
Until He come."

What is the Main Teaching of the Olivet Prophecy?

Firstly, that certain well-defined symptoms would mark the whole period from then until the end of the age: —wars, famines, earthquakes; Jerusalem trodden under foot of the Gentiles and Israel scattered among all nations; disciples of Christ persecuted by all nations for His Name's sake; increasing power of delusion and lawlessness so that the love of the many shall wax cold; the gospel preached in the whole world for a

testimony unto all the nations. These mark the general current of the whole period of our Lord's absence. They are clear and well-defined characteristics, but involving as they do all nations, and continuing as they do throughout the whole period, they are not given as the appointed signs of the Lord's coming. According to the usual method of Scripture they are given first to set forth the broad outline, or in other words, the background of the whole picture.

Specific Signs of the Specific Predictions.

But the Olivet prophecy circles around two supremely important specific events: *(a)* the desolation of Jerusalem fulfilled in A.D. 70; *(b)* the second coming of our Lord. The specific sign of the first "But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand" (Luke 21:20). The specific signs prelude the Lord's coming will be: *(a)* the abomination standing in the latter day temple at Jerusalem; *(b)* followed at once by a shortened period of unequalled tribulation; *(c)* closing with signs in sun, moon and stars, etc., immediately after which the Lord will come. While the Olivet prophecy declares matters which involve all nations, its center, as of all God's dealings with this earth, is Jerusalem. And Jerusalem is the place where the specific signs occur in connection with those two outstanding events. Over eighteen centuries have witnessed the steady fulfillment of the general predictions among the nations; and A.D. 70 witnessed the minute fulfillment of the specific prophecy of Jerusalem's overthrow by the Romans; and all these together bear witness to the truth of the prophecy, and of Him who uttered it; and also bid us look for the same clear literal fulfillment of the still future events as of the past.

"Take Heed." "Watch Therefore."

As our Lord commenced this discourse with the warning, "Take heed, let no man lead you astray," repeating the warning several times throughout the prophecy, so now He gives us a large section to impress the words "watch therefore." In A.D. 70 the Christians in Judea were watching for the appointed sign of Jerusalem's impending doom and saw the sign as the signal to flee to the mountains and by obeying the Lord's words escaped with their lives to Pella. They watched for the sign while they awaited the event it signaled. Nor can we obey our Lord's command,

"watch therefore," unless we watch for the signs of His coming. "Watch therefore for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh."

Sudden and Unexpected.

The Lord's coming will be unexpected by the world as was the flood, of which the chief thought here is that "they knew not until the flood came and took them all away." It had been proclaimed but they believed not. "Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house: through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7). He witnessed to and against a corrupt world and the flood brought at the same time, deliverance to him and judgment to them. The flood overtook them as a thief but it certainly was not a secret event. It was universal in its proclamation and extent. So too does the apostle Paul remind us that "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they [i.e., the World] and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape" (1 Thess. 5:2, 3). It will thus come upon them as a snare, not because it will be of a secret character, but because they will be continuing in their sins; and, in unbelief of God's word, will be looking for and saying "Peace and safety," the very opposite of what God has foretold. Neither will the world alone be surprised, for the whole section contains many illustrations and warnings signifying that many who profess His name (even truly) will be surprised. Is not this the distinctive warning in the parable of the virgins? The Lord firmly warns us against looking for a secret coming for says He, it will be "as the lightning shineth from the east and is seen even unto the west." Sudden, unexpected, but public and manifest as the lightning.

The Day and Hour Unknown.

Six times in these verses our Lord tells us that the day and hour of His coming will be unknown to man: yea, He says that even the angels do not know it, but His Father alone. But how many false teachers have presumed to declare the day and how many different days have they already fixed, only to see God's truth scoffed at, multitudes of people stumbled, while God's calendar goes steadily on to the time which God has planned and which rests as a secret in His own safe keeping alone.

Parables of the Olivet Prophecy.

The parable of the "faithful and wise steward whom the Lord has set over His household" is a great comfort to us, for it shows that even unto His coming our Lord will provide us such faithful men of God to guide the saints in the dark period of increasing delusion, persecution, and godless apostasy, and to feed the flock of God with convenient food. Blessed be the great Shepherd to make such provision. But there will be others; even as there have been all down the age: "hypocrites," for the Lord, who knows the heart, gives him his portion with the hypocrites; and His judgment is just.

This man represents those who are professedly stewards of God's household, but are in reality worldlings, for they eat and drink with the drunken, and persecute the true servants.

This has been so all through the course of the church's history but will be more acute at the time of the end, hence the warning of Luke 21:34.

Next we have the parable of the "Virgins." Here, again are professors, true and false, revealed and separated at the coming of the Bridegroom. As "Virgins" they professed purity and separation to the Lord from the world; professed to be light-bearers in the midst of the darkness; and called Him "Lord, Lord." The true ones clearly indicate the condition of the many true disciples at the time of the coming, for the Lord begins with "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto." The wise virgins knew the Lord, they were saved themselves, they had lamps and oil, they knew the Lord was to be expected during the night but had let their lamps get dim and needed to trim them, and instead of "watching" they fell asleep.

Their fellows were unsaved; unready; they called the Bridegroom "Lord," but He said "I never knew you." He will never say that of His own, for the Word says: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." They had a lamp of profession, but of what use was it in the darkness? They had no oil. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His."

This parable is for our warning! Lest we be like the foolish virgins, i.e. false professors; or like the wise virgins of the parable, wise indeed unto salvation themselves, but not wise enough to "Watch." "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

Among Christians who hold the two-stage coming theory, many admit that these wise virgins represent true members of the church of God. If this be so, and the Bridegroom going in to the marriage feast represents the marriage of Christ and His church, then admittedly the church and church truth are here in the Olivet prophecy. And the coming of the Bridegroom to the marriage is His coming in power and great glory immediately after the tribulation, of which He had just spoken in this discourse. Some, however, deny that they represent members of the church of God, asserting that they are saints saved after the church is taken to heaven.

If so, the difficulty arises as to how they go in with the Bridegroom when He comes to the marriage feast: a period of years after the marriage of Christ and His bride has (according to the two-stage idea) taken place. The words "For it is as when a man going into another country" connect this with the next illustration that of the "talents" in which again we have true and false profession revealed at the Coming. The two servants faithfully served their Lord according to their talents and ability, and were commended and rewarded when their Lord came: the "wicked and slothful servant," though receiving something of his lord's, did him no service at all, but sought to hide his property; and as we listen to his words, "I knew thee that thou art a hard man," etc., we hear the echo of the elder son, the self-righteous Pharisee in Luke 15, who condemned the father, justified himself and finished up in the outside place. So also with this man, his heart had been opposed to his master all the time he was professedly his servant, and by his own words he is exposed as an unsaved man, for none of the redeemed would think or say "Thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter."

Would a child of God accuse the Lord at His coming with harshness or injustice? NO! The Lord's sentence shows him to have been a lost soul, for he is to be "cast into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The Throne of His Glory.

We now come to the prophecy concerning the "sheep and the goats." It is said by many that this is "the judgment of the living nations," and is the

same event as that described in Joel 3 and Zechariah 14, but this cannot be, for those nations are gathered by the Lord, not to separate them the true from the false, but are the hosts of Antichrist who are bent on "cutting off Israel from being a nation" and are gathered to be destroyed." Let us quote Joel 3:9-12

"Proclaim ye this among the nations; prepare war: stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say I am strong. Haste ye and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together."

This describes the gathering of the nations against Jerusalem at the end of the age, under Antichrist.

"Tither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord," describes the cry for the Lord to come with His myriad's of angels to combat this vast host of evil nations. Truly it is the "valley of decision"—yes, God's decision. They will not be separated as a flock, the sheep from the goats, but will be slain with the sword of Him that sitteth on the white horse. The valley of Jehoshaphat will become a veritable river of blood. See Revelation 14:19-20.

In each of the parables, so far, we have clearly seen that true and false profession of the Name will be revealed and judged at Christ's coming, and this prophecy teaches the same fact. The sheep are the true flock of the Good Shepherd (the sheep of Matt. 25 being the same as John 10), while these designated goats are those who falsely profess to be of His flock.

But it is objected, "Before Him shall be gathered all nations," and nations are not Christendom. In reply to this it must be noted that the gospel had been preached to Israel, and they, having rejected it, He had "left" them desolate, and in this very prophecy proclaimed the preaching of the gospel among all nations for a witness; and in Matthew 28:19, He commands, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them, etc. . . . unto the end of the age."

"Seeing, then, that God has visited the Gentiles to take out of *them* a people for His Name," is it surprising that the company gathered at the

end of the age, as the result of this same testimony are called nations or Gentiles.

The words "Before Him shall be gathered all nations," are qualified and explained by all that follows, e.g. "He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats," i.e. they are His professed flock, and both call Him "Lord" when they address Him: "Lord, when saw we Thee." The sheep are spoken of as "Blessed of My Father," inheritors of the kingdom; "the righteous"; and their righteousness has been manifested by their attitude to Himself; and when He commends them they deny all merit of their own. They are the "righteous." How can any son of Adam's fallen race be declared righteous by the Lord?

Is it by works or grace? Remembering the terrible anathema in Galatians 1 upon any man or angel who preaches any other gospel than that which Paul preached, viz., the gospel of the grace of God, we may well tremble for those who assert that these are called "righteous" because they have been kind to certain (alleged) Jewish brethren. Will not such interpreters remember, too, the words of the Lord Jesus: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except ye turn and become as little children ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15).

The only ones who inherit that kingdom are redeemed souls. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, did not God choose them that are poor as to the world.... rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?"

"The saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom." None else.

"Come ye blessed of my Father." They stand related to God as children, i.e. born again ones; and to make this matter sure beyond all reasonable dispute the Lord says: "These," i.e. "the righteous"... "the inheritors of the kingdom," the "blessed of the Father," these who have served Christ by their love to the brethren: "these . . . to life eternal."

May the Lord deliver us from any theory that perverts the gospel of Christ, and contradicts the eternal doctrine of grace, by which alone any man can ever be saved, and possess eternal life.

But it is said by some: There are three companies spoken of here, viz. "sheep, goats, and brethren." Is this true?

In Hebrews 6:10, we read of "the things that accompany salvation," where the writer commends them by saying,

"Ye Ministered Unto the Saints and Still do minister."

Were not these Hebrew believers, saints? Certainly they were! And the proof of it was found in the fact that they "ministered unto the saints," i.e. to one another. So here, the true sheep of Christ have ever proved their love to Christ by their love to one another. Some teachers, in reading this prophecy, or quoting it, have been known to insert the word "Jewish." We need to take heed to the warning, "Add thou not to His Word lest He rebuke thee."

Our Lord is the head of the body: the church, and to use a West Indian expression, "When any part of the body is hurt, the head takes it up." When our Lord converted Saul of Tarsus He said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? I am Jesus ... whom thou persecutest."

The goats are similarly revealed by the Lord.

"I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat, etc.," and they disputed it and wanted to plead their own good works: "Lord, when saw we Thee . . . and did not minister unto thee?"

Since it has been alleged that these spoken of as "brethren," are not Christian disciples, it will be well to note that nowhere in the New Testament does our Lord refer to Jewish or Gentile people as brethren except the family of faith. "Who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His *disciples*, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 7:49-50, and Mark 3:31-35, R.V.).

"One is your Master even Christ, and all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23). "For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing Thy praise'" (Heb. 2:11 and 12).

The relationship our Lord recognizes with the sons of men is the spiritual; and Paul says, "Though I have known Christ after the flesh, yet know I Him so no more."

What is the Practical Value of this Study ?

What difference does it really make in the long run which view is correct? Is it worth while to press views that are unpopular and that cause feeling even among true saints of God?

These practical questions must be faced. To think that Satan should have Christians divided in heart on a subject so comforting and glorious as the coming of our Lord is a bitter sorrow indeed.

Our Lord has given us a command in His Word, "that we all speak the same thing," and we ought to deem it possible if we believe in the sufficiency of the Lord and His Word. "To be of one mind in the Lord" is such a desirable thing that every effort of prayer, study, love and forbearance ought to be made to attain it, and as our Lord has commanded us all to speak the same thing; and to see that there are no divisions among us, it is incumbent upon us to attempt, in humble confession of failure in this matter, to attain unto the unity of the faith. Every false doctrine has its corresponding effect in the church of God, dividing saints, paralyzing effort in the winning of souls, even in the darkest places of the earth, and making many a true heart cry to God in agony because of division, reproach and misunderstanding. The only path to real loving unity is the path of humility.

Another reason for this study is, that when these things begin to come to pass, if any saints find out by the strain of the events themselves, that so many have led them into a wrong expectancy, what effect will the sudden disillusionment have upon their minds and hearts?

At least four times in this discourse our Lord said to His disciples, "take heed that no man lead you astray," and all through He spoke of false teachers, the multiplying of iniquity, the power of increasing delusions, including great signs and wonders "that would lead astray, if possible, even the elect." If, then, we imagine our Lord will take us before these perilous times occur, wherewith shall we be prepared to meet them when they come upon us? And if those who are in Judea, are thus expecting, contrary to the Lord's prophetic warning, they will not know they are to

flee to the mountains, and the warning which was to have saved their lives will be lost to them. What if the Christians in A.D. 70 had been so deluded? What if they had thought that the Lord's words "When ye see Jerusalem compassed by armies . . . flee," were meant for others than themselves? we would not have the record in history that we have today, of their wonderful deliverance in the mountains of Pella.

CHAPTER III.

"THE ASCENSION OF THE CHURCH MILITANT. an ASPECT OF THE RAPTURE."

In an article under the above title which appeared in The Advent Witness, November, 1931, from the pen of Mr. H. Campbell, the writer says:—

"The Ascension of the Church ..."

"The title of our paper strikes a military note. We propose to show it is an appropriate aspect arising out of the Scriptures which present to us this great hope of ours, and no mere imaginary method of treatment on our part. It arises clearly enough when we pay due attention to the very special words used by St. Paul [emphasis mine], under the direction of the Holy Spirit, when describing the character of the great transit of the soldiers of Christ from the fight down here below to the victory up above in heaven. The Rapture of the saints is like a grand military movement. We take three of the main pronouncements on this subject."

The writer then reviews certain Greek and English words in 1 Corinthians 15:23, 52, 53, and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. His concluding words contain the following:—

"So our little tale of words is done. We behold do we not, the junction of two grand armies: the dead in Christ—whom God shall bring with Him; and those who are alive and remain at His Coming. What a stirring spectacle! What an amazing sky! Look up at it with the eye of faith. See! There are the troops moving up, ever up, faster and faster, further and further, each in their own order and glorious formation. The innumerable

companies are there led on by the high Michael—the Hosts of Heaven. Over all, the loud unending and unmistakable signal to march ringing out. Hark, can we hear it coming near? All is swiftness—the essence of military success. See! They are gone, gone, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye": in the clouds, the far-off clouds, the marvelous clouds. Not in the pale clouds of our poor sky, but in the trailing clouds of glory—the Shekinah clouds of God where the wings of the Cherubim beat. Gone—to the inheritance of the saints in Light. And then? What then, down here, on this darkening earth? This Christless world? ... Think of what this world will be like when all the true Christians, the salt of the earth, are gone. Evil predominant everywhere!"

These two passages will sufficiently illustrate the method and purpose of the article. It is certainly and gloriously true that 1 Thessalonians 4 describes a grand array of Heaven's Hosts together with the redeemed, glorified ones; but that our Glorious Lord comes with all His Hosts to take all His redeemed myriads swiftly away from the scene of battle, leaving the enemy in sole possession, is a grievous error. This will never be the result of our Lord's coming for which we most ardently look. But there is no misunderstanding the brother's teaching, for his last paragraph just quoted, in which he appeals to the unsaved, contains the awful words: "This Christless world. . . . evil predominate everywhere." Note that word "predominant."—"Evil predominant everywhere"!!!

The Shout of Battle.

Reviewing the words "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout" (1 Thess. 4:16), the writer cites certain authorities to prove that it is a battle shout. He says:—

"Luther uses for this 'shout' the German for 'war-cry.'"

"Vulgate: 'shout of command . . . which a general used.'"

"Lange: 'Christ is thereby described as a victorious captain whose order summons to battle for the destruction of His enemies.'"

"Darby: 'The shout is a military term.'"

"Conybeare and Howson translate: 'with a shout of war.'"

"Barnes sees in the phrase 'A great military rush.'"

Had our friend kept closer to his own authorities on this subject he would have done well, "for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a

shout"—"a war-cry" (Luther)—"a shout of war" (Conybeare and Howson). With the description of Lange we concur with the utmost gratitude to God, and hold it to be blessedly true that "Christ is thereby described as a victorious Captain, whose orders summon to battle for the destruction of His enemies," and we truly see with Barnes that it is "a great military rush." But strange to say, Mr. Campbell seems to see in it a great rush away from the scene of battle—a rush off the field instead of to it. Is it thought that our Lord will "shout for the battle, and instead of fighting it, rush His soldiers off the field leaving evil predominate everywhere? Why a battle shout and no battle? Will Antichrist wear out the saints of the Most High after the Lord Himself has shouted His war-cry? Most assuredly not!

"With a Shout" or "In a Shout"—Which?

Speaking of the words "with a shout" he repeats the well-known fallacy that they should be properly translated "in a shout." Shall we then discard our Authorized and Revised Version rendering and read it "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven in a shout" (1 Thess. 4).

The authorities he has quoted have not made such a mistake. They describe it as "a shout of command which a General used." Conybeare and Howson translate it "with a shout of war." Would the writer likewise alter the translation of the words: "And He shall rule them with a rod of iron"? (Rev. 19:15; cp. 12:5). "What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod?" (1 Cor. 4:21). "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. 2:16). In hundreds of instances in the New Testament the little Greek word *en* has an instrumental meaning and must be translated "by" or "with" as in the A.V. and R.V.

"The Last Trump"—Is it Really the Last?

Like many more expositors he stumbles over the words, "last trump," in 1 Corinthians 15:52. Like other writers he declares (without taking time to explain why) that "this 'last trumpet' has nothing to do with the trumpets of the Apocalypse." He says: "We cannot go into that question here. Suffice it to say that it means more 'last sounding trumpet,' rather

than 'trumpet sounding in the last days,' as if there were no trump after it."

We, however, refuse to treat Holy Scripture so! For us, these suggestions do not "suffice." We believe this "last trumpet" is the last trumpet in the only series of prophetic trumpets in the New Testament, namely, the seven foretold in the book of Revelation. It is when the seventh trumpet sounds that the Lord and His Christ take the sovereignty of earth's kingdoms for ever and ever. It is *then* that the angry nations are met by the wrath of the Almighty. The heavenly voices declare that to be *the time* for the dead to be judged (which must involve their resurrection) and "that Thou shouldst give reward." This must involve the judgment seat of Christ and agrees with our Lord's own statements as to when He will reward His saints, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). Revelation 11:18 gives a most comprehensive list of those who shall *then* be rewarded, viz., "unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints and them that fear Thy Name, small and great." Most believers in the two-stage theory, place the resurrection and rewarding of all the Old and New Testament saints at the time of the Lord's coming as foretold in 1 Thessalonians 4, and 1 Corinthians 15. But here Christ and His heavenly witnesses place it at the seventh trump, which proves in itself that the alleged two events are only one, and that the "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15 is the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15. These Scriptures are complementary, for while 1 Corinthians 15 says "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"; Revelation chapters 8-11 tell us of *the only series of Prophetic trumpets*; and show that it is then that the resurrection and rewarding of the Old and New Testament saints take place. While 1 Thessalonians 4 describes our Lord as descending from heaven with a shout—"a war-cry"—"a shout of command"—

"The victorious Captain whose orders summon to battle for the destruction of His enemies,"—Revelation 11 tells us of the wrath of the Almighty falling upon the angry nations, thus showing us with whom our Lord will battle when He "descends from heaven with a Shout." Our

brother does not tell us, as many do, that none of the Lord's enemies will hear that "Shout." He has acknowledged unhesitatingly the great truth that this is a battle scene and the shout is a "war-cry."

For about twenty years I believed in the two-stage theory (because I had never seen the other taught), although I felt difficulties in calling two distinct and different comings, with years apart, only one coming. Surely godly men must see that they are up against great difficulties when their theory compels them to controvert the true and simple meaning of such words as "Last trumpet," "First resurrection," "End of the age"; and when they have to contend that two second comings are one second coming. If these plain words could thus be "wrested" from their ordinary everyday meaning, one would feel it a hopeless task to be sure of anything.

Mr. Campbell also repeats the mistake that appeared in a tract by Dr. F. E. Marsh entitled, "At Any Moment." Dr. Marsh therein says: "As there are two trumpets (Num. 10) in connection with Israel, one to gather the people unto Moses and to God, and the other when they gathered to war against their enemies; so there are two trumpets, one to gather all the Lord's own to Himself (1 Thess. 4:13-18), and the other when Christ comes with His saints to inaugurate His kingdom of righteousness and to put down His foes."

Supposing this were true, which of these two trumpets would be the last, the first or the second? Mr. Campbell says, "In Israel two trumpets were used; one summoned the assembly; the last of the two was for the journeying of the camp—the order to march."

Now, as a matter of fact, Numbers 10 says not a word about one trumpet succeeding the other. Why then attempt to read the idea of First and Last into it? God told Moses that two trumpets of silver were to be made; and one blown to assemble the Princes to Moses, whereas the Two Blown Together summoned all the people. It was not a matter of succession at all but simply whether one was to be used or the two together. Our brother has told us (we believe truly) that this "trump" means a "war trumpet," but note the express words of Numbers 10:7: "But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm."

If the trumpet in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 and Matthew 24:31 (same word) is "a war-trumpet" and the "shout" is a "war-cry" (as

our friend has truly sought to prove), and as an alarm was not to be sounded simply to gather the people to Moses and to God, it follows that this "alarm" in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 must be connected, not with simply gathering the people unto God, but with gathering them for war. Paul says the bodies of all the saints will be changed "in a moment [not any moment], in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound,..." Many attempts have been made to prove that this *last trump* is not the *last trump* spoken of in the only series of Prophetic trumpets in Holy Scripture, but, whether it be explained away as the Roman or Greek army trumpet, or the silver or ram's horn trumpet, it still remains that if this *last trumpet* is not the *last trumpet*, but seven are to sound after it, then it follows that there are two last trumpets, or that the trumpet here spoken of by the inspired Apostle as the *Last, is not the last*. Be it also noted that the apostle nowhere says that the saints will be *translated* "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." It is the change that is said to take place, and that change will not be at any moment, but "in a moment... at the last trump." In one given, specific moment when the last trumpet sounds "the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed." The translation of *all* the redeemed will follow the change of the living and the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

"To Meet the Lord"

With regard to the word "meet" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Mr. Campbell truly says: "The word here used for 'meet' is a prechristian one of the 'koinee' or common Greek. It implied the welcoming of a great personage on his arrival. ... It is the same word which is used of the Wise Virgins who went out to 'meet' the Bridegroom."

This word is used three times in the New Testament and in each instance the thought is the same. In Matthew 25:6, it is when at midnight the cry goes forth "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" that this word for meet is used. It is not used in verse 1 where they went out to meet him, but while he tarried they all slumbered and slept. It is the word used only when the midnight cry goes forth, Behold! and the Bridegroom was actually on his journey—so much so that only those who were then ready could go in with him to the marriage. The wise virgins alone met him so as to conclude His journey with Him (*In the Textus receptus the words in *both*

verses 1 and 6 are: "*Eis apantesin*"; but in Tregelles' Greek text the difference is shown: verse 1: *Eis hupantesin*; verse 6: *Eis apantesin*). Likewise in Acts 28 the word is used in a simple historical manner, viz., when the brethren living in Rome heard that the apostle Paul was coming to Rome, they went out as far as the Market of Appius to meet him (*apantesin*) in order to conclude His journey to Rome with him. So—and in no other way—when our Lord is coming with all the Hosts of heaven, the dead and living saints (in glorified bodies) will be caught up together to meet Him (*apantesin*).

"We shall Meet Him on His Way."

In Matthew 25 the Bridegroom is not represented as coming for the purpose of meeting the virgins, but the reverse! In Acts 28 it was not Paul journeying to meet the brethren of Rome in order to return with them to Jerusalem from which he set out, but the reverse. It was they who went to meet him so as to conclude his journey with him into Rome, the place of his destination. Likewise in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, it is not the Lord coming to meet His church that is emphasized, but the reverse.

Be it noted that the well-known expression about our Lord's coming to the air is nowhere to be found in Holy Scripture. Nowhere does this or any other Scripture speak as if the air would be the terminus of Christ's journey on this occasion; but in the same way that the five wise virgins went to meet the bridegroom when the midnight cry arose and conducted him on his way; in the same way that the brethren in Rome went to meet Paul in order to accompany him on the rest of his journey into Rome;—even so shall we be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air. For Him to be Coming to the Air would be one thing, but for His redeemed to be "caught up . . . to meet Him in the air" (as Scripture says they will) is quite another. Well did Miss Frances Ridley Havergal put this thought in her well-known hymn: —

"Thou art coming: Thou art coming:
We shall meet *Thee on Thy way*."

The divine emphasis is not on Him coming to meet us, but we being caught up to meet Him. Christ is the center of all the glory in that day.

"Parousia" Not a Special Pauline Word.

The two words "*parousia* and *apousia*" occur in that well-known verse in Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence." Its literal translation is "presence."

The idea that "*parousia*" (and the other Greek words mentioned in his paper) are "the very special words used by St. Paul" to describe this event in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 is disproved by the fact that it is used four times in Matthew 24 of the coming of the Lord which such brethren distinguish (and want us to distinguish) from the coming which Paul taught the church to expect.

"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming (*parousia*), and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3).

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27).

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37).

"And they knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall be the coming (*parousia*) of the Son of man" (Matt. 24:39).

These all (cited from the Lord's Olivet prophecy) refer admittedly to Christ's coming in power and glory with His church and show our Lord's use of the word.

"Christ the Firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming" (*parousia*) (1 Cor. 15:23).

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15).

These illustrate Paul's use of the word.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming (*parousia*) 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: establish your hearts: for the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:7-8).

These show how the Apostle James used the word. And note how he emphasizes "patience": waiting for a harvest which must involve waiting for the seasons with early and latter rain, etc.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty . . ." (2 Pet. 1:16). "Where is the promise of His coming" (*parousia*)? (ch. 3:4). "Looking for and hasting unto the coming (*parousia*) of the day of God . . ." (ch. 3:12).

These illustrate the apostle Peter's use of this word. "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (*parousia*) (1 John 2:28).

This illustrates the apostle John's use of the word. And these citations from the words of the Lord, and Paul, Peter, James, and John, disprove the idea of it being a very special word used by Paul. The same can be said of the "trumpet" (cp. Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52, and 1 Thess. 4:16), where the same word is used by Christ and Paul. The same also can be said of "*musterion*" (cp. Matt. 13).

A Day of Glory and Victory.

With all that is said in our brother's article about this scene being one of majesty we heartily agree. Truly no passage of Holy Scripture more vividly describes our Lord as coming in manifested glory than 1 Thessalonians 4. We fully agree that He is seen Coming as "The Lord of Hosts." Indeed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to chapter 5:11 (which is all one context and runs on without a break) He is spoken of as Lord seven times. It is the Day of the Lord—"the Lord Himself." Christ is Lord—the Day of Christ is therefore The Day of the Lord. After reading all that our brother has said about the "shout of command"—"the war-cry"—and the affirmation that "Christ is therefore described as a Victorious Captain whose order summons to Battle for the destruction of His enemies," it will surely be impossible for any God-fearing man to repeat the assertion that "of course no one will hear that shout except the Lord's people," for it would be rather strange for the LORD to come with all heaven's hosts ("the Holy Myriads") and utter that "war-cry"—"that shout of command" and for all His foes to be quite unconscious of it. Truly we are thankful that our brother has not followed the example (in this article) of those who would degrade this scene of glory into a secret removal of the bride.

Our Lord is coming again once, and that in manifested glory, and it is when He so comes forth, that we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. We shall thus, in glorified bodies, be with our Lord when He rescues the spared remnant of Israel, destroys Antichrist and his armies, and sets up His glorious kingdom. With our brother's ardent longing for that glorious day, I am absolutely one, as also in his earnest desire to warn souls to flee from the wrath to come, but I earnestly pray that he and others may be led to see (even as God has led me) that the result of that day, foretold in 1 Thessalonians 4:16&17, will not be to leave this world "Christless" . . . with "Evil Predominate Everywhere" for a period of years, but to fill it with Christ's millennial glory.

Christ Predominate Everywhere.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE DAY OF CHRIST" IS "THE DAY OF THE LORD."

A remarkable distinction proposed to us by those who would have us divide the second coming of our Lord is that the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4 describes the Day of Christ, but that the Olivet prophecy describes the Day of the LORD—asserting that the day of Christ is nowhere spoken of in the Old Testament but was a special revelation made through the apostle Paul—and to use the words of C. I. Scofield, D. D. (p. 1212; Dr. C.I. Scofield's Reference Bible). "The day of Christ relates wholly to the reward and blessing of saints at His coming, as day of the Lord is connected with judgment."

When it is averred that we must sharply distinguish between the day of Christ and the day of the Lord, we answer—Why? Is not Christ the Lord? When we read, "Behold the day of the Lord cometh . . . then shall the Lord go forth and fight . . . and His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives . . . and the LORD my God shall come and all the saints with Thee" (Zech. 14:1-5), is it not agreed that the Lord whose feet shall stand in that day on Mount Olivet is the Lord Christ? Since the Christ of the

New Testament is so emphatically the Messiah of the Old, that we read, "we have found the Messiah which is, being interpreted, Christ," and the Messiah of the Old Testament is decidedly and admittedly Lord, such proposed distinction is shattered by one of the simplest facts of Holy Scripture, namely that "Jesus Christ is Lord." And if Christ is Lord, the day of Christ is the day of the Lord.

In numerous passages of Scripture the day of the Lord is

Connected with Salvation and Reward,

not only with judgment. "Behold your God shall come with vengeance, your God with a recompence; He will come and save you" (Isa. 35:4). "Behold your God I Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him . . ." (Isa. 40:9-10; cf. Acts 2:19-21; Rev. 22:12). That the distinction alleged by Dr. Scofield is unwarranted is proved also by the plain direct statements of the Lord Christ Himself; in which He tells us when He will reward His disciples, e.g. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of the Father with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). This is where the judgment seat of Christ comes in. In direct opposition to the oft-attempted distinctions, we see that in the Olivet prophecy Christ depicts Himself coming as Lord (Matt. 24:42), as rewarding His servants (25:21, 23), as Bridegroom, coming to the marriage (25:1-13), and as Shepherd-King with His flock (25:31-46), whereas in this whole passage from 1 Thessalonians 4:13, which is alleged to set forth the day of Christ as distinct from the day of the Lord, there is no distinctive word of Him as Bridegroom, no word about bride or marriage, nor about Him rewarding His servants (those being in the Olivet prophecy), but the sevenfold emphasis is on His Lordship.

Just as our Lord is spoken of in Scripture by many titles and in many ways, but is always the One same blessed Person, so His day is

Variously Termed in Holy Scripture:

"the day," 1 Corinthians 3:13; Hebrews 10:25, 2 Peter 1:19.

"that day," 2 Timothy 1:18 and 4:8.

"the day of Christ," Philippians 1:10

"the day of Jesus Christ," Philippians 1:6.

"the day of God," 2 Peter 3:12.

"the great day," Jude 6.

"the day of the Lord," 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10.

"the day of our Lord Jesus," 2 Corinthians 1:14.

"the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 1:8.

It is surely worthy of note that the Thessalonian passage which is supposed by some to describe the day of Christ as distinct from the day of the Lord does not even contain either of the phrases that such would recognize as referring to the Day of Christ, but emphasizes His Lordship. Thus it is "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air . . . and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

It is His Title LORD

that is seven times repeated in these verses in the whole context (1 Thess. 4:13-5:11), and in a central verse it is the "Day of the Lord" (verse 4).

By dividing the second coming of our Lord into two second comings, placing between His coming for and with His saints a period of years for which they can show no Scripture statement though they are frequently asked for it, the teachers of the modern two-stage coming theory involve themselves in this difficulty (and many others) that they place the day of Christ before the day of Antichrist.

But will the Day of Man follow the Day of Christ?

Will the day of Christ when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . ." (which even writers in The Advent Witness have admitted to be a "war-cry"), leave the world to go on as if the Lord's battle shout did not affect or concern it? The time of Antichrist's reign will be pre-eminently "man's day," when man's pride, blasphemy, and rebellion will reach its very apex. Will "the Lord Himself descend from heaven with a shout, with the *voice of the archangel* and with the *trump of God*" and leave His greatest foe to rise and take possession? Nay Christ is Lord. The day of Christ is the day of the Lord, when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The redeemed host, thus translated, will be part of the Lord's Host when He

smites the Antichrist and his armies, delivers the remnant of Israel, and sets in Zion the throne of His kingdom. Thus man's day will be overwhelmed and extinguished by the day of the Christ, which is in very deed the day of the Lord.

CHAPTER V. CHRIST'S SECOND COMING: POST-TRIBULATIONAL.

The second coming of our Lord will terminate effectually all tribulation for all God's saints.

This truth rests upon the plain statements of Scripture. The simple words of our Lord on Mount Olivet, spoken within three days of His death, declare that

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . ." (Matt. 24:29),
"But in those days, after that tribulation . . ." (Mark 13:24),

Christ will come to gather His elect people from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. To this agree the words of the Apostle Paul who, speaking of the "persecutions and tribulations" the saints were enduring (verse 4) says:—

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed 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" (2 Thess. 1:6-8).

Whatever is asserted about Matthew 24 being Jewish, it is certain that no such theory can intrude itself here, for these words were addressed to Gentile believers. They were in need of comfort; and the apostle wrote expressly to comfort them, but he does not in any way suggest a coming of our Lord before His coming in glory. It is agreed on both sides that in all such passages Scripture speaks of corporate hope. Even so, when the

apostle says "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15), and "knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus; and shall present us with you" (2 Cor. 4:14). In the one passage he links himself and fellow-workers with the dead in Christ, and in the other with those who will be alive when Christ comes, simply because all are in very deed the one family of God in heaven and on earth. The apostle's words here are, "And to you who are troubled, rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus," and explicitly describe it as being "with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance."

So also does the Apostle Peter teach us. His two epistles were written to "strengthen the brethren." The first deals specially with the sufferings of Christ and His people, and the second with the glories that shall follow. But in writing to those who were "if need be in heaviness through manifold trials," he says:—"that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ " (1 Pet. 1:7, R.V.).

and again,

"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).

The fruitfulness, preciousness and reward of tried but triumphant faith (ver. 7), as well as the grace to be brought unto us (ver. 13), will be, according to the Apostles Peter and Paul, at the revelation (Greek: apocalypse) of our Lord Jesus Christ. Neither of them hint at any previous return of our Lord.

This also accords with the teaching of the prophets. In Daniel we read:—

"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" (Dan. 7:21, 22).

It does not suffice to say that this passage is Jewish, for whether Jew or Gentile, none can be saints apart from being "born from above." The spared ones of Israel will not be converted to God until Christ destroys Antichrist. Then, and not until then, will they exercise personal faith in

Christ. Then, and not until then, will they look unto Him whom they had pierced and be brought to true repentance. They cannot, therefore, be the saints who are spoken of as such so many times in this one chapter and in numerous other passages of God's book, against whom Antichrist will make war during the last three and a half years of this age. These same persons of whom God says:

"Here is the patience of the saints: Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12),

are indeed "keeping the faith of Jesus"—and can any keep the faith of Jesus and not be Christian? They are keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus during the time of Antichrist's rule, and in it are glorifying God, for as He looks upon them He can say with approval: "Here is the Patience of the Saints."

I affirm then, again, that the second coming of our Lord will, according to all the Scriptures (prophets, evangelists and epistles), *effectually terminate all tribulation for all God's people for ever.*

The idea that Christ will come and take some of His people to enjoy the bliss of the marriage scenes above and the rewards of the judgment seat of Christ, while other saints are to be left on earth to endure the fiercest persecution for His sake, is nowhere taught in God's Holy Book.

Does Any Scripture Oppose this Teaching?

A while ago, the Editor of The Indian Christian sent a questionnaire to leading men, in agreement with his views, in Great Britain, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The questions centered around this subject. The third question is:—

"What Scriptures, if any, do you consider definitely teach that the Church will *NOT* pass through the Great Tribulation? Refs. only."

This is a definite question, and therefore we value it, for truth loves definiteness and precision. We like to come to grips, for truth has everything to gain and nothing to lose thereby. Mr. Irvine has printed the replies and references given (from Deut. to Rev. 22), and has himself written a preface thereto which I will now quote exactly and in full.

He says: "Under this section a number of helpful remarks are made, and passages of Scripture are given, which should be a comfort to any Christians who dread the unspeakable days of the Great Tribulation, more

than—as well they may—the dark waters of Jordan. Whilst no such ‘categorical statement,’ as is suggested by Mr. C. F. Hogg, can be produced—and as he says, none need be expected—many of the passages quoted clearly indicate the relationship that Israel and the world will have with this day of wrath and trouble and distress; and as these passages are, as is true of the whole body of Scripture, *uniformly silent* with regard to the Church passing through it, surely the fears of those ‘that are Christ’s at His coming’ (*Parousia*) may well be allayed. In some of our after articles further reassurance on this all-important matter is given. (Ed., I.C.)." (Indian Christian, p. 147. March, 1931.)

What is the result of Mr. Irvine’s investigation according to his own summary of the replies given? First of all, after having examined and printed the testimonies of these leading men in Great Britain, North America, and Australia, he writes:—

"No such Categorical Statement... can be Produced and None Need be Expected."

Secondly, he says, "Many of the passages given clearly indicate the relationship that Israel and the world will have with this day of wrath and trouble and distress"—thus recognizing and acknowledging that they deal with something entirely different from the question asked. Thirdly, he asserts the *uniform silence* of Scripture on the subject in hand; and fourthly, calls upon troubled hearts to rest in this alleged uniform silence of Scripture. If it were true that Scripture is uniformly silent, as to the Church passing through the last three and a half years of God-honoring witness against Antichrist, it could, for that very reason, teach nothing about that of which it is said to be *uniformly silent*. We see, therefore, that these brethren have no Scripture statement to bring against the teaching we hold.

Some years ago a leader of the Darby party was asked, Can you tell me any verse or verses of Scripture that state either a secret coming, a two-stage coming, or a pretribulation coming? The reply was, "You look for verses of Scripture: we look for principles." But can Scripture principles be taught except by Scripture words? In like manner, a while ago, Dr. Burton printed the following in the *Advent Witness*:

"An esteemed fellow-student of the Scriptures asks for plain proof of the separate stages of our Lord's return. This opens up an immensely important line of investigation. *Of course there are no verses that state in so many words that there are separate stages*" (italics ours).

We welcome such a courteous answer. The subject is indeed of immense importance. It is clear that if Scripture does not state in so many words that there are separate stages it is not stated at all, for that is the only way in which anything could be stated, namely in so many words.

We see, therefore, that no verses of Scripture are to be found that state that the Church will not pass through the last three and a half years of great tribulation, nor that there are separate stages of our Lord's return.

And in addition to having all these facts against them, teachers of what they are pleased to call the "two-stage coming" inevitably involve themselves in the task of drawing distinctions between the second coming of Christ as foretold in all Scripture beside, and that same teaching as expressed by the Apostle Paul. And this alone does not fully state the case, for having severed Paul's teaching from the rest of Scripture, they proceed to divide between his first and second epistles to the Thessalonians. The second is allowed to teach the very same second coming as other parts of Scripture, but the first epistle is said to contain an entirely new revelation as the Church's hope. And even here it is not all the teaching of the epistle on the subject, but a few verses taken apart from their immediate context which follows without a break in chapter 5, which context in chapter 5, they allow to be treating of exactly the same second coming as the rest of Scripture. But these five verses and exhortations are divided off and alleged to be an entirely new revelation. Is this rightly dividing?

Those who assert that specific Church truth is only to be found in Paul's epistles do thereby convict themselves of adducing, as from Paul's epistles, ideas which they confessedly cannot find anywhere else in the Word of God.

Was it a Fresh Revelation to Paul?

It is affirmed by many that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, is the record of an entirely fresh revelation made to and through the Apostle Paul. This is,

they claim, the first record of the hope of the Church, and is entirely different from the second coming of Christ spoken of in earlier Scriptures. Now, if this were true, it would effectually take from them all the previous verses of Scripture which they attempt to use against us. Useless for them now to say, Only the Church saw Him go, and only the Church will see Him come (Acts 1:9). And how can they use the very words of 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "waiting for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come," and say: "This is His coming to the air, as Son of God, but Matthew 24 is His coming to the earth as Son of man." If 1 Thessalonians 4 truly contained the first teaching ever given on the hope of the Church it would follow that the Church at Thessalonica had not, up to that time, the blessed hope; but this fallacy is refuted by the fact that at the very reception of the gospel from the apostle, they had, "turned unto God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, . . . even Jesus which delivereth us from the wrath to come": and are spoken of by the apostle as being in blessed contrast to "those which have no hope," which proves that they already had it. Moreover, it would follow that, until that time, no Church on earth, neither any of the apostles, not even the apostle Paul himself, had the true hope of the Church until he wrote this first epistle to the Thessalonians. In such case would he have said, "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren," of something never known before in the Church of God? The truth is that concerning love of the brethren they needed not that one wrote unto them. Nor about the times and seasons and unexpectedness to the world of our Lord's return. These, Paul says, they knew perfectly. But they did need true teaching to correct them as to the part the dead in Christ will have in that day. If the blessed hope was that Christ might come at any moment and we be taken without dying, then all who have died in Christ have missed that. But the blessed hope as here taught is, that "Whether we wake or sleep, we shall live together with Him," and the blessed emphasis throughout the passage is on the word "together." When our Lord comes both we and they, "will God bring with Him," for the resurrection in glory of the sleeping saints, and the change into His image of the living saints will be followed by both being caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. When we see our Lord coming in

power and great glory, we shall not have to wait till He reaches the earth, but having been changed into His image, we shall be caught up to meet Him.

"Thou art coming: Thou art coming,
We shall meet Thee on Thy way."

"A Careful Comparison" Examined.

It inevitably follows that teachers of the two-stage theory are involved in the task of finding distinctions between this passage in Thessalonians and, specially, our Lord's Olivet Prophecy, which He gave within three days of His death. This, say they, is the coming Bridegroom for the waiting bride, whereas that in Matthew is His coming as Son of man to Israel. But is it not wonderful that the words "Bridegroom," "bride," "marriage," cannot be found in 1 Thessalonians 4, but that our Lord gave a whole parable in the Olivet Prophecy, telling of the Bridegroom coming "and those that were ready went in with Him to the marriage." In this Indian Christian is an article by Algernon Pollock entitled "The Appearing and the Rapture—A Careful Comparison between Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4." His principal argument is that certain things are mentioned in the one passage and not in the other. In reply it would be sufficient to point out that (a) the Olivet Prophecy was given to answer the direct question as to the signs of Christ's coming and therefore treats of those signs, whereas 1 Thessalonians 4 was written for the purpose of comforting saints as to the dead in Christ—saints whom, the apostle himself says, knew those other things perfectly, and for that very sufficient reason he did not here write what he says they needed not; (b) Matthew 24 is but part of the Olivet Prophecy, which includes Matthew 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is but part of the Apostle Paul's statement concerning the coming of Christ. But although these six verses are often severed from all that follows in the same context, and from the rest of Paul's teaching in other parts of his writings, not one of the distinctions proposed will stand the test.

"The Appearing and the Rapture."

Whence this word "rapture"? The English word rapture means extreme joy. It has no true connection with the word in I Thessalonians 4:17, which means exactly what the A.V. and R.V. translators have rendered it,

namely, to be "caught away" or "caught up," the upward direction being contained in the contextual words, "to meet the Lord in the air." It is no right use of words to change "caught up" into "wrapt away" and "wrapt away" into "rapture", and then to speak of God's people being "raptured from earth to heaven." The writer says:—

"Matthew 24 is the coming of the Son of man, but 1 Thessalonians 4 is the coming of the Lord Himself." Reply: We read in Matthew 24:42, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Is not the coming of "your Lord" the coming of "the Lord Himself"?

God's Elect.

Chapters 8-11 of the epistle to the Romans deal very fully with the subject of election. Speaking of those whom God foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, glorified, Paul says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. . . ." God's justified ones for whom Christ died and rose again, are His elect. This Scripture then proceeds to link the elect of Paul's day with those of the Psalmist's day by its use of the words: "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. . . ." The words, "For Thy sake," denote the reason of the sufferings, "as sheep for the slaughter," refer them to God's flock: "Shall tribulation, or distress . . . or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" describe the nature of such sufferings of God's elect. While verses 37-39 acclaim the fully assured triumph—"more than conquerors through Him that loved us,"—of all the suffering saints of God.

Chapter 9 goes on to deal with the very subject of Israel's relation to the covenant of God and says, It is "not as though the word of God has come to nought. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." "The purpose of God according to election" is then illustrated by reference to Isaac and Jacob, both born, not merely of the flesh, but of promise and of the Spirit. God is spoken of as "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob," for they were born again men. But never is He

spoken of as the God of Ishmael or Esau. It is true that God chose the nation Israel for blessing in the earth and He will completely fulfil all His gracious promises to them, converting them when Christ comes again, and making them the chief nation on the earth during the millennial reign of Messiah. But a man is never one of God's elect in the deepest sense of the word simply because he is born of Abraham according to the flesh. The whole New Testament affirms this repeatedly, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." In chapter 11:4, the seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal are distinguished from all others of Israel. They were God's elect. Again, in verses 5-10, Scripture carefully states the distinction between the nation Israel and the elect, both of Paul's day and Elijah's day, uniting such elect ones in the words: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. . . . What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded, according as it is written. . . ."

If the elect obtained that which the nation obtained not, it shows that Scripture clearly draws a distinction between the two. Peter also, who heard the Lord speak three times in the Olivet Prophecy alone, of the elect, bids us to "make our calling and election sure," and says: But ye are a chosen (*eklektos*) generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. . . ." and that in contrast to the unbelieving Jewish people (1 Pet. 2:7) and also to the unbelieving Gentiles surrounding us (2:12).

This certainly settles who the elect are in the Gospel narratives, and in the Olivet Prophecy. Since only the saints of God both in the Old Testament and New Testament are God's elect, they are those spoken of in Matthew 24 and Mark 13.

"But for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days. . . ."

"To seduce if possible, even the elect."

"And shall gather together His elect from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven." (Mark 13:20, 22, 27; cp. Matt. 24:22, 24.)

The gathering of God's elect from "the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" is not the restoration of Israel to Palestine.

Palestine is not heaven. It is the "gathering together *unto Him*," (2 Thess. 2:1) of all God's redeemed family, "those that have made a covenant with God by sacrifice" (Ps. 50).

"Some from earth: from glory some;
Severed only till He come."

I end as I began, by affirming that, according to Holy Scripture, the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed hope of God's elect, will effectually terminate *all tribulation for all God's saints forever*.

No Scripture divides the second coming of Christ into two second comings. No Scripture warrants the idea that Antichrist will be able to war against any saints after our Lord Himself has descended from heaven with a shout. Nor that the people of God who have lived between the day of Pentecost and any secret "rapture" will be enjoying the bridal feast above and receiving rich rewards at the *bema*, while other saints whom they are pleased to term "tribulation saints" are enduring unto death against the Antichrist on earth.

CHAPTER VI.

"TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY." 2 THESSALONIANS 11:7

Much controversy has centered around this passage of Scripture. It is affirmed by many that the Holy Spirit is to be taken away, and that as His divine presence is promised to the Church for ever in the Savior's words in the Paschal discourse in John 14 it follows as a natural sequence that both the Holy Spirit and the Church will be thus removed from the world, leaving lawlessness to spread unhindered under the Antichrist, the Lawless One. These brethren believe, even as we do, that the Lawless One will receive his death blow at and by the appearing in glory of our glorious Lord, but they use this inference, based, we believe, on a mistranslation

thus:—"And the Word was made (lit. became) flesh, and dwelt among us," but relating as it does to the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, it confirms the thought that the Greek word employed is connected with birth. This is clearly seen to be the case when the word is traced throughout the New Testament, by the aid of Dr. Strong's or Dr. Young's Concordance, both of which show plainly that origin and not removal is the thought contained in the word. Why should the thought of removal be imported into this verse of Holy Scripture when it is foreign to this word in every other passage in which it is used? We see therefore that firstly there is, no Greek word in the text for "taken" and also that there is no thought of "taken" implied in the verb "*genetai*"—lit. "to be" or "become."

Dr. Young's Analytical Concordance shows that "*ginomai*" is rendered "arise" 13 times, "be" 253, "be done" 63, "be made" 67, "become" 47, "come" 53, "come to pass" 82, etc.

A glance also at the kindred words "*genesia*"—translated (birthday 2), "*genetes*"—(birth, in John 9:1), "*gennao*" (beget—49 times and be born, 39), "*gennema*" (fruit 5 and generation 4), "*gennesis*" (birth 2), "*gennetos*" (that is born 2), "*genos*" (translated offspring, stock, kindred, etc.) will verify the fact that "becoming" or "coming to be" is the true meaning and force of the word used in 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

Dr. Strong gives the literal meaning of *ginomai* as "to become," "to come into being," and Dr. Young says in every instance "*ginomai*," lit. to come, become." The force therefore of the verb used in this passage of Scripture denotes "coming to be" and is connected with origin and not removal. We see therefore that firstly, there is no Greek word in the text of 2 Thessalonians 2:7, for the English word "taken," secondly, that the Greek word "*genetai*" contains no thought of removal, and thirdly, that it definitely and everywhere in Scripture denotes "coming to be," origin.

Other Uses of the Word.

But the question has been asked: Inasmuch as the word is translated "arose" and "ariseth" several times in the New Testament, does it not in those verses where it is so rendered, imply removal? An examination of all the verses will be the best reply,

Matthew 8:24: there arose a great tempest in the sea.

8:21: when tribulation or persecution ariseth.

Mark 4:17: when affliction or persecution ariseth.

4:37: there arose a great storm of wind.

Luke 6:48: when the flood arose.

15:14: there arose a mighty famine in that land.

John 3:25: then there arose a question.

Acts 6:1: There arose a murmuring of the Grecians.

6:19: the persecution that arose about Stephen.

20:23: the same time there arose no small stir.

23:7: there arose a dissension.

23:9: there arose a great cry.

23:10: there arose a great dissension.

These are all the verses where the word or its cognates is translated arose or ariseth. In neither of them is that which ariseth removed by so arising. The rising of a storm or flood does not indicate its removal. It simply develops, "comes to be," and thus becomes manifest. Even so it may be argued, if necessary, in every instance. That which is said to "become" or "come into being" (translated arose or ariseth in these verses) is a tempest, tribulation, persecution, affliction, flood, mighty famine, a question, a murmuring, a cry, a dissension. When we read, "there arose a mighty famine in that land," there is no thought of the famine being removed from, or taken away from, that land. The reverse is the case. In fact, these instances might very well illustrate the truth contained in the very passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8, which we are considering. The little boat upon the lake of Galilee was suddenly enveloped by the tempest, which became, came to be (*egeneto*). So will it be in the last days. Lawlessness which has long been working secretly, will at God's appointed time become developed out of the midst, as a ripened system, and then (*tote*, i.e., at that time) shall the Wicked One be revealed. The restraining is not intended to stop entirely the working of lawlessness, but to check its progress, so that it will ripen just at God's due time for the Antichrist to be manifested.

Nothing "Taken Out of the Way."

We are not pleading for any "special translation," but it is our duty to bow to the Word of God. If He had said "taken" in this text or if He had said "way," removal from the way would probably have been the thought.

But God says neither. We have seen already that "taken" is inserted by the English translators and that it rests on no Greek word in the verse, either written or implied. It is also unquestionably true that the Greek word for "way" does not occur in this text. None will surely deny that "*hodos*" means way, as when we read "I am the way," but that "*mesou*" means midst, as for example: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst."

"He or It."

The question arises now as to whether the words should read—"until he become out of the midst," or "until it become out of the midst." Whichever is more correct, the practical result is substantially the same, for "he" could refer to none other than the Antichrist, and "it" to the manifestation of the lawlessness of which he is the embodiment, just as our Divine Lord is said to be the incarnation of godliness in the words, "great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh." The person described in the whole context from verses 3-9 (with the exception of the words, "only there is the restrainer now") is the Antichrist. All the personal pronouns in verses 3-6 refer to him and also the "he" of verse 8, so that if we read "he become out of the midst" in verse 7, this pronoun would also as a matter of simple grammatical sequence refer to the Antichrist too. If it be read, "until it become out of the midst" it can only refer to the emerging as a manifested fully-ripened system of the lawlessness which is to be the matured apostasy of the last days. The Antichrist will arise at that very time as its embodiment and head. It is certain that the restraining is on the secretly working lawlessness and not on the Antichrist, because that person has not yet come.

The Apostle Paul wrote this very chapter because the Thessalonian saints were in danger of being "troubled," by a premature and therefore false expectation, namely, that of thinking the Day of the Lord had set in when it had not. So likewise, Satan is still trying to "excite" us with a premature hope which has in many dear saints had disastrous results. Hence the Apostle's words in chapter 3:5: "and the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." May the Lord give us truly, brethren, to have "patience of hope."

It is when "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with *a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . .*" that we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. It is "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance" (2 Thess. 1:7), that the troubled Church will get release. It is when He comes to destroy Antichrist that we are to be caught up in the clouds to meet our Lord and be with Him.

"When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear [not disappear] with Him in glory."

CHAPTER VII.

DOES SOVEREIGN GRACE EXEMPT FROM TRIBULATION?

A while ago attention was called to some words in The Advent Witness, November 1930, and referred to in The Indian Christian, June 1931. In Watching and Waiting, April 1931, they were quoted as follows:—

"An esteemed fellow-student of the Scriptures asks for plain proof of the separate stages of our Lord's Return. This opens up an immensely important line of investigation. Of course there are no verses that state in so many words that there are separate stages."

One has no idea who asked that question, but such a courteous reply to a plain question on an "immensely important" subject, is calculated to draw together the hearts of those who love the Lord's appearing.

But many Christian hearts must surely be grieved by the review in The Advent Witness, of the Highgate Road Chapel Conference Addresses which were printed in Watching and Waiting.

The Advent Witness, of August 1931, condensed in its "review" an attack, not only on the tenets, but on the motives of the speakers; thus anticipating the Judgment Seat of Christ when the counsels of the heart will be manifested.

The Testimony attacked is called "The Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony," and on this the Reviewer says:—

"‘Sovereign Grace’ is to us the sweetest of all divine attributes, and ‘Advent Testimony’ is our *raison d’etre*, but, nevertheless, we do not believe the Church, or any part of it, will go through the Great Tribulation, nor do we believe that there is no difference between the Coming of the Lord to the air for His Church and His coming to the earth on behalf of Israel. Were it otherwise we should wonder if we really understood Sovereign Grace, for if the Church must endure the tribulation wrath of God after being saved by Grace, we should fear that Grace does the penalty ‘twice demand, first of my Surety then of me’ (Presumably this quotation is from Toplady’s hymn, the words of which are:

"If thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine,
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.")

And if the Antichrist must be revealed before the Lord Jesus comes we should not continue our ‘Advent Testimony,’ but we should pray to be taken to Heaven before that great and terrible day, when the Beast will demand our worship and allegiance under pain of death, and before the Battle of Armageddon devastates the world."

Sovereign Grace.

What are the Reviewer’s thoughts of Sovereign Grace as revealed by this review? Its center is surely in the heart of the Eternal God, but where is its circumference? The words above quoted, "If the Church must endure the tribulation wrath of God, etc.," clearly show his belief that for any part of her to be on earth during the Great Tribulation, would mean:

"Grace does the penalty twice demand."

But Why? Is Sovereign Grace the sole possession of the present-day believer? What of the saints of old? Were they not saved by Sovereign Grace? Will any soul ever be brought to God except by Sovereign Grace? Did not Abraham and Moses, David and Daniel know the blessing of Sovereign Grace ? What was its effect on them? Did not Daniel and his

friends live at a time when an image was set up in the plain of Dura, and universal worship demanded for it under pain of death? And what was their attitude? What do we read of Daniel when he knew that the writing was signed forbidding prayer to God? Blessed be God, we read: "And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Glorious words! May God give us such an heart as this. How different are these words from what we have quoted above.

Again, Noah knew that he was saved by grace through faith, for we read, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," and in Hebrews 11, "By faith Noah." Did he say that the prospect of living to see that day of utter desolation would mean grace demanding twice? And did not Daniel know the Presence of One with him in the lions' den? And did not even Nebuchadnezzar see the Presence of One like unto the Son of God as he looked bewildered into the fiery furnace? Was this God demanding twice?

Tribulation is Not Wrath from God.

Turning to the future we plunge right into the heart of the subject. Whether the Reviewer admits these "who keep the faith of Jesus" to be part of God's Church or not, the fact remains that a band of redeemed and sanctified people, whose prophetic history is written large in the pages of Holy Writ, will indeed suffer and witness in the reign of Antichrist. In Revelation 14:12, we read of them: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

Again in Revelation 15:2, 3: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

And in chapter 12:11: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

These who are called "saints" and are specially marked out by the Spirit of God with words of divine commendation ("Here is the patience of the saints"), are true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. And are they suffering

wrath from God? Can any one overcome unless born of God? (1 John 5:3, 4). Are not all the marks of true children of God found in these suffering, conquering witnesses of Jesus? And when "they who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus stand as victors on the sea of glass, would it not be a fearful error to suggest that they had suffered, being witnesses for Christ, because:—

"Grace does the Payment .. twice demand."

Whether these witnesses are Jewish or Gentile does not alter this fact that some whom God calls "saints" are undoubtedly allowed by God to live and act in these scenes, even as men of God like Daniel and his friends witnessed in the lion's den and in the fiery furnace. And to Daniel a mighty angel was sent with the words, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." Yet he suffered, and witnessed, and continued his testimony and will be amongst those who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever.

Do these Suffer the Wrath of God, or Tribulation?

In Scripture we see them in passage after passage, suffering even unto death under Antichrist, but we see them commended by God with special words of divine approval. Do we, in this present day, need to know where to see the Patience of the Saints? The Divine Word says, as it points out these highly approved ones: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Could we not well desire such words of divine pleasure to be said concerning us? Again, we see them when the conflict is over, the battle for ever won; as they stand upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, divinely mentioned as those "who got the victory over the beast," etc.; and just as the redeemed from Egypt in Exodus 15 stood on the Canaan side of the Red Sea, with their enemies still as a stone, so these redeemed ones stand in the Heaven of heavens on the sea of glass mingled with fire: the sea of which we read in Revelation 4, that it is before the throne of God.

Do We Understand Sovereign Grace?

Thank God we know a little of it, and expect one day to be like Him and to know even as we are known. Glory to the God of Grace who has sent us the Gospel of Grace, and given us the Throne of Grace, for only by

means of Sovereign Grace can any one ever inherit Eternal Life and Glory (Dan. 12:2, 3).

Yes Grace; not circumscribed to any special few amongst the host of the Lord's redeemed (for none could be redeemed apart from it), but Sovereign Grace from the Throne of God; Redeeming by Precious Blood every member of the Family of Faith from Adam's day until the last gathered in at the end of the Millennium. Let not dispensational theories divide the family of God, for what God hath joined together let not man put asunder. Sufficient has been said, but more can be easily added, to show that no Saint will suffer the wrath of God.

The Future of Advent Testimony.

The Reviewer in The Advent Witness says: "And if the Antichrist must be revealed before the Lord Jesus comes we should not continue our 'Advent Testimony,' but we should pray to be taken to Heaven before that great and terrible day, when the Beast will demand our worship and allegiance under pain of death, and before the battle of Armageddon devastates the world."

I desire, in reference to the above, to speak very lovingly to my brethren who are connected with "The Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement." Do these words truly foreshadow what will be its doom when the on-coming march of events proves the fallacy of their belief that Christ will come before Antichrist? I speak carefully, and in the fear of the Lord, for honored names are connected with that testimony; and in this very fact lies the immense importance of my present words. Many of the Lord's servants all over the world, are fully convinced that the Lord will not come for His Church before the Antichrist appears and reigns; and we believe that this has been truly taught not only in Holy Scripture (our only ground of infallible teaching) but by Christians all through the age. What disaster it will be when the oncoming march of events proves their belief (without which the Reviewer says, they would not continue their Advent Testimony) to be utterly wrong! What shipwreck to many devout souls it will mean if such a testimony should thus be discontinued and its tenets largely discredited. What will become of those who have sought shelter under its branches? How will godly men, who in this one matter have missed the mark, be able to maintain their influence with, or help in any

way, their followers, when such events prove the futility of the two-stage theory? And in that day, will not all the efforts made to overthrow our witness by means of the popular cry: "Will the Church go through the great tribulation?" and the assertions about its being the "Tribulation Wrath of God," etc., still further harass the minds of those perplexed disciples? Will there not be danger that such may become the prey of false teachers, in the day of which our Lord says, they shall "deceive if possible, even the elect."

What We Believe and Teach About the Second Advent.

We firmly believe that the two-stage theory invents a coming of the Lord, in nearly every respect the opposite of that for which our Lord has told us to wait, and has insinuated that it will be several years in front of the coming of the Lord as taught all through Scripture.

Although The Advent Witness has admitted that "there are no verses" teaching two stages, it has published the following in its review of "The Highgate Conference Report," 1931:—

"After carefully reading this 'Outline of Events in Connection with Christ's Second Coming,' we are conscious that those who piece them together realize that the exposition of the Lord's Return so clearly unfolded in 1 Thessalonians 4 differs from the prophecy of the Coming of the Son of man in Matthew 24. To harmonize them the former is interwoven with the latter in an endeavour to make two different events one."

We believe that our Lord's coming again is one coming, namely to the earth, and that it is when He is on His way that we shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus, on that day when the Lord descends, the dead in Christ will rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be changed, and together with them we shall be caught up to meet our coming Lord, and thus be with Him as His feet touch the Mount of Olives, and as He confronts the Antichrist in the valley of Jehoshaphat and destroys him and his host. What could be simpler?

No Scripture States an Interval of Years.

We begin to realize the immense importance of the alleged interval of years between our Lord's coming for us and with us, when we see that it is the pivot of the whole any-moment, two-stage theory, without which it

must fall to pieces. The admission by its teachers that such a period of years is nowhere stated in Scripture should make devout Bible students test afresh their foundations, but we go much farther than any such negative statement, for we most surely affirm that while Scripture nowhere states any such period of years, it does very emphatically supply many positive statements which make such an interval a total impossibility.

We need build nothing, therefore, upon negative admissions of brethren of the other school, but upon the positive statements of the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture. We also observe that Scripture very simply and definitely sets events, which such brethren put within that alleged interval of years, in an entirely different position in the divine program. In the absence of any statement of Holy Scripture to uphold them, it appears to us very hazardous to build such a two-stage theory upon any inferences. To infer that certain events must take place between the time when our Lord comes for us and with us, and to reckon out that these must take so many years, is dangerous indeed, as even the diversity between an alleged 3 1/2 or 7 or even 40 years or more should suggest. Scriptures in abundance speak of the coming of the Lord in glory, and what could be simpler than to believe that when He so comes we shall be caught up to meet Him, and thus be with Him when His feet touch Mount Olivet?

The Coming to the Air and the Coming to the Earth: ONE OR TWO?

Every careful reader of this review will notice how emphatic the Reviewer is about there being "two different events." He says: "Nor do we believe that there is no difference between the Coming of the Lord to the air for His Church and His Coming to the earth on behalf of Israel," and continues, "there remains no doubt in our mind that the attempt to force the Church into the discourse completely fails, and with it all the further modification necessary to the suggestion that the 'Advent' of Thessalonians is the same as the 'Advent' of Matthew 24."

Not only does he insist upon these being "two different events" but very distinctly and positively speaks of the difference between the "Advent of Thessalonians" and the "Advent of Matthew 24." Thus the writer teaches indisputably two distinct and different advents, but Holy Scripture has

only one second coming, for we read:—"And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Which of these alleged two future comings are we to consider to be the appearing a second time "of our Great High Priest"?

Psalm 110.

This Psalm is quoted and referred to in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles: thus showing its tremendous importance. With its first verse our Lord put to silence His accusers, the rulers of Israel, and with it He faced them when the High Priest Caiaphas uttered the word of adjuration: Peter quoted it on the day of Pentecost to prove the ascension of Christ (Acts 2:34), and referred to it again in the well-known words, "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).

Psalm 110:1 is cited or referred to more than twenty times in the New Testament, and together with ver. 4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec," may be said to be at the basis of the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, where our Great High Priest, after the order of Melchizedec—our Priest Ring—in all His Eternal Majesty, is contrasted and compared with the priests of Aaron's line. The above-mentioned passage which speaks of His appearing now in the presence of God for us; of His past appearing to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and His appearing "the second time without sin unto salvation," uses clearly the figure of the High Priest in the holy of holies; with those for whom he ministers, looking for him to appear among them again in his robes of glory and beauty: surely typical of Christ's appearing in glory. Psalm 110:1 is cited several times in this epistle. In Hebrews 1:3, we read:—"Who. . .when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (His sacrificial work and present session). And in verse 13, "But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" In chapter 8:1, 2, "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." And in Hebrews 10:12, 13, we read :—"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool."

When we read the oft-quoted words: "the Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1), can we expect Him to come forth before His enemies have, by the Father, been made such a footstool? "Sit Thou at My right hand until . . ." is a distinct command of the Father to the Son. To infer a leaving of that place at the Father's right hand before He had made His enemies His footstool, would imply disobedience to His Father's decree. Every true child of God would, if he saw this awful implication to be the logical outcome of a belief in a pretribulation coming, surely reject such teaching at once. But when will Christ's enemies be made the footstool of His feet? Will it not be when the Antichrist is gathered with his host" to the battle of the great day of God Almighty"?

This Psalm shows clearly that Christ is to sit at the Father's right hand; His priestly session on our behalf continuing until "The Lord shall send forth the rod (sceptre, see Amer., R.V.) of Thy strength out of Zion: Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies" (ver. 2).

"His Coming to the Air."

This very misleading phrase is nowhere to be found in Holy Scripture. In 1 Thessalonians 4 it is not said that the Lord will descend to the air; nor is any word used to signify that the air is to be the terminus of His journey on that occasion. The particular word for meet is used three times in the New Testament, and in each case the thought is the same. In Acts 28:15, Paul was approaching Rome, which was to be the terminus of his journey, but the brethren in Rome went out to meet him as far as the Market of Appius. Many Scriptures speak of the coming of our Lord:—

Zechariah 14:4 says:—"And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives," and in verse 5, "And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee."

The simplest explanation is that when our Lord is on His way to Olivet "we . . . shall be caught up... in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." We shall thus, in bodies of glory, be assembled in that glorious host when He comes to destroy Antichrist and his confederate kings and when He delivers the spared ones of Israel from Antichrist. That will be the glorious day when the nation shall be

converted, forgiven, born in a day. For "If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved: for the Lord will execute His word upon the earth (or 'land'?), finishing it and cutting it short. And, as Isaiah hath said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had become as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah" (Rom. 9:27-29; cp. Isa. 10:20-23).

Jewish and Christian Remnants Distinguished.

God has promised that however much He may send His four sore judgments on Jerusalem, to cut off man and beast: "Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant . . ." cp. Ezekiel 14:21-23; and God will in the latter day, convert and forgive them, and they will be blessed on earth during the reign of Christ. But these must not be confused with the witnesses of Jesus, of whom Scripture speaks as "Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus"; for the Jewish remnant will not be born again until they look on Him whom they had pierced and have been led to repentance at the coming of the Lord for Israel's deliverance. When they are thus converted at Christ's coming, they will become "saints of the Most High," but before they are converted and forgiven they cannot be called "Saints": neither is it true of them that they keep the commandments of God, for they will not till they have believed in Him whom God sent to them. And assuredly, none can "keep the faith of Jesus" before he has believed on the Saviour. Remembering that the spared remnant of Israel will not be converted until Christ comes to them in glory, it is impossible to identify them with the people who are called "saints" who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus," who witness faithfully unto the Lord and His Christ during the reign of Antichrist. We cannot keep the faith of Jesus, until we have received faith in Jesus, and have owned Him as our Lord Jesus.

A distinction frequently alleged is that Matthew 24 speaks of the "Coming of the Son of man," but that 1 Thessalonians 4 is of the "Coming of the Lord Himself." Concerning the title, "Son of man," it is one by which the Lord frequently spoke of Himself, and as such it is recorded by the Evangelists, but of the apostles He said, "Ye call Me Master and Lord and ye say well, for so I am." Never in the Gospels do we read of the apostles calling Him Son of man, and in the epistles they continued the

approved habit of calling Him Lord. This sufficiently accounts for the presence of this title in Matthew 24 (as used by Christ Himself) and its absence in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Again, as to the Lord Himself. In Matthew 24:42, He says, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," showing that the coming of Matthew 24 is of the Lord Himself.

The Church is in Matthew 24.

The Advent Witness says, "But that makes it necessary to believe that the 'Elect' of Matthew 24 are the Church, which we are convinced is not the case. When the Lord said the angels shall gather His Elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other, the Church was not in existence. Mankind consisted only of Jew and Gentile, and the Jew is described as the Elect in Isaiah 45:4 and elsewhere."

But *if* it were true that the Church did not exist at that time, would that prevent it existing at the end of the age?

Much might be said on this matter, but for brevity I will only say, that two chief events are prophesied in the Olivet Discourse (which is contained in Matthew 24 and 25; Mark 42 and Luke 21), viz., the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in A.D. 70 and the Second Coming of our Lord. I have known of Christians who believed that the Church commenced at Pentecost; some who maintain that it was not known until revealed to Paul; others who assert that it came in by a sort of transition when near the end of Acts Paul said, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." But I have never known any one so bold as to declare that the Church did not exist in A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was demolished as our Lord herein prophesied, Jews by the thousands being slaughtered and many crucified outside the city walls. History records that at the given sign of the armies surrounding the city, all the Christians fled across the Jordan and found refuge in Pella, and there is no record of one losing his life. We only ask: Were these Christians in A.D. 70 who obeyed our Lord's Word as uttered in the Olivet Discourse (Luke 20:20), part of God's Church? If so, then the Church is already inside this Olivet Discourse placed there by the sovereign Lord Himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

Revelation 2 and 3.

The question at issue in this article is, How should we rightly interpret these letters to the seven churches? It is clear and indisputable that John was inspired to write them to seven then existing churches in Asia concerning their own spiritual standing and condition at the time of writing. In this respect they differ in no way from the letters to seven Gentile churches that were written by Paul, and it is my deep conviction that they should be interpreted on the same principle. It is true that they contain much prophetic teaching: so also do Paul's epistles, some of which are almost entirely prophetic. In like manner too, they contain truth which, while written specifically to these first century churches, bears influentially on every church. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." "And all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts."

If we strictly adhere to the three-fold division of the book of Revelation marked out by our Lord—"Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter" (1:19)—the first is the vision recorded in chapter 1, the second must be the letters to seven then existing churches, the third, the visions from chapter 4. It is agreed that the method of instruction in this divine book is the same as in the book of Daniel, its Old Testament counterpart. Adhering closely to this point of view we remember how repeatedly Daniel saw a vision and received instruction regarding events coming near to his own time—(then comes a gap)—followed by instruction regarding the last three and a half years of this age. For example, Daniel 8 records prophetically, events up to the four-fold division of Alexander's kingdom—then, both in the vision and in the angel's interpretation, it leaps over the centuries and continues with instructions concerning the time of the end. Even so, John saw the vision (ch. 1)—received seven

letters relating to local churches of his own time—then comes the gap—chapter 4 and onward giving the Final scenes. The question between us and those who hold the panorama theory concerns "the things which are." Transporting ourselves in mind to the side of the apostle John as he heard those words would we have understood, and can we think that he understood them as meaning the things that will commence when the apostles are dead, and that will run on through untold centuries? By trying to fit these seven letters into all the centuries of Christendom's history we should have to leave the Lord's simple word "are" and transfer His present tense into the future; for the whole of these letters are interpreted by writers like Win. Lincoln (Lectures on Revelation, p. 52) as concerning events running from post-apostolic days on to the coming again of our Lord. This is the more remarkable in view of the fact that in this very verse our Lord distinctly used the words "the things which are" in designed contrast to "the things which shall be hereafter." It goes without saying that when the apostle John received these instructions concerning "the things which are," the post-apostolic history of the church was of necessity, every bit of it in the future. Beside this, there is no hint in all the letters of them being a continuous panorama of Christendom's history. Nor is there any gradual decline portrayed as we should expect if such were the true interpretation. The second and sixth, namely, those to Smyrna and Philadelphia, contain commendation from the Lord and have no word of censure: while the condition of the church in Thyatira is surely as bad as that of Sardis. And it is wonderful how anyone can see a reference to the so-called rapture of the church in the solemn and awful words "I will spue thee out of My mouth." When first I heard this panorama theory as a young Christian, it seemed to me very wonderful, especially as a running parallel was supposed to exist with the seven parables of Matthew 13. But as years rolled on I gradually became convinced that the whole idea was forced and strained.

[Lamps of Gold and Stars.](#)

The panorama theory collides with the Lord's plain symbols and with His own statements about those symbols. John beheld Him walking amidst the seven golden candlesticks (Gk. Lampstands). All appeared together. They did not come into view consecutively as if successive

scenes of church history were depicted. Likewise the seven stars were all observed Together in the right hand of the Lord. According to His symbolism each candlestick represented a church and in the letters He addresses each as a church. But if we declare that Ephesus represents the church, Thyatira, Romanism, Sardis describes Protestantism at the Reformation, and Laodicea the last stages of Christendom, we alter the meaning of the Lord's symbol all the time to fit the exigencies of a theory, although He has explained in simplest language what His symbol means. The seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches.

The Lord calls each a church, and uses for each of the seven the symbol of the lampstand of gold. But is it not a fearful error to imagine that our Lord depicted Romanism as a lamp of gold? Is Romanism a lamp? Is it a lamp of gold? As one who has laboured for many years in a Romanist land, I protest that it is a fearful error to imagine that the Lord depicted Romanism or the Roman church as a lamp of gold tended by the great High Priest whom John saw walking amidst the seven golden candlesticks!

An angel is a messenger: whether human or otherwise is to be gathered from the context. According to Win. Lincoln, one of the chief exponents of the theory we are considering, the angel in each assembly was the product of departure from the divine pattern as taught in Paul's epistles. Some gifted person was leaned on as the pastor, and this, according to him, is incipient Nicolaitanism, the full development of which is Romanism. But how is it that the angel in each church is the one specially *recognized by the Lord Himself*, the one to whom the aged exiled apostle was told to send the letters, and to whose care we may almost say, the Book of Revelation was first committed? Moreover, our Lord symbolized them as stars—indicative of heavenly lightbearing—held in His own right hand. That is very different from being leaders in declension from the Word of God and from the divine pattern as given in the Epistles of Paul! Many persons have graciously been delivered from clericalism and have run to the other extreme.

A Day for Twenty Years?

I speak in restrained language and in the fear of the Lord. It is my deep desire not to be hurtful to any of God's children, but must we not think

that the system abounds in gross absurdities when, for example, Mr. Lincoln imagined he could see a celibate clergy hinted at in the name of the married woman Jezebel, and the Arian controversy in the name of the Lord's faithful martyr Antipas? Again, the idea that in speaking prophetically, God says a day when He means a year, is justly rejected by the many of those who hold the theory we are considering; but in total collision with their own view of the matter they—in one verse in the whole Bible—interpret our Lord's simple words "ye shall have tribulation ten days" to represent the period of persecution endured by God's people from the close of the apostle's life unto the reign of Constantine. This would be ten days for over two hundred years, or a day for about twenty years.

"Because Thou Hast Kept... I Also Will Keep Thee."

Even Mr. Lincoln admits that in the first instance these letters were addressed to seven local churches of the Apostle's own time and concerned their own then present condition. It is, therefore, impossible to disregard the fact that the local church in Philadelphia had kept the word of Christ's patience and that He did expressly on that account give them this promise of preservation. Theirs was the faithful keeping of the word when such faithfulness had meant endurance, and to them specially, as a local church, did the Lord give this promise, and did, we believe, keep it. If even it is said that we do not now know the special hour of trial to which our Lord referred, that would not invalidate His knowledge and theirs of it. In like manner the Lord said to the church in Smyrna "ye shall have tribulation ten days" and perhaps we cannot now place our finger on the special ten days of trouble of which He spoke, but we believe those ten days of particular trouble took place. I have often wondered whether they had to do with the martyrdom of the blessed Polycarp (friend and disciple of the apostle John) who was an elder in the church in Smyrna about that time, and was in all probability the very angel of the church in Smyrna to whom the apostle wrote the letter. Whether the hour of universal trial from which the local church in Philadelphia was promised deliverance or preservation, occurred at that time we do not know, but the fact remains that to her the Lord gave this particular promise, recorded in Revelation 3:10; and did, we believe, keep it.

But to them it did not involve their translation to heaven before that hour of trial. And if even the superimposed panorama theory were permissible—which it is not—or if in any way there is to be a future application of the promise, on the same lines it could not necessitate the translation of God's people to heaven before the event that is thus supposed to be specified as the "hour of trial." All this is quite independent of the solid fact that an hour of universal temptation is not in any sense the equivalent of the three years and a half great tribulation.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME General DIFFICULTIES MET.

The Mystery of the Rapture "Behold I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:51, R. V.).

These words are often quoted to confirm the ideas that (1) God was herein revealing truth never before known; (2) That truth being, in the words of a recent writer, "The mystery of the rapture"; (3) The words "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," denoting the extreme rapidity with which the Lord will descend to the air, and we ascend to meet Him: such rapidity excluding all possibility of manifested glory and proving it to be a very different event from the Lord's coming to the earth, which, it is asserted, will take place some years after the "rapture."

A mystery in Scripture is "What is known only to the initiated" (Young's Analytical Concordance). Even if the Corinthian church, through carnality, needed now to be instructed in this mystery, it did not prove that it was never before revealed, for our brethren themselves strongly hold that it is taught in 1 Thessalonians 4, which was written, they believe, at least five years earlier.

But for the sake of brevity it only needs to be pointed out that the so-called Rapture of the Church is not even Mentioned in the Whole of 1 Corinthians 15, and so cannot be the subject of any new revelation in that chapter. The mystery of 1 Corinthians 15 is that at one specific moment

the bodies of all the dead and all the living saints will be changed from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible and it is this event that is to take place in a moment. "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Last Trump." This event is specially emphasized here in connection with the last trump, the first resurrection and the fulfilment of Isaiah 25:8; not as a new event separated by years.

"The Mystery of the Church." A word should be said about the "mystery of the church," and here, too, it is remarkable that the above title cannot be found within the covers of the Bible! Ephesians 3 speaks of "the mystery of Christ," that mystery, as explained by the apostle, being: "That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel," whereof Paul says, "I was made a minister," and this mystery he affirms, "In other generations was not made known unto the sons of men as it hath now been revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

Paul is nowhere claiming to be the medium through whom this truth was first revealed to the church, but states emphatically that it was revealed to His holy apostles (plural) and prophets (plural). The same truth was clearly enunciated by the Lord in the well-known words: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd" (John 10:16 [See also Matt. 8:10-12 and Luke 8:28-29, R. V.]).

As an apostle of Christ, Paul received his apostleship and all his teaching direct from the Lord, and not from the other apostles, or earlier members of the church, and this he often refers to, e.g. "For I have received of the Lord that which I delivered unto you." "Let such an one consider that the words I write, they are the commandment of the Lord." Such words as "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord" do not, therefore, necessitate the idea of the revelation of truth not known before to the other apostles.

[Is the First Resurrection Divided?](#)

The idea of dividing the first resurrection is a necessary concomitant of the whole system with which it is connected, for having separated the second coming into parts, numerous other divisions follow as a natural sequence. In Matthew 27:51-52, R. V., we read:—

"Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many."

These, it is sometimes claimed, were part of the first resurrection, the saints referred to in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 coming next, afterwards the tribulation saints.

A simple interpretation of the words:—

"This is the first resurrection, blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection," would have saved us from these problems. It has even been said that the verb "is" does not occur in Revelation 20:5, and therefore the word "completes" might be inserted instead. It is perfectly true that, according to very frequent Scripture usage, the verb to be is not written but implied, but the idea that any latitude is allowed for us to supply one word or another according to our theories does not appeal to those who believe in verbal inspiration. In more than sixty instances in the Apocalypse alone the verbs "were," "are," "be," and "is," are implied, and in none of them would the word "completes" possibly fit. In this case it is clear that only one word could be intended, viz., the word (is). A similar instance occurs in the next chapter (21:23) "The lamp thereof (is) the Lamb," and in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ (is) the same yesterday, today and forever." When, in this book, the thought of completion or its equivalent is intended, it is always written and never simply implied (e.g. "I have found no works of thine fulfilled before my God" (3:2). "Then is finished the mystery of God" (10:7). "When they shall have finished their testimony" (11:7)).

It has been said that "we must not assume without Scripture warrant, that these in Matthew 27 returned immediately to the grave, they may have ascended when their Lord ascended." But though details are repeatedly given in Scripture of the ascension of our Lord, never do we get a hint of any others in bodily form going up with Him. These were visible to those to whom they appeared in Jerusalem and would have been visible had they ascended with Christ. Such a fact—if it were a fact—would not have been passed over in silence by all the New Testament writers. In fact, Peter

distinctly says of David that he had not ascended into the heavens. While here on earth our Lord raised people from the dead, of whom the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son, and Lazarus are examples. In Acts, through His Name, Dorcas was raised and restored to her friends for a further term on earth. Why should any different thought be maintained concerning these others who come between? Lazarus was raised and restored to his sisters only a short time before the death of Christ, yet no one suggests that he ascended when our Lord ascended ten days before Pentecost. His sister's words still remain true, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." The very way in which the resurrection of the bodies of these saints in Matthew 27 is spoken of in connection with "the earthquake, the rending of rocks and of the veil of the temple," shows it to be one of the series of signs and wonders connected with the greatest event that history could record, viz., the death and resurrection of our Creator Redeemer.

In writing to Timothy, Paul, after exhorting him to "give diligence to present himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the Word of Truth," and telling him to warn the saints not to strive about words to no profit, utters some severe words concerning two men, Hymenæus and Philetus. These men's words are said to "eat like a gangrene," are described as "profane babblings," and to "Overthrow the Faith of Some." And what is their error? Here are Paul's words: "Saying that the (or a) resurrection is past already" (2 Tim. 2:18,R.V.).

From these words it is certain that Paul did not understand Matthew 27:52-53, as describing a resurrection except in the sense that Lazarus and Dorcas were raised as special signs of Christ's divine mission and of His power over death, and afterwards returned to the grave and saw corruption.

Son of man. Son of God: Is Christ Divided?

A popular distinction is voiced in the words of J. Charleton Steen, in The Witness, February, 1921. He says:—

"Matthew 24:30 brings us to the second advent, His coming to Mount Olivet. . . . This coming has nothing *whatever* to do with His coming for His church (1 Thess. 4), but it is His coming with His church in manifested

glory (1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10; Col. 3:4; Matt. 24:36-44.). Note, it is the coming of the Son of man. This title is never found in the church epistles. Some one has said, the church has no more to do with Him as Son of man than the Syrophenician woman had to do with Him as Son of David."

The best reply to this statement is in the Lord's own words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, *ye have no life in you*" (John 6:53), and again: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15 R. V.).

To have nothing to do with Him as Son of man is to be eternally lost. As to the usage of the term in the New Testament it is worthy of note that never in the gospel do we read of the apostles calling Him Son of man, so that nothing would be gained if it could be proved that they did not so speak of Him in the epistles.

The evangelists record His words in which He continually called Himself Son of man, but Himself testifies of the apostles, "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well."

In sovereign grace He used the term (which by its distinct reference to Dan. 7:13 implied His Messiahship), because, for our salvation, He became in fashion as a man, humbling Himself still further and becoming obedient unto the death of the Cross.

In one of the church epistles, written to those who are "Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling," we read, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou visitest him," and these words quoted from the Psalms seemingly refer to Him, who became a little lower than the angels because of the suffering of death, and is now crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2).

In Acts 7 the Christian martyr Stephen used the words when he testified "I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

In Revelation 1:13 the apostle John says he saw amidst the seven golden candlesticks "One like unto the Son of man," and it was He who addressed the letters to the seven churches.

These are church epistles surely in which are promises of His coming.

Noah and Enoch.

Much valuable help may be afforded us by a proper use of Scripture types, when once a true foundation of doctrine has been laid in the right understanding of the plain statements of the Word of God, provided that such types are always interpreted so as to agree with, and never to differ from, such plain statements.

The suggestion that Noah typifies the Jewish remnant going through the tribulation and Enoch of the church being translated some years previously, conflicts with the Scripture use of types, as well as with plain statements of the Word. Peter uses Noah's deliverance through the flood as typical of the believers' salvation through the death and resurrection of our Lord; baptism being, he says, a "like figure" (lit. *antitupon*, i.e. a corresponding type), a type teaching the same truth. Noah was not a Jew. Why, then, should he be the type of a Jewish remnant? As typical of the believer "in Christ" he was untouched by the flood, because the ark bore all the storm. This could not be said of the remnant of Israel that is to be brought through the time of Jacob's trouble and converted at the coming of Christ. Again, the flood was an overwhelming judgment, likened in the New Testament to the overwhelming wrath that will descend on Christ's foes at His coming, and not to any period of tribulation that may precede it. The flood came and destroyed them all (Luke 17). There is immense contrast instead of likeness between the latter day Jewish remnant persecuted by the tyrant Antichrist and Noah safe inside the ark with the ungodly world silent beneath the flood.

Enoch, who was translated 669 years before the flood, is mentioned once in Hebrews 11 in reference to his "walk with God" and his translation without seeing death, and by Jude in reference to his prophecy of Christ's coming with His holy myriads to execute judgment, but nowhere in reference to any suggestion of a secret coming. The New Testament uses Moses and Elijah, Noah and Lot, as typical in reference to the Lord's coming.

Moses typifies those who sleep in (or through) Jesus, for the Lord buried him. Elijah typifies those who remain till He comes. Both of these appeared with Christ in glory on the mount of transfiguration, a

representation, indeed, of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:16).

Noah illustrates those who are watching and ready for the coming, while Lot is like children of God who are so mixed with the world's affairs that their eyes are blinded to prophetic truth; for he did not know till the very night that the overthrow was imminent, and he lost everything. Saved though as by fire.

A Question Answered.

The following objection has been received:—"Revelation 19 shows holy ones, Christians, coming with Christ out of heaven to execute judgment on the beast and the False Prophet. Therefore, the heavenly company is distinct from those who suffer under the Beast and will be saved at Christ's coming. The Church cannot come out of heaven to take part in the judgment of the Beast and at the same time be its victims on earth."

Answer. As in Daniel 7:11 we see the beast slain, while later in verse 13 Messiah is brought before the Ancient of Days and invested with the authority which results in the beast being destroyed, even so it is here. The One upon the white horse is seen in Revelation 19:13 with garments already dipped in blood (the blood of His foes) before the conflict is described in verses 17-21. All the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord when He comes to destroy Antichrist; hence they may suffer under him until the Lord appears, and at that moment be changed and translated to join the Lord's host as He, with all His angels, come forth.