

**MAY
CHRIST COME
AT
ANY MOMENT?**

SCRIPTURE TEACHING ON THE
SECOND ADVENT AND AN
EXAMINATION OF TRIBULATION
AND PARTIAL RAPTURE THEORIES
IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE.

By
A. J. POLLOCK.

**THE CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT,
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MAY CHRIST COME AT ANY MOMENT?

A GOLDEN age of peace and righteousness is surely coming for this weary world. But it will not come by Acts of Parliament, or through the League of Nations, or by the communists throttling the capitalist and setting up Bolshevism, or by any means that man may strive for at this present time.

The world is weary. Beneath a mask of gaiety there are empty hearts. There are plenty of tears and anguish, and sharp cries of pain, and millions of graves are being dug every year.

Things, too, in the world are rapidly growing worse. Even the man in the street has to admit this. The machine of government is becoming choked to repletion, and must come to a standstill before long. In the words of Scripture, "Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things, which are coming on the earth" (Luke xxi. 26).

And in the circle of the Christian profession the aspect of things is ominous. The apostasy of the last days, prophesied so clearly in the Scriptures, is well on the way. Higher Criticism has done its deadly work in the ranks of the Christian profession. Spiritualism, crank religions, Modernism, Ritualism, worldliness, are rampant on every hand in the professing Church.

But the Christian knows what will happen.

Christ will come,
and come to reign.

*“Lo ! He comes from heaven descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain !
Thousand, thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of His train !
Hallelujah !
Jesus comes and comes to reign.”*

So sang joyously the Christian poet. Yes, the golden age is surely coming. Peace and righteousness shall reign upon this earth, now sin-scarred and death-ridden. The government is going to be in right hands. Hands once nailed in weakness to the cross of Calvary shall yet hold the sceptre of universal dominion !

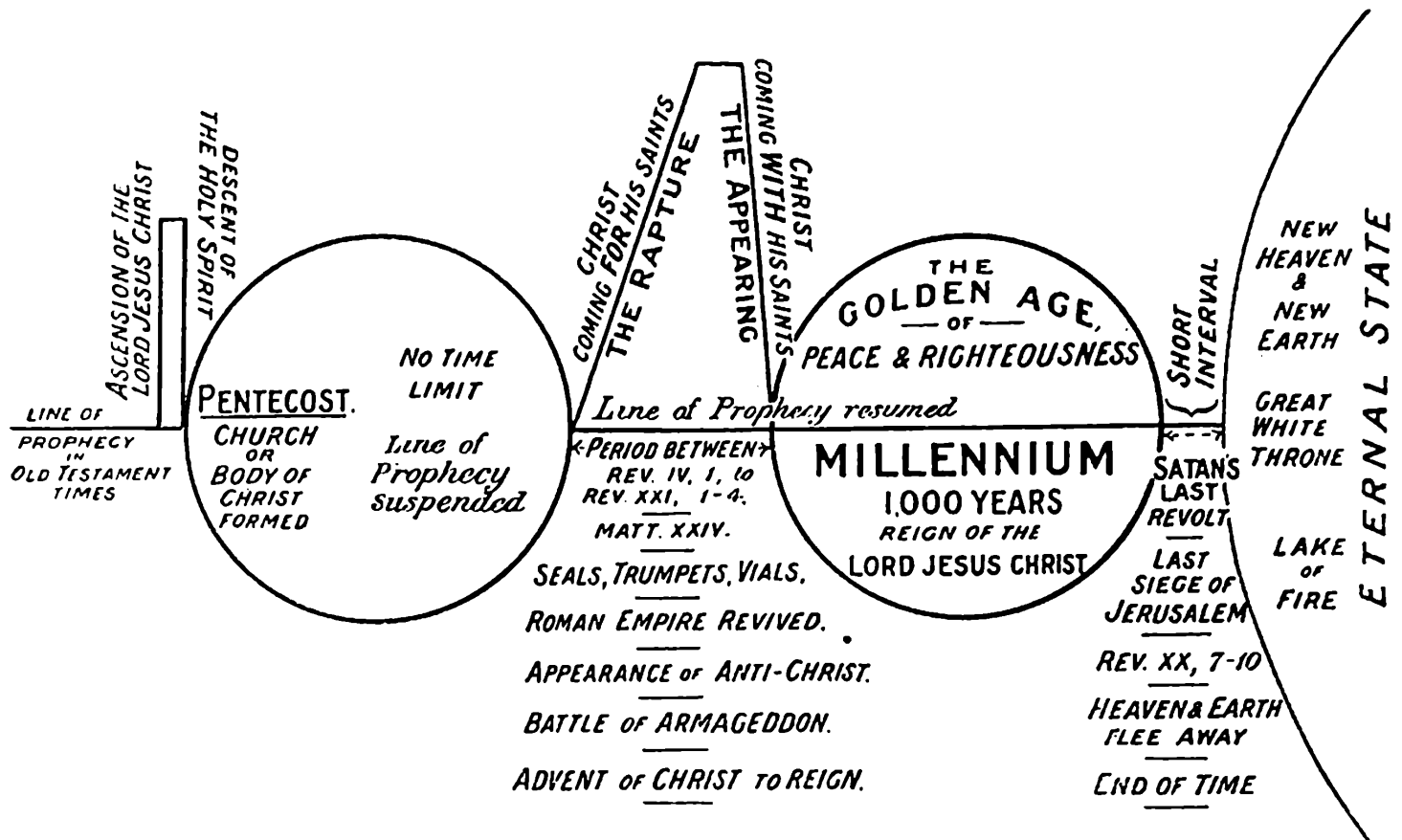
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. Christ's Appearing and Rapture.

But not all at once will this golden age be ushered in. Scripture outlines a period of God's governmental and chastening hand, purifying and preparing the world for the coming of Christ. This is foretold in many parts of Scripture, and is outlined specially in the Book of the Revelation, beginning at chapter iv., where the apostle John is caught up in spirit to heaven and shown “things which must be hereafter” (Revelation iv. 1). This period will culminate in the revival of the Roman Empire, the appearance of the Antichrist, and the outbreak of the Great Tribulation as seen in Matthew xxiv. 21 and 29.

Scripture plainly teaches that the Lord's coming will be in two parts, viz., His coming *for* His saints, as seen in 1 Thess. iv. 15-17, called for convenience sake, *the rapture*; and His coming *with* His saints to reign over the earth, in other words, to establish the millennium—the thousand years' reign of peace and righteousness—called for convenience sake, *the appearing* (1 Thess. iv. 14).

A rough diagram will make our meaning plain.



The Christian waits for *the rapture*.

The Jew waits for *the appearing*.

The rapture is connected with the present heavenly calling of the Church.

The appearing is connected with the earthly calling, as given to Abraham and his seed.

Thus is exemplified the Lord's saying, "The last shall be first, and the first last" (Matt. xx. 16). The Jew, called first in time, shall be last in coming in for his promised earthly blessing; the Christian, called last, shall be first in coming in for heavenly blessing.

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How will the Rapture take place?

The apostle Paul's inspired words:—

"Behold, I show you a mystery" (1 Cor.

xv. 51),

proves that the rapture was something unrevealed in Old Testament times.

The word, mystery, means something only known to the initiated.

The truth of the rapture was not revealed till after the Church was formed on the notable day of Pentecost.

The rapture then is the hope of the Church, and not of Israel.

When a Jew is converted to-day he turns his back upon the synagogue and embraces Christianity—he gives up the hope of an earthly calling and embraces that of the heavenly calling. The Epistle to the Hebrews brings this out when it speaks of “a better hope”—“a better covenant”—“a more excellent ministry”—contrasting the law principle that Judaism clings to with Christianity—with grace reigning “through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans v. 21).

This is one of the chief objections to the British-Israel theory, that, even if it were true, it seeks to occupy the believer with *earthly* hopes, and thus diverts him from the hope of his *heavenly* calling. This would be so if the British-Israel theory were true; how much more is it to be reprobated when it stands condemned as a theory with neither support from Scripture nor history—a theory founded on myths, legends, speculations, and the perversion of Scripture.

Though the rapture was not revealed in Old Testament times, yet it was *implied*. Jude, verse 14, tells us that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied,

“The Lord cometh *with* ten thousands of His saints.”

The thoughtful hearing that prophecy might have asked the question, “How can so many saints come *with* the Lord?” The patent answer would be that He must come *for* them before being able to bring them *with* Him. But these could only be questions with no authoritative answer, at best, and it is worthy of note that Enoch’s prophecy would never have been known by us, unless Jude had revealed it to us, for it is not given on the Old Testament page.

We turn to 1 Thess. iv. 14-17, where we are told how the rapture will take place. These three verses are very precious. Without them there would be a big blank in our knowledge. We should not know how the rapture will take place if these verses had not been given to us.

The Thessalonian saints were young converts. In Acts xvii. we have the account of Paul's visit to their city. For one short fortnight, including three Sabbath days a mighty work of God went on. Then, as ever where God is working mightily, the enemy stirred up opposition, and Paul and Silas had to leave the city.

The young converts were apparently so keenly expecting the Lord's return that they imagined those of their number who had passed away in death had lost the blessing of the Lord's return. Hence these instructions to these young converts.

It is not without significance that 1 Thessalonians is the first inspired letter written by the apostle Paul, and it is addressed to young converts, thus showing how important it is to have this wonderful truth presented to the newly converted. Some think it is advanced truth for deeply-taught saints. Thank God, this blessed hope is for all His people, including the youngest.

Let us examine the passage in detail. 1 Thess. iv. 14 gives us the appearing:—

“If we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so them also which sleep in Jesus *will God*
bring WITH Him.”

Note the apostle places the assurance that God will bring all the sleeping saints *with* Jesus on the same ground as the fact of His death and resurrection. Just as surely as that the death and resurrection of the Lord took place, so surely will He bring the sleeping saints with Him.

There are two “ifs” in grammar—the “if” of doubt, and the “if” of argument—the former bringing in doubt, the latter excluding it. The apostle here, using the “if” of argument, refers to incontrovertible facts—the death and resurrection of Christ—and says that just as

surely as these happened, so surely will the sleeping saints come *with* Jesus.

Then, in verses 15, 16, and 17, the apostle shows how this will be brought about, viz., by the Lord coming *for* them at the rapture.

How are the Christian dead raised?

Some contend that the Lord's coming means His coming to His saints as they die to take their spirits to heaven. Those who teach this cannot surely have read the passage we are considering. It is as plain as words can make it. It is not here the body of the dead saint going *into* the grave, but coming *out* of the grave. We read:—

“The dead in Christ shall rise first”
(verse 16).

This is clearly borne out in 1 Cor. xv. 52 when it says,

“The dead shall be raised incorruptible,”

going into details in verses 42-44:—

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

The sowing is the going into the grave. What a word to use for the body of the departed saint, that it is “sown”—a seed, which will germinate and bring forth life at the summoning shout of the blessed Lord.

What a contrast! Sown in corruption, in dishonour, in weakness, a natural body. How we hurry to put out of sight the dead bodies of our most dearly loved. To see corruption at work, to see the body, once in health and functioning in every way, now a bit of lifeless clay, quickly losing the appearance it bore in life, is truly dishonour.

But see the glorious contrast. Raised in incorruption, in glory, in power, a spiritual body.

Sceptics come in to say the resurrection of the body is impossible. They tell us the body crumbles into dust in so many years, and the dust becomes part and parcel

of the soil. They adduce hypothetical cases, such as cannibals eating a missionary, and his body being assimilated in the bodies of several cannibals, and then they ask triumphantly how can resurrection be?

To such we would answer in the words of the Lord,

“Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matt. xxii. 29).

Such questions are anticipated by the Scripture when it says:—

“But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (1 Cor. xv. 35).

And the answer is given:—

“THOU FOOL, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.”

“And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*;

“But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body” (1 Cor. xv. 36-38).

There is evidently a connection between the body which goes into the grave and that which comes out. But a mighty change takes place at the summoning shout of the Lord. The corruption becomes incorruption; the dishonour becomes glory; the weakness becomes power; and the natural becomes the spiritual.

We cannot understand. We may not reason. We can accept unquestioningly the statements of Scripture. The God who can fling millions of suns into space and suspend them in their due place; who can bring out of nothing the whole of nature, with all its beauty, vastness, sublimity, its adaptations and provisions, which reflect the glory of God as Creator, and are designed for the well-being of man as created, can bring about resurrection according to His own statements in His own Word.

The house from heaven.

But it may be asked, Does not Scripture speak of believers

“... Desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is *from HEAVEN*” (2 Cor. v. 2)?

It does, and it thereby indicates the mighty change from the natural body to the spiritual body to be so great as to justify such language. Yet 1 Cor. xv. 44 says:—

“*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.*”

Note the “it” is identical, yet how vast the change. “Doth not even nature itself teach you” (1 Cor. xi. 14)? The plant, springing out of the ground that has germinated from the seed sown, produces beautiful flowers. Where do the flowers get their gorgeous colouring? Not from the cold earth, but from the sun’s warm light; not from earth but from the sky.

So the marvellous change that will take place in resurrection is so wonderful that the body rising from the grave is connected with heaven in this way.

But remember, resurrection must mean that that which goes *into* the grave must come *out* of the grave, or else resurrection is a meaningless term.

Scientists tell us that every part of the human body is renewed every seven years, that the flesh and blood, and bone and muscle and hair of to-day did not exist seven years ago. Yet the identity is maintained. A man of seventy will tell you he was born seventy years ago, yet that change has taken place ten times, and still he has maintained his identity.

Suppose he had gone abroad and returned after twenty years’ absence, his friends would hail him as the same individual, and they would recognize the man who returned as the man who had left all those long years ago. Yet, if scientists are correct, not one particle of the body that left returned.

The natural body and the spiritual body.

Spiritualists lay great stress on 1 Cor. xv. 44.

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

They teach that there is a physical body, and surrounding it is what they call the *aura*, that is, an invisible spiritual body, unseen save by those of clairvoyant faculties, so they

affirm, and that at death, the physical body is put in the grave, but this *aura*—the spiritual body—passes over, as they phrase it, into the spirit world.

It is pitiable to see Spiritualists vehemently denying the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, denying the inspiration of the Bible, denying that there has been a fall, denying the deity of the Lord Jesus and the atoning character of His death, yet clutching at every verse in the Bible they think can be construed to bolster up their theories. It is certainly a compliment to the unrivalled authority and power of the Scriptures, and yet it reveals their utter inconsistency and the weakness of their cause.

But the Scripture quoted is twisted by them and gives no countenance to their affirmation. The "it" identifies the natural body with the spiritual body. In other words, it is the same body that is *sown* a natural body which is to be *raised* a spiritual body. There are not *two* bodies as the Spiritualists affirm, but a change from the one to the other.

But, say the Spiritualists, at death, even before the body is put into the grave, the spiritual body or *aura* "passes over" into the spirit world, whereas Scripture speaks of the natural body being put into the grave—"sown," as it is expressed—and at the coming of the Lord the mighty change taking place in the act of resurrection. Then that which is sown a natural body is raised a spiritual body.

Soul Sleep.

Some again affirm that at death the soul goes to sleep, and does not wake till the resurrection. But Scripture connects the thought of "sleep" with the body. The thought of "sleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. iv. 14) only refers to the believer. Death is now robbed of its terrors for the Christian so that it can be described as "sleep."

That "sleep" refers to the body, and not the soul, is manifest. When the Lord told the sorrowing sisters—Mary and Martha—that their brother Lazarus

“ . . . sleepeth, but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep ” (John xi. 11),
they thought He meant actual sleep.

Seeing their mistake,

“ Jesus said unto them plainly, Lazarus is *dead* ” (verse 14).

Now if “ sleep ” referred to the soul it would mean that the soul was *dead*. This would prove too much for those who advocate the false idea of soul-sleep.

The apostle Paul was under no such illusion as “ soul-sleep.”

He wrote:—

“ I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is FAR BETTER ” (Phil. i. 23).

To die and ~~pass~~ into a state of unconsciousness is not “ far better ” than being alive on the earth, and having communion with God and serving His interests. But what was “ far better ” ? 2 Cor. v. 8 supplies the answer,

“ We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

His confidence was that if He died—“ fell asleep in Jesus ”—his spirit would immediately be with Christ—he would be present, or at home, with the Lord.

Did the Lord tell the dying thief that he would drop into soul-sleep, and after hundreds and hundreds of years of complete oblivion he would be awakened from his sleep in the resurrection ? No. He said to him:—

“ Verily I say unto you, TO-DAY shalt thou be with Me in paradise ” (Luke xxiii. 43).

This stands in contrast to the thief’s “ when.” He said,

“ Lord, remember me WHEN Thou comest into Thy kingdom ” (verse 42).

The Lord replied, “ TO-DAY.” The doctrine of soul-sleep is not supported by Scripture.

The unsaved are as plainly stated to be conscious after the body is dead. Our Lord said of the rich man that he

“ . . . died, and was buried; and in hell [hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments ”
(Luke xvi. 22, 23).

There is no hint of soul-sleep here. The narrative is plain and clear—there is no unconsciousness on the part of the soul after death.

* * *

The Living Saints are Changed.

As soon as the dead in Christ are raised, in that moment of time, Scripture says:—

“ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord ” (1 Thess. iv. 17).

We turn to 1 Cor. xv. 51-57 for further details. There we read:—

“ We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed ” (verse 51).

The corruptible body of the dead saint will put on incorruption; and the mortal body of the living saint will put on immortality. *All* shall be changed, and the change will bring all to the same point.

Romans viii. 11 gives us the marvellous pledge of this wonderful transformation. We read:—

“ But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from [among] the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from [among] the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit, that dwelleth in you.”

Here we get a wonderful pledge given to us. The Spirit of God was the mighty power that raised Christ from the dead; and this very same Spirit, this mighty power, is given to the believer as the pledge of the quickening power of that day. Could anything be more confirmatory?

What a glorious moment when the Lord shall shout that summoning shout, when all the dishonour of the grave shall be over for the sleeping saints from Adam downwards to the rapture, when the body of humiliation shall be a thing of the past for the living saints. What a moment! To see our Lord and be with Him, who died

for us and redeemed us and cared for us all the journey home. What a prospect!

We must now ask and answer a few questions, basing our replies on the immutable Word of God.

May Christ Come at any Moment?

We believe that He may, and that this should be the expectation of all the Lord's people.

It has been asserted by some who believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation and that therefore, the Lord cannot come until the Antichrist has appeared on the scene, and the Great Tribulation has run its course, that the doctrine that Christ may come at any moment emanated from the late Edward Irving, of the Catholic Apostolic Church, who got it from a Spanish Jesuit, writing under the *nom de plume*, Ben-Ezra.

A two-paged anonymous tract states:—

“The strange theory [viz., that the Lord may come at any moment] originally put forth by persons in connection with the Irvingite assembly under the power of evil spirits, has no support from Scripture.”

The only answer we need give to this is, *Does SCRIPTURE teach it or not?* If it does it is true: if it does not, it is false. This is the only sure test. It matters nothing in our present enquiry what Edward Irving taught or did not teach, but “What saith the Scripture?” He died in 1834. We go much further back. What does the New Testament teach?

But it is argued by some, who refuse the truth that Christ may come at any moment, that

“Peter was divinely warned that when he was old he would be martyred; therefore, he could not look for the Lord's return, nor could any of the disciples till Peter died.”

* * *

Another says:—

“There is not a word . . . as to the Lord's return at any moment . . . in 2 Timothy iv. 6,

where Paul plainly alludes to his approaching martyrdom.*

* * *

“First and second Timothy were written evidently with a view to the guidance of believers in a future day.”

* * *

“Peter also testifies in his second Epistle, chapter iii., to a lapse of time before the promised return. It will be clear on a moment's thought that a lengthy interval must elapse before the scoff could be uttered with any show of truth.”†

The answer to this is that all these things, prophesied to come to pass, have come to pass. These things are behind us. Peter and Paul were martyred long centuries ago. The last days, prophesied in 2 Timothy have materialized.‡ The scoffers the apostle Peter prophesied should arise have long ago arisen.

If Peter and Paul died in the *first* century, why cannot the Lord come in the *twentieth* century? Where does it say that Antichrist must arise before the rapture, or that the Church must go through the Great Tribulation? Nowhere in Scripture.

It is quite true that Peter had to look for death and the early Christians for the last days.

A simple illustration may help.

Suppose a husband left England for Canada. He informs his wife that his business may take a lengthy period, or he may be able to settle it at once, and return by the next available steamer.

* We know that Paul was martyred, but is it ever said in the Scriptures that he *must* expect death in this way?

† This quotation is altogether beside the mark. The apostle Peter never refers to the rapture. He has in view the appearing, which is of course, after the antichrist has arisen and the great tribulation has run its course.

‡ The apostle John, writing at the end of the first century, A.D., says, “Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that *it* IS the last time” (1 John ii. 18). What Scripture prophesied was fulfilled before the canon of Scripture was complete, Scripture itself stating it, so that we are left in no doubt.

True, at the first, she cannot expect her husband to return *at ANY moment*.

The first two or three weeks she could safely say, "I am not expecting my husband for some time," but given time for the steamer to reach Canada, a day or two in which to settle his business, and a few days for the homeward journey, she could then say, "I expect my husband's return *at ANY moment*."

She would be a foolish woman did she not expect him daily as the time wore on, and as week succeeded week her expectation would deepen.

There is not one single event awaiting fulfilment before the rapture may take place, since the first century of the Christian era has run its course.

The extracts we have given are all beside the mark in our present enquiry. We have long been in the days when Christ may come at any moment.

The apostle Paul, inspired of God, remember, gives us the idea of Christ coming at any moment. Writing of the rapture he says:—

"WE which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [*literally* are in no way to anticipate] them which are asleep . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then WE which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 15 and 17).

Why does the apostle say "WE" twice over? Why does he hold out the possibility of the Lord's coming for His saints occurring in the life-time of some whom he was addressing? Remember, he was inspired, and if so, he rightly held out this hope.

We have before noted that 1 Thessalonians was Paul's *earliest* epistle, and addressed to young converts. It was surely fitting that the Lord's second coming should be revealed in it without a time note, for it is a truth intended to be for the comfort of the Lord's people during the Church's sojourn on this earth.

Possibly the apostle did not *then* realize that he was likely to be martyred. In 2 Tim. iv. 6, he was an aged

man, in prison with no chance of release, and speaks of his approaching end as any Christian advanced in years might do, and yet that Christian might be expecting the Lord to come at any moment. There would be no inconsistency in this.

But this much is quite plain. Paul led the Thessalonian believers to understand that some of their number might be alive on the earth when the Lord should come, and subsequent generations of the Lord's people are surely right to cherish the same hope, and still more and more so, as the years fly by.

A further question will help to elucidate things considerably.

“ARE BELIEVERS TO LOOK FOR SIGNS
IN CONNECTION WITH THE RAPTURE?”

We answer, the Church should be

LISTENING FOR SOUNDS,

NOT

LOOKING FOR SIGNS,

for there is nothing revealed in Scripture to put off that wonderful event by a day or an hour. We wait for the Lord Himself. How such a hope should thrill our hearts with holy expectation!

There are signs connected with the *appearing*, but none with the rapture.

The appearing has to do with the Jew and the earth, and signs are given us as to that day.

But there are no signs connected with the rapture.

What then are the sounds the Church is to listen for? They are enumerated in 1 Thess. iv. 16.

(1). The shout of the Lord.

(2). The voice of the archangel.

(3). The trump of God.

The shout of the Lord. How blessed will it be to hear His summoning shout! What a moment of triumph for Him! What a moment of bliss for the saints, whether sleeping or waking!

Note the difference between the rapture and the appearing. Matthew xxiv., which gives us the appearing tells us that the Lord

"... shall send 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. xxiv. 31).

In the appearing, the Lord sends His angels to gather His Jewish and earthly elect in view of His coming to reign. There is nothing said of taking them to heaven.

In the rapture we read:—

"*The Lord HIMSELF* shall descend from heaven with a shout" (1 Thess. iv. 16).

"*The Lord HIMSELF!*" How sweet are the words! He does not send His angels, He comes *Himself!*

Ephesians v. 27 answers to this when we read that the Lord shall present the assembly

"... to Himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

John xiv. 3 answers to it in the very words of the Lord Himself when on earth. He said to His disciples:—

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

This then is the heavenly hope of the Church. May we be in a constant attitude of expectation, listening for the blessed summoning shout of the Lord Himself.

We have seen two words framed and hung up on the wall of Christian homes,

"Perhaps To-day."

How it stirred the heart! The Christian poet has sweetly and truly sung,

*He's coming—perhaps to-day!
He's coming in bright array;
When the dead hear His voice,
Living saints shall rejoice,
For He's coming—perhaps to-day!"*

The voice of the archangel. Why the voice of the archangel? The angels who 'excel in strength' (Psalm ciii. 20) are a superior creation to man.

What must their feelings have been when they beheld their Creator, the eternal Son of God, becoming Man, 'made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death' (Heb. ii. 9), and then rising triumphant over the grave, lifting His redeemed people into a closer and higher place than ever they had known, or could ever know?

What shall they say when the Church takes the wonderful place of being the Bride of Christ.

It is a beautiful touch of inspiration to assure us that these holy, unfallen creatures, who have acted as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. i. 14), shall with unjealous hearts enter into the joy of their Lord, and unite in welcoming His Church as she is presented by Himself to Himself to be His Bride for ever. The archangel's voice is representative of the welcome of the angelic hosts.

The trump of God. This should surely dispel any lingering fear as to the Lord's coming in the heart of any of His own. We are so slow in taking in God's thoughts, and some who trust the Lord believe that He is gracious and tender and loving—the Saviour indeed—but they are not sure of how they stand with God. But we read that

"GOD *was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19).

Note, 'GOD *was IN Christ*.' The gospel is from God, and of God, and is intended to bring the believer to God. We read:—

"The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John iv. 14).

The fact is, all that Christ is God is, there is not one divergent thought or feeling. He could say truly,

"I and My Father are one" (John x. 30).

So we find when the Lord summons His own with a shout, the archangel utters his voice in sympathy, and we have the trump of God. The whole mind in heaven is one.

What a welcome for poor sinners saved by grace !
 What a destiny we are called to ! And how soon all
 this may take place !

What is meant by "the last trump?"

1 Cor. xv. 51, 52 throws a little further light on
 the subject for it says:—

"Behold, I shew 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: for the trumpet shall sound, and
 the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we
 shall be changed."

Two things are clear: it is the *last* trump, and it
 is a trump of *power*, for it is connected with the
 resurrection of the dead saints, and the change that is to
 take place in the living saints.

We might put it for clearness:—

- (1). The *summoning* shout.
- (2). The *sympathetic* voice.
- (3). The trump of *power*.

Why the *last* trump? The Scriptures often speak
 of trumpets. Numbers x., describes the silver trumpets
 and their use in connection with the moving of the camp
 of the Israelites in the wilderness. Doubtless, the
 imagery is on these lines.

It has been thought by some that it is an allusion
 to a practice in the Roman camp. When the camp had
 to move, a *first* trump was sounded. Immediately tents
 were struck, luggage packed, beasts laded, and all got in
 readiness for a move.

A second trump was for each soldier to get into his
 place, actually ready for the start.

A third and *last* trumpet was the signal for the
 march to actually begin.

At any rate it is clear that, whatever the former
 trumpets set forth, the *last* trump is the signal given to
 call the believers into the presence of the Lord in a
 moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

When will the Lord come?

The Word of God plainly condemns date-setting. In the light of the following Scriptures they are, at the best, but foolish and impious guesses:—

“But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night, but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light” (Zech. xiv. 7).

* * *

“Of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt. xxiv. 36).

* * *

“But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark xiii. 32).

* * *

“And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power” (Acts i. 7).

The day of the Lord, we are told, will come “as a thief in the night,” and certainly that is not a simile conveying the thought of knowing when the Lord shall come. All the Scriptures quoted above have reference to the appearance, and certainly there is no Scripture telling us when the rapture will take place.

There has been much discussion as to the Lord disclaiming knowledge of when His coming should take place, and attributing that knowledge only to the Father. Those who advocate the “*Kenosis*” theory have not been slow to fasten upon this passage in support of their impious contention.

But it is clear that Jesus as God must be omniscient, and a Divine Person could not divest Himself of this quality. He is evidently speaking of Himself in His dependent condition down here as the Servant of the Father, and as such He may not reveal this knowledge, but says plainly it is in His Father’s power.

Two members of a firm might both know some very important information, and it might be decided that one partner, and one alone, should divulge it at a moment he himself decides upon. The other partner, though knowing it, would not know it *officially*, and would therefore be unable to divulge it.

J. N. Darby says:—

“It is of this great day, and the hour of its arrival, that the angels, and even the Son, *as Prophet*, know not” (Synopsis, Vol. iii., page 242).

One thing is plain, and that is, we should distrust any person who dares to set a date for the Lord's return in defiance of the Lord's own words.

What are the Signs connected with the Appearing ?

Seeing that the rapture and the appearing are combined in the thought of the second coming of the Lord, as two parts of a whole, it is clear that the Scripture teaching as to the appearing has an interest for and a voice to the Church. The rapture is the Lord coming **FOR** His saints; the appearing, His coming **WITH** His saints. The saints are connected with both.

There are signs prophesied in connection with the appearing, and seeing that the rapture precedes the appearing, it follows that if the signs of the Lord's appearing are shaping themselves visibly before our eyes, and telling us that the appearing is not far off, the rapture must perforce be still nearer.

What then are the signs which show that the appearing is drawing near ?

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian assembly,

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto Him.

“That ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand [i.e. present]. Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except

there come a falling away [literally, *the apostasy*] first, and that man of sin [Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. ii. 1-3).

Here we get the signs that must be fulfilled before the appearing can take place, viz.—the apostasy of Christendom and the appearance of Antichrist upon the scene.

Both these signs are being foreshadowed in a very ominous way at this present time. Take the apostasy, of which we shall speak more particularly later on.

The apostle John writes:—

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John ii. 18).

The presence of the antichrists is the precursor of the arrival of the Antichrist.

Speaking only of recent happenings, within the memory of living Christians, what do we find? Higher Criticism doing its deadly work of undermining the faith of multitudes in the inspiration of Scripture. Modernism the fruit of Higher Criticism, refusing to believe in the plenary and full inspiration of God's Word, weakening, and often denying altogether, the deity of the Lord Jesus, rejecting the Virgin Birth, and the *true* manhood of Christ, in some cases denying even the very resurrection of our Lord—in short, keeping the outward form of Christianity, but robbing it of all that is vital and fundamental.

Along with this is belief in Evolution, which treats Genesis i. and ii. as mythological, and to be consistent, refuses the truth of the fall, and therefore scouts the atonement as unnecessary.

True, all this leaves Modernism in a very illogical position, and this will be so borne in upon them that complete and absolute apostasy, that is, the total rejection of the claims of God, and therefore of Christ, and the authority of the Bible—the absolute giving up of Christianity in every shape and form—will come to pass.

Then, crank religions have arrived in force, mostly, if not altogether, originating in the United States of America.

They vary considerably in their teaching, but they all unite in refusing the deity and true manhood and atoning work of the Lord Jesus.

Such are Christadelphianism, originated by Dr. Thomas; Millennial Dawnism, originated by the late self-styled "Pastor" Russell; Seventh Day Adventism, originated by Wm. Miller and carried on by the hypochondriacal Mrs. White; Mormonism, originated by Joseph Smith; and Christian Science, that colossal deceit, which is neither Christian nor Science, originated by the late Mrs. Eddy, to mention a few of the leading anti-Christian crank religions of the hour.

More sinister than all is the way Spiritualism is capturing its tens of thousands, and even permeating the Christian churches.

Most of the theological colleges are dominated by the Modernists, and are alas! turning out religious infidels by the hundreds, who masquerade as ministers of the gospel, but who are in reality ministers of Satan.

Scripture gives us ample warning as to this. Paul warns us of the coming apostasy, and surely it has developed so far that it only needs the true Church to be caught up at the rapture to make it complete. John lamented the presence of antichrists in his day, how much more are they present with us to-day?

Paul could write of

" . . . false prophets, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. xi. 13-15).

Modernism, too, has invaded the mission field, and is producing terrible results in heathen lands.

Those who stand for inspiration, and, therefore, belief in the deity, *true* manhood, virgin birth, atoning sacrifice,

glorious resurrection, ascension to God's right hand, and coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, to rapture His Church to glory, and His appearing to set up His kingdom on earth, are called Fundamentalists.

The battle between Modernism and Fundamentalism is in full swing. No quarter is asked and none is given. Things all around speak of the apostasy, ripening almost to maturity, and surely all this tells us that the appearing of the Lord to reign upon the earth cannot be far off.

The fulness of the apostasy and the arrival of Antichrist are put together in 2 Thess. ii. 1-3.

This brings us to other signs. One sign is so related to another sign in Scripture, that it is impossible to consider one by itself. This is the meaning of the passage that

"No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Peter i. 20).

It is like a block puzzle. The blocks placed in proper relation to each other make one complete picture. No block can be treated separately. So with prophetic signs.

The appearance of Antichrist depends on the apostasy of Christendom. It also depends on two other great events, viz., the revival of the Roman Empire and the return of the Jews to their own land. Both are prophesied in Scripture,* and most evidently the Great War has set in motion movements which foreshadow these two things.

The freeing of Palestine from the domination of the Turks; Earl Balfour's historic declaration on the capture of Jerusalem, that Palestine should again be the home of the Jews, and that they should found a Jewish state; the appointment of a British High Commissioner, a Jew by birth—all this is opening the way for the fulfilment of Scripture in the arrival of the Antichrist on the scene.

Along with this we have the League of Nations, surely a sign of the revival of the Roman Empire.

* See "Things which must shortly come to pass," by the author of this pamphlet, to be obtained of our publishers. 4/-.

The consolidation and strengthening of Italy as a kingdom, the increasing importance of Greece and the near East, and many other things, which space forbids our entering upon—all tell us that things are rapidly shaping for the fulfilment of Scripture in the revival of the Roman Empire.

It is the head of the Roman Empire, who is to make a treaty with Antichrist for seven years, and give Antichrist his support and authority. All this is foretold in Scripture.

Thus we have a few of the prominent signs foretelling the coming of the Lord to reign upon the earth.

Add to these, the unrest in the world, the threatening wave of Socialism, Communism, Bolshevism, stark anarchy, all tell us that the promised reign of Christ must be near.

And if the signs of the times tell us that the appearing of Christ to reign upon the earth is at hand, and the rapture or coming of the Lord for His saints precedes the appearing, it follows that the rapture must be very near. This is unquestionably the expectation of thousands of God's dear people.

* * *

Will the rapture be secret?

Those who believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation strongly assert that it must be public and not secret. One of them writes:—

“Three distinct circumstances accompany the descent of our Lord from heaven and the rapture, either of which entirely precludes the thought of *secrecy*. (1) the SHOUT, the signal shout of our victorious Lord Himself. . . . (2) the VOICE of the archangel, like Himself, powerful and full of majesty; (3) the TRUMP OF GOD.”

Seeing the rapture is to take place

“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. xv. 52),

it will burst upon an unbelieving world with startling suddenness. The world does not believe that the Lord is coming and treats the Christian's hope as the dream

of a disordered mind. The rapture will certainly be secret, seeing it will take place in the twinkling of an eye. But its effects—the removal of the Church of God from the earth—manifestly cannot be secret. A vast number of believers in all positions of life, and in every quarter of the globe, could not be simultaneously and suddenly removed from the earth without its causing amazement and frightened consternation at the moment.

Doubtless, it will be a relief to the world when the “kill-joys” and “marplots” are gone. There will be none to oppose the course of unrighteousness. The wheels of Modernism will no longer be checked by the brake of Fundamentalism; and apostasy can be hailed as the triumph of man’s progress.

The effect on the world of the removal of the two witnesses, as narrated in Rev. xi. 3-12 will, doubtless, have its counterpart when the Church is raptured to glory.

When the dead bodies of the witnesses shall lie in the street, the sight gloated over by their enemies, we read what the effect will be:—

“And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell upon the earth.”

Doubtless this event will be a nine days’ wonder, and then shall sweep in, as allowed of God, the “strong delusion” as prophesied in 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

As to the *sounds* for which the Church is listening, do not instances in Scripture bear out that they *may* be secret, so far as anything intelligible to the world is concerned.

For instance, Paul narrating his conversion, says:—

“And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me” (Acts xxii. 9).

Evidently they heard a sound, but it conveyed nothing intelligible to them.

Again, our Lord prayed in the trouble of His soul

“Father, glorify Thy Name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. The people, therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to Him” (John xii. 28, 29).

Evidently the voice, so intelligible to the One addressed, conveyed no information to the bystanders, indeed, some simply imagined that they had heard a peal of thunder.

In 1 Cor. xv. and 1 Thess. iv., the sounds are not said to affect more than the sleeping dead and the living saints. Nothing is said about the world hearing the shout. The Lord's shout is a *signal*. To whom? Not to the world. It is like the shout of the trireme to his oarsmen, or the captain to his men, which they only have to do with and understand.

* * *

Will ALL believers be caught up?

A view is being pressed by some at the present time that only a *portion* of the Church of God will be raptured at His coming, and that those who are not looking for Him, who have failed to attain a certain degree of holiness will be left behind

“to be purged by the fires of tribulation,”

as it has been expressed. This is only different in place and degree to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

We are pointed by such to Heb. ix. 28.

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: *and unto them THAT LOOK FOR HIM* shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.”

But the expression—“unto them that look for Him”—describes the believer as contrasted with the unbeliever that does not look for Him.

All believers look for Christ.

All are not intelligent as to the truth of His coming, but all look for Him. Show us a Christian that is not looking for Him. Impossible!

But Scripture is plainness itself on the point, and how devoted, diligent, enlightened students of the Scripture can go astray on this vital point passes comprehension. Can anything be plainer than this:—

“Behold, I shew 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. xv. 51, 52)?

All means all, and nothing less, taking in everyone of the saints, the feeblest as well as the strongest.

There is no loop-hole of escape, nor do we want one. We are told by Scripture that *all* the saints are to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, not at different times, but all together.

If language means anything this verse should settle the point once and for ever that all believers will be caught up at the rapture, and not a selection of waiting saints, or those who have attained to a certain degree of holiness.

You cannot separate a moment, the twinkling of an eye, into two or more periods; the last trump is surely one definite signal, affecting every saint of God, whether in the grave or on the earth. In a moment of time; at the last trumpet-signal, *all* shall be caught up.

Discussing the resurrection the same chapter says:—

“Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward, they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. xv. 23).

There is no differentiation between saint and saint. The one point emphasized is that they belong to Christ. How conclusive this is, especially occurring in an epistle addressed to believers, who could be asked, “Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” where frightful immorality was allowed, where leaders were vying one with another, where seriously evil doctrines were taught—in short, where looseness and carnality were rampant. And yet the apostle never once questions that they belonged to Christ. He said to them,

. . . “Ye are Christ’s” (1 Cor. iii. 23).

Nor did he suggest that only the best of them would be

caught up, but affirmed that all, because they belonged to Christ, would be caught up.

It is not that their carnal state was not a matter of serious concern to the apostle, as witness the warning of the whole epistle, and how the immoral man was delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, nor to the Lord when we see how He put the hand of sickness upon some, and even took the worst offenders from earth altogether—fit for heaven by the precious death of Christ, unfit for testimony on earth because of their own unfaithfulness.

Indeed, it is only those who appreciate in some measure the true meaning of grace, who can likewise realize that God's government and the Father's discipline are not slack in respect of the ways of His people. "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29).

There is another verse which confirms what we have just said:—

"And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY" (Rom. viii. 23).

Here, the change the body experiences at the coming of the Lord is styled "the redemption of the body." It is plainly the redemption of the body when corruption puts on incorruption and mortality puts on immortality.

But what is the word *redemption* connected with? Is *redemption* a question of reward, of fidelity, of attainment, or of pure, sovereign mercy?

The apostle Peter tells us we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Do we connect redemption in this connection with attainment and reward? The fact is, when God redeems, redemption is not completed till our very bodies, whether corrupting in the grave, or still a conscious part of this groaning creation, travailing in pain, as Romans viii. 22 describes it, are delivered from every effect of sin. So the effect upon our bodies at the

rapture is connected with redemption, and therefore, with God's pure and undiluted mercy.

* * *

The partial rapture theory.

We may well enquire what is at the bottom of this partial rapture theory. Good and earnest men, who think they are doing God's service, advocate it.

We believe it is the desire to obtain a spiritual lever strong enough to lift God's people out of careless walk, carnality, earthly mindedness and worldliness. Alas! too many of the Lord's people are characterized by these things, and the best of us are far from being as devoted as we should be.

But we are afraid this theory will only land those who receive it into confusion of mind, and fail to accomplish that which its advocates hope from it.

In the first place, it is entirely unsupported by Scripture, as we have seen. Where does it say in the Word of God that only the faithful will be caught up at the rapture? Nowhere! Surely an unscriptural theory cannot bring about Scriptural results.

The theory betrays a lack of the sense of the grace of God, and a mixing up of the idea of heaven and that of the kingdom of heaven.

Paul writing to Titus tells us,

"THE GRACE OF GOD that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

"TEACHING us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; LOOKING for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 11-13).

Note, it is *the GRACE of God that TEACHES*, not the threat of coming short and being left behind at the coming of Christ. Surely the Christian, who has the deepest sense of grace, is the Christian who has the greatest desire to be pleasing to God and is marked by the greatest carefulness of walk.

In the passage just quoted, there is no hint of any, who await "that blessed hope," being left behind.

The whole thought of a partial rapture is illogical. Those who advocate it, in the main, confine the thoughts of a partial rapture, that is, some taken and others left, to the living saints. But, to be logical, why should there not be a similar difference made with the departed saints? Why should faithful and unfaithful saints, who have passed away, all find themselves with the Lord, and a distinction be made with the living saints? Verily, "the legs of the lame are not equal" (Prov. xxvi. 7).

That all saints who have departed are with the Lord is very evident, when we read of the lengths to which God's discipline can go—even taking saints from the earth. We read:—

"He that eateth and drinketh [the Lord's supper] unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 29, 30).

Surely if saints were excluded it would be such. There is no hint, however, that these erring saints are not with the Lord. On the contrary, the word—"sleep"—is used in connection with their passing away—a term only used of true Christians, and there is no hint of any other place than His presence for them.

It is very evident that God is not careless as to unfaithfulness, and the lengths to which His holy discipline can go is exemplified in the case of these Corinthian saints.

The fact is, *heaven* has to do with God's sovereignty and God's grace, and all believers alike get an equal entrance there.

The kingdom of heaven has to do with God's government, and our place in it will be in proportion to our faithfulness in walk and ways as Christians, and all will not get an equal entrance into it.

It is the mixing up of these two things that betrays Christian teachers into the mistake of partial raptures.

They take up passages of Scripture where the foolish virgins are shut out, or the unfaithful servant refused entrance into the kingdom of heaven, to mean that true Christians will be shut out of heaven.

And further, if it is a standard of holiness that is to determine who will be caught up and who will be left behind, we ask, Who is to fix this standard of holiness?

It were well if we faced this question, for if God were to deal with us on these lines, it is only PERFECTION that will suit Him, and none would be caught up at the rapture.

In examinations the examiners will pass students if they get 50% or 60% of marks, but if we argue on these lines with God 99% would not pass us. We must have 100%—there must be PERFECTION. None could stand.

Thank God, there is *perfection* in Christ and His finished work, and that is the only standing ground for the saint. It is “grace, wherein we stand” (Rom. v. 2), and only grace.

* * *

Will unfaithful believers be shut out of the kingdom of heaven?

There is a theory being earnestly promulgated by a very devoted and enlightened Christian teacher that unfaithful believers will be shut out of the kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps the greatest example of being shut out of the kingdom of heaven is given us in the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. xxv.). There were five wise, and all the five entered to the marriage feast. There were five foolish, and all the foolish were shut out.

But we are left in no doubt as to who the foolish represent. When they beseech the Lord to open the closed door to them, He replies:—

“I know you not” (Matt. xxv. 12).

Could this ever be said of a true Christian? A true Christian has put his trust in the Lord, and we read:—

“He knoweth them that trust in Him”
(Nahum i. 7).

If anything, Luke xiii. is even more explicit. When the Master of the house rises up and shuts the door, and those outside begin to knock and clamour for admittance, the Lord answers:—

“I know ye not, whence ye are.

“Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets.

“But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity” (verses 25-27).

Shall the Lord ever speak to true Christians like that? No, it will be the fate of empty profession, of those who have professed and not possessed, of those who had lamps, but no oil to keep the light burning.

And further, the next verse says:—

“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out” (verse 28).

There is no distinction made between prophet and prophet. *All* the prophets, Jacob, too, plotting, scheming, intriguing Jacob, will *all* be in the kingdom. No hint of any real believer being shut out.

True there will be different rewards—some will be over ten cities, and others over five, and some will doubtless be in the kingdom with practically little or no reward, but all will be there.

What betrays the unscriptural sadness of this theory is the wild speculation into which one of its advocates was driven in explaining where the unfaithful believers would be, who should, according to this theory, be refused entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

He actually suggested that unfaithful believers might be raised from the grave and caught up at the rapture, and then being judged unfit for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, viz: the millennial reign of Christ, their bodies would be re-consigned to corruption and their unclothed spirits find themselves in heaven.

In this case, when the millennium should be over, this would necessitate a second resurrection for the unfaithful saint.

Where is there one line of Scripture to uphold such an idea? Is not speculation run riot and impious to the last degree?

But there is worse even than this. For the worst offenders, for the most unfaithful believers, this teacher suggests that, being shut out of the kingdom, such may find themselves temporarily in Gehenna—in hell. When we read this in black and white we could scarcely believe our eyes.

The Roman Catholics invent a purgatory for followers of their religion, who have not died in mortal sin, as they phrase it. They never consign to hell one who shall ever find release from it. Hell for them is final, so they invent a half-way house.

But it is reserved for this teacher to go one step further than even the Roman Catholics, and suggest that real believers may go to hell temporarily.

In support of his contention he twists a blessed verse of God's Word into meaning the exact opposite to what it really teaches. He quotes that honoured verse,

“I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish” (John x. 28),

that is, they can perish for a period, but not for ever. twisting it into meaning they shall not perish for ever.

Such he affirms is the force of “the admirable Greek.” The Greek is truly admirable for it admits of no such rendering, as the veriest tyro in Greek can testify. It means that Christ's sheep will never perish, no, not for a single moment.

If ever a theory earned its own utter condemnation, it is when wild and evil speculations are allowed in order to explain away a difficulty its advocates find themselves in. No Scriptural doctrine will ever land a Christian into such a dilemma.

But it is true that the believer may or may not have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Peter says:—

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter i. 10, 11).

An entrance all believers shall have. Let us see to it that it is an abundant entrance, that, in the government of God, reward can be granted on the ground of faithfulness and devotedness. If granted, all shall redound to the glory of the Lord.

* * *

Will the Church go through the Great Tribulation?

A writer who believes that it will, says:—

“We search in vain for *one single text* containing a promise either expressed or implied, that the Church will be taken away prior to the tribulation.”

For our part we search in vain for one text telling us, either expressly or by implication, that the Church will be taken away *after* the Tribulation.

We are afraid the author of the above extract has not searched with any degree of care, for Rev. iii. 10, 11, most clearly states what he tells he has searched for in vain, and that not by implication, but by *express* statement.

“Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from [ek. OUT OF] the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

What does it mean by keeping the word of His patience? Surely it means cherishing the hope of the Lord's return, which calls for patience as we wait for

Him. Rom. viii., which we have just referred to in connection with the redemption of the body, connects hope—the hope of the Lord's return—with patience. We read—

“If we *hope* for that we see not, then do we with *patience* wait for it” (Rom. viii. 25).

And the Lord has promised that because we keep the word of His patience, He will keep us *out of* the hour of temptation which is to come upon all the world, to try the earth dwellers.

Could anything be clearer than this?

We are not only promised to be kept out of the temptation, but out of the HOUR of it.

This hour of temptation, which will affect the whole world, is the period between the Church's rapture and her appearing with Christ to set up His millennial kingdom—prophetically described to us between Rev. iv. 1, when John is caught up to heaven in spirit and given a vision of “things which must be hereafter,” and Rev. xx. 2, where after the seals and trumpets and vials have run their course, the false bride—Babylon the Great, apostate Christendom—will be judged, and Christ's enemies defeated in the great battle of Armageddon (chapter xix.). Satan will then be bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. The Great Tribulation; the special trial for the Jewish nation, called in Jer. xxx. 7.,

“The time of Jacob's trouble.”

will come at the end of the vials, and terminate with the battle of Armageddon and the relief of Jerusalem.

The Church is to be taken *out of the WHOLE of it*—not kept in it, but taken clean out of it.

The language is very explicit:—

“Keep them from [literally *ek.*, OUT OF] the HOUR of temptation.”

Seeing that the temptation will try the whole world, how can the Church get away from the hour, or period, of it? This can only be accomplished by being taken OUT OF TIME and put into eternity, and this will be accomplished for us at the rapture.

If to be kept *out of* the HOUR of universal temptation means going through the Great Tribulation, then words have no meaning, and are but counters in a game of chance. But language could not be plainer or more explicit.

Surely, if the meaning had been otherwise, the word immediately following:—

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown,”

would have been a mockery. If the words do not mean the near prospect of Christ's return, rather than waiting for the appearance of the Antichrist and the period of the Great Tribulation, then what do they mean? They are capable of no other meaning.

But one of the “Tribulation” teachers says, referring to Rev. iii. 10:—

“The whole point at issue is, What is the meaning of being kept from?”

“In John xvii. 15, the same word is used—but the keeping there is certainly not a removal from the evil in the sense of being taken from its sphere, for the Lord expressly says—‘I pray not that Thou shouldest take them *out of* the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from [*ek.*] the evil.’”

There is a curious confusion of thought in this extract. The writer is confusing the thought of being kept from or out of the evil, a *moral* thought, with being kept *out of* the world, a *physical* thought. There is no difficulty about this. Though physically, the disciples were in the world, as actual men, their spirits were to be kept from the contaminating influences that surrounded them.

Then our author goes on to say:—

“The Greek word variously rendered in the New Testament means to ‘keep with care, to guard.’ It is so translated in John xvii. 12 (R.V.)—‘I guarded.’ It is never employed for taking away.”

The writer here has made a palpable blunder—a blunder he evidently never saw himself, for his honesty as a Christian man would have led him to correct it.

The blunder is, that he is arguing about the word "*kept*," when the point at issue are the words, "*kept FROM*." Of course, the word "*kept*" (John xvii. 12), means to guard, but to be "*kept FROM*" introduces a further idea.

There is all the difference between saying, "I want you *to keep* this casket of jewels in safety," and saying, "I want you *to keep FROM* Mr. Smith this casket of jewels." Yet the argument of our "tribulation" teacher assumes that both "keep" and "keep FROM" mean the same thing.

There is indeed, no getting out of the clear meaning of Rev. iii. 20; the believers have the promise:—

"I also will keep them from [*out of*] the HOUR of temptation."

But there are other considerations that strengthen, if possible, what we have put forward.

"The Fiery Trial."

One writer, advocating the view that the Church must go through the Great Tribulation, quotes in support of his view:—

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning THE FIERY TRIAL which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (1 Peter iv. 12, 13).

He thinks "the fiery trial" refers to the Great Tribulation period, and quotes also, 1 Thess. iii. 3, 4, in support of his view:—

"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know."

A little consideration will show that both passages refer to this present dispensation; indeed, Paul distinctly states, "as it came to pass," as *present* experience.

Surely the cry, "Throw the Christians to the lions," the sight of them wrapped in waxed cerements, burning as torches to light up pagan pleasure grounds at night, the catacombs of Rome, the inquisition of Spain, the fires of Smithfield, to mention only a tithe of what Christians have had to suffer for Christ's sake, are enough to justify Peter characterizing the sufferings of the Church as "the fiery trial."

The fact is, these writers are, one and all, ignorant of the true character of the Church and of the dispensation in which it is found. They fail to grasp the essential difference between the tribulation the Church is called upon to endure in this present dispensation, and that which will come upon the earth after the Church has been raptured to glory in a future day.

Now, the tribulation the Church is called upon to endure is from the hands of men, as energized by Satan.

Then, the tribulation will be from the hand of God, though He may and will employ angels and men, and even demons, as His instruments.

Now, tribulation is the portion of the Christian, because of his faithfulness to Christ—"partakers of Christ's sufferings."

Then tribulation will fall because of iniquity and apostasy on the part of men—the exact opposite.

Now it is upon the Christian only.

Then it will be upon the whole earth.

Now, if believers are reproached, happy are they, and need not be ashamed, but can glorify God on account of it.

Then, tribulation will be penal and retributive in character.

Whilst there will be the whole period described as

"The hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world" (Rev. iii. 10),

and out of which the Lord has promised to take His Church, there will be as part of it, and that a closing part, the Great Tribulation—the three and a half

years of terrible persecution caused by the head of the revived Roman Empire breaking his seven years' treaty with the returned Jews at Jerusalem, who will have as their head, the Antichrist, the wilful king of Dan. xi. 36, as prophesied in Dan. ix. 27.

But this period is always set in relation to the Jewish nation as brought back to the land of Israel in unbelief, and as preparing them for the reception of their Messiah, and never referred to in connection with the Church.

Jeremiah xxx. 7 speaks of "the time of Jacob's trouble."

Daniel xii. 1 prophesies "a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation, even to that same time" for God's ancient people.

Matthew xxiv., which describes the same time, sets the scene in Judæa, and exhorts the people to pray that their flight might not be on the *sabbath*—the Jewish day, as the first day of the week is the Lord's day, whereas we have no reference to the Church in this connection for the simple reason that she will not be called upon to go through this terrible period.

The fact is, the source, nature, essence and effects of the tribulation the Christian is called upon to pass through has nothing in common with that of the future day.

Of course, during the Great Tribulation, believers—Jew and Gentile—converted *subsequent* to the rapture by the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, will be persecuted by unbelievers because of their testimony to God and to the coming Messiah, in many, many cases suffering martyrdom. But this will be tribulation within tribulation, as we have said, in its source, nature, essence, and effects, perfectly distinct the one from the other.

But there are other considerations that prove that the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation.

What is meant by Apostasy?

The apostle Paul wrote:—

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that* day [the day of Christ] *shall not come*, except there come a falling away [literally *apostasy*] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition [the antichrist]” (2 Thess. ii. 3).

The word in the original, translated “falling away,” is *apostasias*, meaning apostasy.

Let us hear how two *very* prominent advocates of the theory that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation explain the word *apostasy*. We are well content to abide by their definition.

“That part of the earth, therefore, which hitherto has been and which will be, till ‘the end of the age,’—the spring and pivot of the world’s energies, will become utterly APOSTATE. It will utterly reject God as revealed in Christ: God as the Jehovah of Israel: and God as the Creator” (B. W. Newton).

* * *

“Not merely bad times in the Church, such as coldness, deadness, lukewarmness, lifelessness, but the *Apostasy*. Now what is the Apostasy? Entire rejection of everything that is divine; the fulfilment of the second Psalm,—‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;’ let us have neither God, Christ, nor anything divine: the setting up themselves, the denying everything that is divine, the rejecting even the *form* of godliness. this is the Apostasy referred to . . . this has not been fulfilled in Popery. It is *anti-christian* altogether”

George Müller.

Surely these definitions leave nothing to be desired in the way of being clear and explicit.

But these definitions prove altogether too much for those who teach that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation. It follows from 2 Thess. ii. 3, that if the Church is to go through the Great Tribulation she must apostatize, that is, completely renounce every scrap of faith in God; whether in creation, in His relation to Israel, or in Christianity.

But remember, it is only that which makes a profession that can renounce it.

For, consider the situation. The *true* Christians on the earth are a very considerable number. They must be taken account of. Could there be this wide-spread apostasy, this wholesale and complete renunciation of God and of Christ, and of every shred of Christianity, if such a vast number of people on the earth did not apostatize? The strong trend of the mere professors in the Church is very distinctly in the direction of apostasy, and we should expect it to be so. But there is a restraining influence, and we ask,

What is it that restrains?

Things have travelled a long way in the direction of apostasy, but there is a restraining influence at work. Things are working up to the fulfilment of 2 Thess. ii. 3, but the final phase of the apostasy is held in abeyance.

What then is it that restrains?

We read:—

“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth [*literally* hindereth] *will let* [*literally* hinder] until He be taken out of the way [until He be gone, N.T.].

“And then shall that Wicked [Antichrist] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. ii. 6-8).

There is a restraining influence preventing the apostasy from coming to its full maturity, allowing indeed, as is evident, things to develop in anticipation of what is to come. That influence is that of God by the Holy Ghost.

Who else could restrain iniquity in this world but a Divine Person?

The Holy Spirit maintains the Church of God upon this earth, and as long as the Church is here the apostasy evidently cannot take place, and the restraining influence is at work.

It is very evident that the Holy Spirit has a special position on earth since the death of Christ. The Lord

distinctly makes the coming of the Holy Spirit in this special way contingent on His own going away from the earth, really contingent on His rejection and death.

He says:—

“If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.

“And when He is come He will reprove [*literally*, bring demonstration to] the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment” (John xvi. 7, 8).

The Spirit's coming is given to us in Acts ii., fulfilling the type of the Feast of Pentecost, indwelling the believers, forming the body of Christ—Christ the glorious Head in heaven, believers, the members of His body, on the earth.

From that day God has, by His Spirit, specially restrained evil in this world on behalf of His people.

But the day is fast approaching when this restraining influence that hinders the full-blown apostasy and the manifestation of Antichrist—the man of sin—will be removed, and that will assuredly be the case when the Church of God is raptured to glory.

But says one of the “tribulation” teachers:—

“With regard to the . . . view, that the restraining One spoken of is the Holy Spirit in the Church, it is incredible that those who will be witnesses for God against the Antichrist will be left to cope with him and his delusions without the aid of the indwelling Spirit of God.”

The answer to this is not difficult.

The Holy Spirit will assuredly, in the future day, uphold God's saints who stand against Antichrist, and He will sustain them in their fiery trial, though He will not indwell them in the special way that characterizes the present dispensation.

Was not the Holy Spirit active in Old Testament times, sustaining God's tried people? Circumstances could not be much darker or more terrible than those described in Heb. xi. 32-38.

Was not Daniel supported in the den of lions; and the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace?—two examples that are typical, we believe, of the trials of the godly remnant during the Great Tribulation, and intended to be a special comfort to them.

We believe that just as the Holy Spirit sustained God's people *before* the day of Pentecost, *before* He plainly indwelt believers in the special way marking the present dispensation, so *after* the restraining influence is gone, *after* the Church shall have been raptured to glory, the Holy Spirit will be blessedly active in sustaining God's earthly people during the awful times that will visit the earth in God's wise and righteous government.

Another consideration may help us.

Who are the four and twenty elders?

If the Church is to go through the Great Tribulation one would expect some directions as to how she is to comport herself during this period of unparalleled trial. We have instructions given to the godly Jewish remnant in Matt. xxiv., but not a word of instruction to the Christian.

Rev. iv. 1 to xx. 2 gives us the whole period of trial described as "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world."

We look in vain for one single allusion to the presence of the Church of God upon the earth, or one line of instructions as to Christian conduct and guidance in these appalling circumstances.

Can we imagine a father sending his son into a perilous country for a considerable period—a country where

deadly dangers will surround him—and not warning his son as to those dangers and advising him how to comport himself wisely? A father who allowed his son to depart thus on a perilous mission, without a single word of warning or counsel, would be inhuman indeed.

Is it reasonable that Christ should leave His Church to her sorest trial and not give one line of counsel to guide, or one word of comfort to console at such a juncture? Impossible!

The very silence of Scripture on this point is a piece of circumstantial evidence that the Church cannot be on the earth at that time.

But if not on earth, then she must be in heaven. And it is only to be expected that next to seeing the Lord Himself, John's eye would, in vision, see that which is nearest and dearest to His heart, even His Church, in near proximity to Him.

And further, seeing that at the Lord's coming *all* the saints, Old Testament and New Testament believers, will be raised and caught up, we should expect *all* the saints—Old and New Testament saints alike—represented. This, we believe, is seen in the four and twenty elders.

It is singular that the authors who advocate the view that the Church is to go through the Great Tribulation, whose writings we have examined, with scarcely one exception, either make no reference to the four and twenty elders, or content themselves with telling us what they think they are *not*. Their treatment of the matter is most significant, for if they could have proved they did *not* represent the Church, how willingly, nay, eagerly, they would have done so.

Our reasons for believing that they represent Old and New Testament believers are as follows:—

(1). Seeing there is no instruction for the conduct of the Church on earth during the Great Tribulation, we should expect to see the saints in heaven.

(2). If in heaven, we should expect that John in his vision would see the Church next to seeing the Lord Himself, as being the nearest and dearest to Him. The Lord is described by John in Rev. iv. 3, and immediately following, in verse 4, the four and twenty elders are described.

(3). Seeing *all* the saints—Old and New Testament saints—are raptured to glory at the second coming, we should expect to see the Old Testament saints associated with the New Testament saints.

(4). The “elders” in the Old Testament represent Israel. Seventy elders of the children of Israel accompanied Moses when he went up Mount Sinai to receive the law.

The “elders” in the New Testament represent the Church.

(5). But twelve, not twenty-four, is the representative number for both Israel and the Church. There were twelve tribes in Israel—twelve was the number of stones on the breast-plate of the High Priest, and twelve the number of loaves on the shewbread table.

Twelve in the New Testament is the number representing the Church; there were twelve apostles; the holy city, representative of the Church in administration in millennial glory, had twelve gates, twelve foundations, and the measurement of the city was twelve thousand furlongs.

Why then, four and twenty elders? Why not twelve?

Twelve being the administrative number, we believe twelve stands for the Old Testament saints, and twelve for the New Testament saints. It is interesting to note

that this very unusual number in Scripture, twenty-four, is the number of the courses of the priests in 1 Chron. xxiv. 7-19—thus setting forth the whole range of worship.

(6). Further, it is clear the elders are not angels, for in Rev. vii. 11, these classes are distinguished as separate. The elders were clad in white raiment and had crowns of gold on their heads. Now, white clothing is common to angels and glorified saints, as Scripture testifies. With the latter, it specially symbolizes the practical righteousnesses of the saints as seen in Rev. xx. 8.

But crowns are never said to be the portion of angels, whereas they are held out as a reward to believers. One of the promises given to the Church in Smyrna was, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee *a crown of life*" (Rev. ii. 10).

But it has been urged by an objector that the four and twenty elders cannot symbolize the saints for how could they wear crowns before Christ should have His? How could they reign before Christ reigns? The answer is very simple. The word crown in Rev. iv. 4 is not *diadeema*, the monarch's crown, but *stephanos*, the crown awarded to the victor in the Isthmian games, and used to symbolize reward for the Lord's people. It has nothing to do with reigning at all.

The combination of white raiment and *crowns* can point to none other than the saints of God.

(7). Their occupation confirms what has been already said. They do two things; (a) follow intelligently and with appreciation the justice of God's governmental dealings with the world, and (b) worship.

(8). When the Church, in her *distinct* character, comes into view in Rev. xix. 7, 8, the voice of much people exclaiming glory to God is heard *in heaven*. This is the first mention of the Church, as such, in the whole book; Rev. ii. and iii. dealing with local churches in the aspect of profession.

Henceforth, after Rev. xix. 7, 8, there is no more allusion to the four and twenty elders. The Church, as such, is prominent and distinctive. The hour of the display has come.

(9). In Rev. xxi. 10, etc., we are distinctly told that the holy city, that is, the Church viewed in administration in connection with the millennium, is seen as coming "*out of heaven.*" She must have been *in* heaven to come *out of* heaven.

These considerations leave us in no doubt whatever as to who are represented by the four and twenty elders, and that the Church's rapture terminates "the things that are" (Rev. ii. and iii.), and that she is, thank God, with her Lord according to the faithful promise in Rev. iii. 10, 11, while His desolating judgments sweep this world in tribulation.

The confounding of the dispensations.

Moreover, if the Church is to go through the Great Tribulation, we should have the extraordinary spectacle of the Christian evangelist preaching the gospel of the grace of God, telling his converts that they have ceased to be Jews and Gentiles religiously, that they now belong to the Church of God, that there is no Great High Priest on earth, no earthly temple, that theirs is an heavenly calling, and to be taken up with an earthly priesthood and an earthly temple would be to go back "to the weak and beggarly elements" (Gal. iv. 9), which would bring them into bondage.

On the contrary, the Jewish evangelist would preach "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. xxiv. 14), tell his converts that they were connected with earthly promises and an earthly system of blessings—temple, altar, priests—designed by God for their blessing.

What confusion this would be, and

"God is NOT the Author of confusion"

(1 Cor. xiv. 33).

Then again, the "tribulation" teachers hold that Matt. xxiv. contains instruction for *Christians*, and that

the following passage gives us the time that the rapture will take place.

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

"And He shall send 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. xxiv. 29-31).

On the other hand, those, who believe that the Lord may come *at any moment*, hold that the instructions were given to the disciples, in accordance with what they were at that moment, viz., a believing remnant of Israel, and *as representing the Jewish remnant* IN THE DAY TO COME, and that the passage quoted will be fulfilled when the Lord comes *with* His heavenly saints, to bring deliverance to God's *earthly* people, viz., Jews and Gentiles converted by the preaching of "the gospel of the kingdom" during the period between the rapture and the appearing, constituting "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world" (Rev. iii. 10).

"The Jewish waste-paper basket."

But this latter view excites the wrath of a "tribulation" author. He says:—

"This Judaizing practice seems to have sprung up side by side with the doctrine of the Pre-tribulation theory, and was no doubt produced by it.

"... If it is permissible for me to put out of court as Jewish any Scripture that I adjudge to be so, I can easily bring the Scripture into accord with any hypothesis I choose to advance, because I have silenced all obnoxious passages. . .

"This method has been aptly described as making use of a 'Jewish waste-paper basket.'"

On the contrary, what shall be said of a teacher who claims as Christian, Scripture that plainly has reference to the Jew? Even the "tribulation" teacher acknowledges the distinction—"the Jews...the Gentiles...the Church of God" (1 Cor. x. 32)—and sees the difference between the earthly calling, belonging to the promises made to Abraham, and the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus, belonging to the Church of God alone. Surely there are instructions for *both*. Scripture distinctions are plain.

But let us see if Matt. xxiv., adjudged to be "Jewish" and in prospect of a day yet to come, is a matter of wishing to put out of court a Scripture that does not coincide with an hypothesis.

The Lord is sitting on the mount of Olives, and His disciples ask Him what shall be

"The sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world [*literally*, the completion of the age]" (Matt. xxiv. 3).

Remember, the rapture was still a *mystery* unrevealed till 1 Thess. iv. 13-18 and 1 Cor. xv. 51-54 were penned.

Reading down Matt. xxiv., it will be seen that the setting is distinctly Jewish. We do not adjudge it to be so. Let it speak for itself.

We read:—

"Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains" (verse 16).

This is not adjudging the Scripture to be Jewish. The Scripture itself gives the locality as such. If this were instructions for Christians it would certainly not confine them to Judæa.

Again:—

"Pray ye that your flight be not . . . on the sabbath day" (verse 20).

Again, the sabbath day is Jewish. The Scripture never makes the mistake of confounding the first day of the week—"the Lord's day" (Rev. i. 10)—with the seventh day of the week—the Jewish sabbath.

Then again, the gospel that is to be preached proves it to be Jewish.

"This gospel OF THE KINGDOM shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come" (verse 14).

The gospel of the kingdom was the only gospel preached at the time the Lord spoke to His disciples. John the Baptist and the Lord Himself proclaimed it, and He commissioned the apostles and the seventy to preach it.

It will again be preached, as our passage indicates, in the interval between the rapture and the appearing. Its results are described in Matt. xxv. 31-46.

The burden of the gospel of the kingdom is:—

"Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.

"For this is He that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight" (Matt. iii. 2, 3).

In the days of our Lord this gospel was confined to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24), but in the future day it will go out "unto all nations" (Matt. xxiv. 14).

The gospel of the grace of God is being preached in this dispensation, calling out of this world a people for heavenly blessing. It is so distinctive, presenting a glorious Saviour on the Father's throne, and connecting believers with Him, the glorious Head in heaven, as members of His body upon the earth, that Paul could describe it as "MY gospel" (Rom. xvi. 25, 26), and glories in the fact that he received it by direct revelation (*see* Gal. i. 12).

The reader can see whether we are arbitrary in adjudging Matt. xxiv. to be instructions for the Jewish remnant in a day to come and not for Christians in this dispensation.

It is a question not of a "Jewish waste-paper basket," but of

“rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. ii. 15).

But it may be asked,

Who are the Great Multitude?

as seen in Rev. vii. 9-17.

We are left in no doubt as to who they are. One of the elders, answering John's question as to their identity, says,

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (verse 14).

This vast multitude is composed of Gentiles (as the 144,000 are composed of Israel, evidently a symbolic, not a literal number), who have been blessed by the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.

They are *before* the throne, that is, in the presence of it, not necessarily in heaven.

The twenty-four elders (symbolical of heavenly saints) are *around* the throne, necessarily in heaven.

The multitude out of the Great Tribulation serve God day and night (time) in His temple (place of a divinely instituted, but *earthly* system of worship).

The heavenly saints have no temple, in direct contrast to this, and no need of sun and moon (time).

These “tribulation” saints have no crowns as the elders have. Their garments are made white in the blood of the Lamb and palms are in their hands, symbolic of their having attained victory and stood the awful test of tribulation.

If this vast multitude represent the Church, then where shall we find the nations walking in the light of the heavenly city, which is typical of the Church in administration during the millennium? Where shall we find the nations that are to be blessed in a coming day? Where are the inhabitants of the new earth? We believe the great multitude, who come out of great tribulation, will form that company.

“By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. vii. 20).

This is a very wholesome text. In our present enquiry we ask, What is the result of holding the “tribulation theory?”

The frank admission of more than one, who have recently imbibed the theory, is to the effect that it robs them of their zeal in the gospel; their souls are chilled as they are drawn away from the warm expectation of the Lord’s return *at any moment*; their hearts are depressed as their attention is fixed on happenings on the earth, instead of waiting for the moment when “the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with A SHOUT, with THE VOICE of the archangel, and with THE TRUMP of God” (1 Thess. iv. 16).

What joy can a Christian parent have in receiving a gift of offspring from the Lord when he believes that his children, if not himself, will have to go through the terrible tribulation, and more than probably suffer martyrdom? It is a terrible theory.

But what of the other side?

One of the “tribulation” teachers admits that the hope of Christ coming at any moment is taught by “some of our best teachers and leaders.”

Another states that it is taught by teachers of “high repute.”

Yet a third states that it is taught by “many whom I find it easy to esteem better than myself.”

It is a truth indeed that has moved tens of thousands of God’s people to an unworldliness and a devotedness to Christ which compel our profoundest admiration—a truth that has been signally owned of God in the conversion of multitudes, especially among the children of godly parents.

It abundantly verifies the text:—

“And every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure”
(1 John iii. 3).

If this teaching were of Satanic origin, as some wickedly state, we should not expect it to have such blessed fruit, whereas the effect of believing the theory that the Church is to go through the Great Tribulation is confessedly sad.

* * *

We rise from our consideration of this blessed subject without a shadow of doubt but that the Lord may come at any moment. Nay more, that the signs of the times proclaim that His appearing to reign upon the earth is drawing near, how much nearer then is the realization of the blessed hope.

Oh ! that His people might be waiting and watching, their loins girded like men that wait for their Lord—that they might be on the tip-toe of expectation.

What a moment of supreme joy for our blessed Lord and Master---Him who bore the shame and suffering on the tree of Calvary, Him who patiently has conducted His Church through the wilderness with High Priestly grace and supplies, Him who

“ . . . loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish ”
(Eph. v. 25-27).

What a moment when

“ He shall see of the travail of His soul, *and* shall be satisfied ” (Isa. liii. 11).

And if it will be a moment of supreme joy and triumph for Him, what a moment of ineffable bliss it will be for His own. That triumph may be His, that joy may be ours, as these lines are being read.

Well may Scripture close with the words:—

“ He which testifieth these things, saith, . . .
Surely I come quickly ” (Rev. xxii. 20),

and well may we respond with the words that follow:—

“Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Meanwhile, be the journey almost over, or be there a few more steps to traverse o’er the desert sands of the wilderness of this poor world, we know that the benediction that closes the Holy Book will be ours,

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

His grace will suffice to the end, and then glory, for

Christ may come at any moment.

We may well sing:—

*“Jesus, we wait for Thee,
With Thee to have our part,
What can full joy and blessing be,
But being where Thou art?”*

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