



IS THE

Lord Jesus Christ

Himself again to return to this

World?

By J. D. B.

“Where is the promise of His coming?”
“I will show thee that which is noted in the
Scripture of truth.”—*Dan. x. 21.*

READING:—

Printed for the Author by J. J. BEECROFT.

1886.

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Is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself again to return to this World?

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THERE are yet to be found persons to whom the subject of the return to this earth of the Lord Jesus is still an unsettled, doubtful, and obscure idea, notwithstanding the very plain words of Scripture, and the numerous modern tracts and writings on this most important matter: whence then this slowness to apprehend the true facts, and the glory connected with them, and to realise the present joy and comfort to the heart flowing from them? We fear that the answer, as of old, is to be found in the words of the Lord in Luke xxiv. 25. "*O fools, and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken.*"

But there is another very large and increasing class to whom a further knowledge of this subject is a matter of absorbing interest, as well indeed it may be, and it is to this class that we more particularly address this elementary matter, knowing full well how the soul of the true Christian once aroused on a theme so intimately connected with the Lord they love and worship, will not rest until he knows the "all" that the Scriptures have to say on a point so essentially a part of the things concerning Himself. Let the reader again read this part of Luke xxiv, for it is our text throughout.

2. NECESSITY OF BEING CLEAR ON THE SUBJECT.

Now if it be true that the Lord Himself is to return actually and visibly, it becomes a point of the deepest moment that every true child of God should not only clearly understand for himself the grounds on which this truth rests, but that he should be able

to show to others who may be indifferent to it, its vital importance; and every preacher of the gospel should be especially clear about it, as a most important thing to place prominently before the unconverted man, for it is to such, when unfolded in its full force and direct immediate effect, a theme of the wildest terror and alarm, which cannot be trifled with for one moment.

If it is not a true and Scriptural fact, if it is only a notion entertained by a few silly and weak-minded persons, it should most unmistakably be shown to be such, and be exploded, and once and for ever rejected.

But persons of the first mentioned class may still dream out the excuse, "Well, it may be all true enough, but I do not see what it has to do with my religion, with my daily duties, with my usefulness in this world, or with the inward growth of my soul and heart, I have done without it these many years, and why cannot I do without it now? Why should I

trouble myself about it? for surely I have enough already to occupy me day by day." To such we can only affectionately say,—Read on, and may Christ awaken you, and give you light. (Eph. v. 14). If after reading, you still repeat the same excuse, we shall indeed have written in vain, but we are very strongly inclined to hope that your excuses will vanish away.

To allow then such a momentous matter to be an unsettled one in our minds is a very serious affair, because its importance cannot be overrated; it is in itself a subject that so very materially influences the position which we give in our hearts to the Lord Jesus, for it is so intimately connected with His person, with His power, with all His plans, purposes and intentions, with all that is dear to His heart, that to allow uncertainty in our minds to have any existence at all, is to damage our souls, to harden our hearts, to undermine all our efforts to exalt His name, to weaken our preaching of Him

as the Saviour, and as the one only person who can remedy all that is so very wrong around us, for He is the one only person who has the heart, the will, and the power to put everything right.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

For is not He to be the great King over all the earth? Then He will assuredly settle every outstanding question of the politics of the day, He will settle what Nations are to be exalted, and what Nations to be put down. Is He the King of the Jews? Then He will gather the outcasts of Israel, build Jerusalem, build the Temple, and reign before the ancients gloriously, and through Him by means of the Jewish Nation restored, the whole world will be blessed. (Rom. xi.) Are any physical alterations to be made in this world, and of its atmosphere and climate? Then who so competent to do it as He who holds the earth in the

hollow of His hand; He who can make the desert to blossom as the rose, can divide the Mount of Olives, can cause a mighty river to spring forth into life in Jerusalem, go through the divided mountain into the Dead Sea, and heal its pestilential waters! can level mountains, exalt plains, cause the light of the moon to be as the sun, and the light of the sun to be sevenfold! Does Agriculture require improvements? Then who but He can by His personal presence cause the earth to yield her increase? (Ps. lxxvii.) Is He the Prince of Peace? Then who but He can turn swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks? and cause every man to sit down under his own vine and fig tree. Does warfare require new and improved systems and weapons? Then He at the disastrous and unheard of calamities of the bloody field of Har-Megidon will settle these points once and for ever, and the Nations shall no longer learn the arts of War.

These things all flow from the personal presence of the Lord on the earth as the Scriptures very plainly show.

But more than all this—these matters very deeply affect the future well-being of this world; but this world is not *our* home—there is something connected with Himself that is nearer to us than all this, that is a very present, earnest matter. Is He the Bridegroom? How does this question affect the every thought of our heart, the every motive of our life? What are we living for, if it be not with the one desire ruling our whole souls to be with Him where He is? This is the one and the supreme wish of the true Bride. Yea! it is the one supreme wish also of the Bridegroom.

4. THIS SUBJECT IS THE KEY TO ALL SCRIPTURE.

Moreover if we are not clear on this point we shall be more or less confused in *all* our interpretations of Scripture, and this confusion is obser-

vable in many of our best modern writers; it is the key to all prophetic truth, for it is essentially of "the things concerning Himself," and the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and we may be certain that there is for us no "opening of the Scriptures" no "heart-burning within us" without this key. (Luke xxiv. again.) These two disciples were much perplexed with what had taken place around them, and which so deeply and so intimately concerned them; and we shall in no wise be better off than were they, unless we listen attentively and give diligent heed to the "ALL things" to which the Lord pointed them as being already in the Old Testament Scriptures, to which we now have to add that which He has given us in the inestimable treasures of the New, which are the continuation and consummation of all that was written aforetime for our learning; it is an essential thing *rightly to divide* the word of truth, (2 Tim. ii. 15.) and clear-

ness on this subject is necessary to enable every teacher to do so, and every learner also.

5. DEFECTS IN CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION.

There is very much in the present order and form of religious instruction, as carried on by the usual systems in Churches and Chapels, that tends to starve the souls it is their professed object to feed; for too little stress is laid on the personal, devout, diligent study of the sacred word, and too much prominence is given to the Public Instructor or Preacher, and the necessary outcome is a multitude of weak and feeble Christians; for each individual, like a new-born babe, must feed personally, at the outset of his course on the sincere milk of the Word, and as he grows, the strong meat will soon become necessary, and this can only be supplied by the whole Word of God, and by it alone, there is no human substitute for it that can avail us for one moment.

Some few Christians rise above these difficulties, and searching the Word for themselves usually become Christians whose company is valuable, and whose life is a testimony, an intelligent testimony to the reality of their faith; but these are the exceptions, while starvation, or semi-starvation is the more general result, for we cannot get our doctor to eat our dinner for us with any great advantage to ourselves; although true teachers are a special gift of God to His Church, (using this term Church only in its Scriptural sense, and not in its usual colloquial sense) they are only to help and assist the individual reader of the Word of God. To read it in his stead, denying it to him, is not the proper carrying out of their office.

There are persons who look upon a knowledge of Scripture as only worthy the attention of the Nursery or of the Sunday School. Such persons may be classed as rejectors of the Word of God, and such, in the darkness of their

minds, though they may rank as great among human philosophers, have yet to learn that the Word of the living God is so immeasurably superior to any and every work of human production, as to hopelessly distance any comparison whatever, even if judged on the mere ground of literary excellence; it is a *revelation* from God to man of that which he could not by any possibility have learned from any other source, and the study of this book is the work of a lifetime, which is all too short to exhaust its subject matter, but what he does learn nevertheless raises the earnest and devout student as far above all mere human learning as light is transcendently superior to darkness: it gives him moreover, no small capacity to judge men and things around him, and that not only in present intelligence, but with the divine light of the experience of ages long since passed, and also in the knowledge of the ultimate result in the main, to what end all that is now

working in activity around him, blind and helpless activity so far as the world is concerned, is tending; it also enables him to read the hearts of men in a way which no mere human experience can give him.

Nor is this but a tithe of his advantages, a divine life, an eternal life has been given to the Christian, he is a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. v. 17.) with new motives, new desires, new appetites; to meet and supply these, the inspired word of God is alone able, and it does supply in inexhaustible fulness all that the new sphere in which he lives, craves and demands; and he further finds in these sacred pages how to direct, and how to express the praises and adoration that flow from the mighty revelations of the love and faithfulness of his Father and God.

Hence the necessity of its constant and full and perfect use to the Christian.

6. EFFECT ON THE HEART, OF THE STUDY OF THIS SUBJECT.

The effect of the study of the subject of the Lord's return on the heart and soul is of far more importance than the mere knowledge of Scripture on the subject, the knowledge must be obtained, but the head may be filled with doctrines and arguments, and with a knowledge of God's purposes in the past, present, and future government of the world, but after all the central object of Christianity is a *person*—a person to love—Christ Jesus the Lord—whom to know is life eternal (and if we know Him we know the Father also) “we love Him because He first loved us” (1 John iv. 19.)—“He loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. ii. 20.)—and if we truly love a person and know that he loves us, we are deeply interested in everything that concerns him, small or great. Ask a woman of upright and pure heart, who truly loves a person—nay, there is no

need to ask her—watch her ways—and we then learn that love, even in its poor human form, is an irresistible controlling power. If this be true then, what shall we say of divine love, love energized by the Holy Spirit, the “love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given to us (Rom. *iv.* 5.) Now if we truly love a person we like to be in his company; if he goes away, our hearts yearn to know where he is, what he is doing, when he will return, how he feels toward us, and what are his intentions about us; it is this that makes this subject a part, a necessary part, of the education of every Christian heart; for if our affections are centred around the Lord, the thought of His return—and that at any moment, without any previous warning or notice—becomes not a mere doctrine, but the dearest hope of the heart:—

“Thoughts of His coming—for that joyful day,
In patient hope I watch, and wait, and pray;
The Day draws nigh, the midnight shadows flee,
Oh! what a sunrise will that Advent be!”

but we are anticipating, for we have to go into some details and Scripture proofs.

7. PLAN.

We will now turn to the Scriptures of truth, and endeavour to trace this subject through its wondrous pages, while we hang in weakness and dependence upon Him who is strength itself, and concerning Whom they were written to testify; and trusting in the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit who inspired the writers to write for our learning: those who in their wilfulness reject the authority of the sacred writings we do not for one moment endeavour to enlighten in these pages, though we may seek to warn them.

To proceed concisely we will begin from the beginning and take those Scriptures that prophesy of the *First Coming* of the Lord.

That this is the shortest and best way to deal with the subject will be

evident from the fact that the *Second Coming* of the Lord and all its collateral events are frequently interwoven and involved with the circumstances of His first Advent: the separation and distinction of these events are unfolded more clearly as we advance, the Lord Himself giving the key to His disciples and apostles of the order in which those events were developed, or which yet remain to be developed in all their glorious fulness; the grand distinction of the sufferings first and the glory to follow being pointed out by Him in the xxiv. chapter of Luke. We shall therefore have to note most particularly as we proceed where to make this important distinction, and to observe what parts of ancient prophecy are as yet unfulfilled, and we shall find that they again divide mostly into two heads, being either connected with glory or judgement. We must mainly confine ourselves to the unfulfilled portions, for no sober Christian can have any doubt on his mind concern-

ing those events which are already accomplished facts finally and for ever, though we may have occasion to remark on some of these facts: this method of investigation requires a most scrupulous attention to every word of Scripture, for it cannot fail to be noticed by every earnest student of the Word of God, how much hangs upon a single sentence, or the separation and distinction of one sentence from another, as we shall have to show, sometimes in a most startling manner.

8. SCRIPTURE PROOFS.

The Lord Himself in Luke xxiv. divides this subject into two heads as we have seen, He had first to suffer, and then to enter into His glory, and the apostle Peter speaks of the "sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow," (1 Peter i. 11.), and we cannot do better than attempt to follow out this divine outline—it is as we have stated, our plan.

—then follows the announcement that the serpent was to “bruise His heel;” a certain limited power of Satan—this is connected with the sufferings, and is here put in the secondary order; what the Seed of the woman means we shall have to consider—it is a mystery—a divine mystery—but a cardinal doctrine of Christianity.

It is not necessary to quote every passage bearing upon a coming Saviour—that indeed would be a voluminous task—only leading ones will be selected, for the earnest student will soon learn in his daily readings how to notice and understand many others, some less direct, but which all unmistakably apply to this grand event. Moses speaks of a coming prophet to whom all were to listen, or it would go ill with them.

10. THE PSALMS.

The Psalms of David are occupied in setting forth something concerning the Lord in the great majority of them,

both concerning His sufferings, and in much detail the glories that follow, so that selection becomes difficult, but concerning His sufferings on the cross the twenty-second Psalm is pre-eminent, the second, twenty-third, seventy-second, ninety-seventh and ninety-ninth, among many others are occupied with the glories that shall follow. The twenty-second Psalm claims our special attention, not only from its deeply pathetic, heart stirring—yea, we may say indeed heart breaking—language, for who can read it without tears; but it is also remarkable for the break that occurs in it; down to the end of the 21st verse it is occupied exclusively with the sufferings of Christ on the cross, every word of which has been fulfilled; death is the theme even to the “dust of death” but at the 22nd verse the scene is changed entirely—the theme is changed—not death now, but life and activity is the subject, while the person spoken of remains the same, consequently resurrection is an

accomplished fact; this was stated to be a necessity in the sixteenth Psalm, so here we get a risen Christ. Is this part of this remarkable Psalm fulfilled? certainly not—Christ has risen from among the dead it is true—the grave could not hold Him, it had no claim on Him—but is the kingdom yet the Lord's (v. 28), is He the Governor among the Nations? are all the ends of the world turned to Him? (v. 27.) These things will be among the glories yet to be revealed, but come they will in due course.

This Psalm and the sixteenth also are so fully quoted in the New Testament that their application to the Lord Himself is beyond a doubt, and the Apostle makes good use of them in Acts ii. 25. and in iv. 25., &c.

One more remark we may here make on the second Psalm, the apostles made use of the first two verses (Acts iv. 25.), and applied them to their present persecution; and Scripture is often used in this way for the *principle* that ac-

tuated the priests and rulers, and the Gentile Pilate to crucify the true Christ and persecute His followers, is precisely the same spirit that will show itself, in all its terrible force and power in the coming day spoken of in this Psalm, *when the whole world* will unite, and seek to cast off the very name of Christ, but at that very time God intervenes and asserts *His right*, and then v. 6 will be literally accomplished, accomplished in power to the full, "Yet have I set MY KING upon My holy hill of Zion." This is a part of the "glories that shall follow," and it is a part that requires the personal presence of the Lord in Zion, seated on the throne of David.

11. ISAIAH.

But the prophet Isaiah is perhaps of all the prophets the one most occupied with the subject of the coming Lord and Saviour, and that in much detail—his language rises to the highest pitch of sublimity as the

glorious scenes of the future rise before his enraptured eyes—truly he “saw His glory and spake of Him,” *Jno. xii. 41.* But if the glories that follow the sufferings are so much dwelt upon, he is none the less detailed, and pathetic to a degree when the subject before him is the sufferings; it has been said that the words of the fifty-third chapter are engraven on every Christian heart, so deep a hold has that part of scripture on the people of God, and what Christian is there who is unable to repeat it word for word? But we must look first at a notable prophecy contained in the seventh chapter, because it is so intimately connected with Him who suffered, and with Him who is yet to be glorified before all worlds, v. 14 should read thus “Behold! Thou, O virgin shalt conceive,” in this passage our translators, in their just horror of Romanism and Mary worship from which they were emerging, have rather spoiled its im-

portance by rendering it "A virgin," it is emphatically *the* virgin, for there never was but one *virgin* who conceived, for this would be a miracle, and is described as such fully and completely in the first chapter of Luke, and here we get the meaning of the expression, "Seed of the woman," already referred to in Genesis—Matthew quotes this passage of Isaiah in his first chapter (v. 23), applying it to the infant Christ and his mother Mary, so that its application to the person of the Lord is beyond all question—but it is a mystery—a miracle—but a very cardinal point of Christianity, and in its fullest development of "Immanuel," God with us, yet remains to be fulfilled in its complete extent in a millennial earth. Very rich and important passages are to be found in chaps. xlii. 1-4, xlix. 1-4, l. 4-9, lii. 13, to its end, without a break, going on into the 53rd chapter—this break in such a passage is a great mistake of the early printers, for it cuts off to a careless

reader—the slave of chapters and verses—what is contained in the 52nd chapter. But let us look a little more into detail. Beginning at chap. xlii., is this fulfilled? Certainly not—is it all unfulfilled? A part of it is most certainly already accomplished, but is judgment yet brought forth unto truth? Is judgment set in the earth? Read the passage carefully—In the coming glories it doubtless will be, but the isles yet wait for His law—they have not yet got it. The next passage in chap. xlix. we may regard as accomplished, as also the one in chap. l. In chap. lii., v. 14 is accomplished, also chap. liii. with the exception of verse 10. “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied”—this will not be fully accomplished until the coming day of His glory. Thus we begin to see how the first and the second coming of the Lord are

intermixed, being looked upon by the divine writer as one and the same thing, as indeed they are, though it is necessary for those on earth to travel, generation by generation, through the interval.

12. THE SIXTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF ISAIAH.

But the most remarkable and startling of all will be found in this chapter, which gives us in very few words at its commencement, the work the Lord was to do, both at His first coming, and consequently in connection with His suffering period, and at His second coming—the time of His glory: in this instance we have the most unqualified and unmistakable testimony of the Lord Himself, as to the application of the passage, and why He so abruptly broke off where He did when reading it aloud in the synagogue of Nazareth. Let the reader look at this chapter, reading carefully down to “to proclaim the

acceptable year of the Lord," but not a word further—here the Lord came to a dead stop. Let him turn now to the gospel of Luke, chap. iv., and see why, for this is a matter of deep importance—The Lord is preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, perhaps His first sermon, "He stood up to read," and His intention being thus expressed, no doubt a customary form, the attendant of the place handed to Him the book, or roll, of the prophet Isaiah, "and He found the place where it is written"—no mean accomplishment—for books were not then divided even into *words*, all was crowded together in one endless and undivided succession of letters only—so that first *to find the place*, and then to decipher the writing word by word, was indeed a feat of no mean order—modern division into words, sections or chapters, sub-divided again into verses (barbarous as this last is in our Bibles—an invention of a printer of the middle ages), badly as it may be done,

is no small help to finding a certain place. We must remember that the Lord was not indebted to the Rabbis of the day for instruction—they were astonished that He could read at all, but “He found the place where it was written,” and then follows the part we have quoted; He read that—and that alone—He made a dead stop—not one word of what follows did He read, for it is “and the day of vengeance of our God.” Why was this? Because the *person* was come upon whom the Spirit of God was lavished. “The Lord hath anointed *Me*”—and because with the person, the *time* was come also, “*this day* is this Scripture fulfilled,” Luke iv. 21. The acceptable year of the Lord was now come; we call it in modern religious language, the day of grace, Scripture calls it a *year*, and this year has already been lengthened out more than eighteen hundred times, and is not yet closed. Now all this was come, and was being fulfilled before their very eyes—read

the narrative in Luke iv.—but “the day of vengeance” was NOT YET COME, therefore the Lord did not read one single word further, but abruptly closed the book, and returned it to the keeper, for He was only going to unfold to the waiting congregation that He was now God’s appointed messenger to them for present GRACE, and not for judgment. When on another occasion He is questioned by His disciples about the time and the circumstances of His second coming, He again refers to this omitted sentence, for He explains to them, that He is speaking of the time prophesied of by Isaiah (and by others also) “for these be the *days of vengeance*, that ALL things which are written may be fulfilled,” Luke xxi. 22. Thus while quoting the very words He had previously omitted, He also couples with them further prophecies, and the Evangelist takes care to record that He was seated on the Mount of Olives when He stated

these things, the significance of this allusion to the place we shall see as we advance.

Here then is a proof, and a most startling one, that the Lord must again come in person, to complete this prophecy, and come as a judge.

The apostle Paul also takes up this point when preaching before the learned judges, the Areopagites, assembled in court on Mars Hill, as narrated in Acts xvii. 31, "because He hath appointed A DAY in which He will judge the world," identifying the Lord as the person to act as judge, and stating that the day is fixed for this coming assize of the living, a very distinct thing from the distant judging of the *dead*, before the great white throne.

13. THE NEW TESTAMENT. KINGLY CLAIMS OF THE LORD.

We have before alluded to the kingly claims of Jesus of Nazareth, for

the Old Testament is full of the subject, we will now turn briefly to the New Testament, which at the very outset takes up this subject. Matthew speaks on it in chap. ii. in connection with the infant Christ, and the "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh" remind us forcibly of the kingly, and priestly, and personal characters of the babe of Bethlehem, but Luke is more particularly to our present purpose.

If we turn to the first chapter of Luke, and we commend the first two chapters to the especial study of those who are waiting for the Lord, as we now wait; and here we find that the mighty angel Gabriel announces to the virgin Mary that the Son she was to bear was to be "Great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him **THE THRONE** of His father David." Has this prophecy yet been fulfilled? Has the Lord ever yet sat upon the throne of David? Was the Lord even reckoned among the "great" of this world?

True—He was surpassingly great in a moral sense, but that is not the sense in which He is spoken of here; it is a question of rank and power, going up to its highest form, sitting on an earthly throne as did David of old; but to this day, not one word of this prophecy has been accomplished. What then? Shall we give up this Scripture, or shall we try and explain it away, and say that it refers to His reigning in the hearts of His people, or something of that sort? Away with such trifling with the Word of God! God forbid that we should thus deny the Scriptures! The time is not yet come for its fulfilment, but come it most assuredly will, in all its literal glory—Lord! haste that day.

“Come, blessed Lord! bid every shore
And answering island sing
The praises of Thy royal name,
And own Thee as their King.

Thine was the cross, with all its fruits
Of grace and peace divine:
Be Thine the crown of glory now,
The palm of victory Thine.”

Therefore we learn from this passage that the Lord Jesus Christ will again come to Jerusalem (more correctly to Zion) and sit upon the throne of David, there exercising kingly power over the whole world; for this is one of the many passages that speak of "the glories that shall follow," and it is a very distinct one.

The Lord takes up the theme of His sitting on the throne in Matt. xix. 27, in connection with His giving rewards to His disciples, and again in chap. xxv. 31, in reference to the glory of His coming, and the work which He was to do at the very outset of His sitting on David's throne, and the Scriptures are full of this subject, but the earnest reader will soon learn to cull them out for himself.

In 1 Cor. vi. we are told that we are to judge the world, and not men only, but also angels, v. 2, 3. Now if we are thus to act as judges, when and how can it be, but in connection with our Lord sitting on the throne of David?

In the present day we reverse the nature of our difficulties, as compared with the two disciples on their evening walk to Emmaus (Luke xxiv.)—they could not see the sufferings of Christ, and we do not half see the glories that are to come. Their difficulty was that no outward power or glory had been manifested on their behalf by the One who had been put to death; their expectation was that He would have redeemed the nation (v. 21) from the galling yoke of the Gentile Cæsar; they were occupied, and rightly too, with the prophecies that spoke of his glorious power, and so they were bitterly disappointed—the Scriptures that spoke of His sufferings they had overlooked. We, in our day, are made so familiar with the sufferings of Christ—His cross—His making peace by the blood of His cross—His bearing our sins in His own body on the tree—we are so occupied with these things—and rightly too, for they are the very

essence of all our hopes, our faith is built on them—the fact of His death first, and then of His resurrection—we are so occupied with His humiliation and rejection here—we look upon Him as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—the houseless wanderer—the man Who had not where to lay His holy head.

“What had the world for Him? ’twas meet
 To answer love with love,
 With signs of thankful joy to greet
 The stranger from above.

For Him! with all its proud array,
 Of kingdom, palace, tower,—
 He was a wanderer each day,
 A mourner every hour.

For Him! with all its glory spread
 Before its Maker’s sight,—
 He had not where to lay His head,
 That wearied head, by night.”

Though He was the Son of God by Whom and for Whom all things were created (Col. i. 16.)—we are so occupied with these things that we too in this our day overlook the Scriptures, those that speak of His coming glories.

Both sorts of difficulties arise from the *same cause*, we are slow to believe ALL that the Scriptures have said concerning Himself.

It was this point of our Lord's claim to be King, that Pilate chiefly questioned Him about, for Pilate, occupying the place in Jerusalem of the personal representative and deputy of the great Cæsar who then ruled the world, it became his special duty to put down all claims to kingly power and authority on the part of any claimants; nor does the Lord shrink from the very great danger of declaring Himself to be a King in the very face of such tremendous power arrayed against Him; hence the spirit of God records for our learning, "Jesus Christ, Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession," 1 Tim. vi. 13. But though the Lord keeps intact this title to be King, He also says, "now is My kingdom not from hence," it has no place in the present state of the world; but there is

enough said to show us that Pilate was deeply impressed with the fact that he was dealing with a King, and this explains his testy answer to the envious Jews. Pilate had written over the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," and he would not alter it, to please the whole hierarchy of the Jewish priesthood, who were sorely vexed to see such an official declaration of His kingship. Jno. xix. 19-22.

When the time comes that the Lord takes this great power into His own hands, we read that, "He had on His vesture, and on His thigh, a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords," Rev. xix., and His first act is to destroy the great usurper, far greater than any Cæsar, who will be then exercising unheard of power on the earth, and with him, his attendant satellite, the false prophet, who will share the same fate; all this is described in the 13th chap. of this same book.

14. THE MANNER AND PLACE OF HIS COMING.

Thus the Lord in person comes again to this earth, and "the glories that follow" begin to be realised and manifested: the *manner* of His coming in power is fully given to us in Rev. xix., while the *place* is distinctly noted in Zec. xiv, with its attendant circumstances. In Rev. xix. read carefully from v. 11 to v. 21., and you will observe that everything speaks of kingly power, and when kingly power has to be exercised against opposition, then war and armies are brought into exercise, here then is a most vivid picture of the Lord coming from heaven as a King, seated on a white horse, followed by the heavenly armies, and the reality of this great battle of Har-Megidon is strikingly depicted and its unparalleled slaughter brought before us by the invitation to all the birds of prey throughout the whole world to come as to a

supper to feed on the carcasses of the slain. The expression Har-Magidon, Armageddon or Har-Meggedon, (Rev. xvi. 16.), means "The fortress of Megiddo," and Megiddo is a strategical stronghold north of Jerusalem (King Josiah was slain there, II Kings, xxiii. 29.) and this supper of the fowls and ravenous beasts is prophesied of in detail in Ezekiel xxxix. Thus the place of His coming is fully described, with attendant circumstances, in Zec. xiv., and this place is significantly the Mount of Olives.

Thus a personal coming of the Lord is constantly kept before us; of course the reader is supposed to have his open Bible before him, it is unnecessary to quote in full, long passages or chapters, and it is of little use to read these pages without constant reference to the Word of God: the true end and aim of all such writing as this is to draw the reader into the study of divine revelation—that which is noted in the Scripture of truth, "Let the

word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." Col. iii. 16.

In all that we have hitherto said, the main subject of the Old Testament prophecies as to the coming of the Lord, first to suffer, and afterwards to be glorified, has, for the sake of simplicity, been adhered to; the earth with the Lord present as its king, and the Jewish nation established in power, is the theme of them all, the millennium will be the time of the great display of the Lord's glories to an obedient world, and blessed will that day be; and for that day, a repentant and restored Israel must wait: we have touched but slightly on this subject, only endeavouring to set forth in convincing quotations from Holy Writ the fact of the Lord's *personal return to this world*; but we must now enter upon what is to us a far more important subject, one of daily expectation and personal interest to us; one also, which is far less

understood, or even known at all, than the more familiar, and more readily received ground that we have been going over.

15. THE LORD'S REVELATIONS TO PAUL; A NEW ASPECT OF HIS COMING.

We now enter on this new subject; the Lord very specially revealed to the apostle Paul, the great fact that He intended to come, not to the earth—but part of the way, we may say, and then, by a miracle, to take up from the earth, all those who believe in Him; and this without allowing them to pass through the ordinary phase of death at all, but rather, like Enoch, to be translated alive: changed our bodies must be (Phil. iii. 21.) but death is not to be known to the certain few indicated.

This is a clear truth of Scripture that has been long lost to the church; its animating effect on the early saints is very clearly seen, not only in Paul's writings, but also in those of John,

who whether he knew more or less than Paul, it matters little—knew enough to encourage the saints in no small degree as to their hope. As the great hope of the believer, for there is certainly no charm in death, it has been lost for long ages; it is only within about the last half century that it has again been industriously and clearly set forth in many valuable tracts and essays, and by many very godly and forcible preachers and lecturers, and in every part of the civilized world where Christians are to be found: this fact goes for little in the world's history, but to the saint of God, it is a very important one, and deeply marks the times we are living in—it was always in the Scriptures, but was lost sight of by preachers and teachers who for ages could see nothing but death as the common lot of *all men*—this is distinctly contradicted by Scripture—it is erroneous doctrine, supposed to be sanctified by age—but it can no longer stand

against the clear light of the Word—the old truth has again come forward prominently to the front, and we may indeed thank God for it.

It marks a great change in the age we are living in.

This sleep, this loss of the truth, and this change, or awakening, is pointed out to us by the Lord in the striking parable of the ten virgins.

It is pointed out thus (Matt. xxv.) A marriage is the groundwork of the parable; ten virgins, occupied with this marriage, (Jewish marriage ceremonies took place by night) go out to meet the Bridegroom—some were wise, some were foolish—but all went forth.

They forgot their object—it was night—slumbering overcame them first—then they all slept—but they were suddenly disturbed—at midnight there was a cry made, “behold the bridegroom!” All was now activity—they arose—they trimmed their lamps—some had oil—some

were without it—"those that were ready went in with the bridegroom to the marriage, and the door was shut. The wise ones were shut in, the foolish ones were shut out.

Now this parable exactly represents what is taking place in Christendom; that the last fifty years has been a time of unprecedented activity, all observant persons will readily admit. As a matter of history, it can be pointed out that nearly sixty years ago, this coming of the Lord was first publicly preached. This was the "midnight cry;" for it will hardly be disputed that Protestantism was about that time at its lowest ebb; shortly after this preaching had commenced, the celebrated *Tracts for the Times* appeared—wise and foolish virgins alike began vigorously to trim their lamps, a process that is going on now in every part of Christendom, with more or less energy—what if the next move in this solemn drama should be concerning *those that were ready!*

This same activity is as much observable in the political, scientific, literary, artistic, and social world, as it is in the religious movements of the day—as we have said, a great change in the age we live in is marked by these things.

But we must explain the nature of the revelation made to the apostle Paul without further digression.

16. THE THESSALONIANS AN EXAMPLE TO US.

The way in which this revelation was made known to these early Gentile Christians by the great apostle of the Gentiles was remarkable in itself; this theme forms an important part of his earliest epistle. We read of his first visit to Thessalonica in the xvii. chapter of the Acts; here a few Jews and many Gentiles received his testimony concerning Christ, amid violent persecution from the unbelieving Jews, who drove him out of the city, and

followed up their opposition even unto the next town. Men converted under these circumstances are usually zealous Christians—that these Thessalonians were such is very evident from the lively manner in which the apostle addresses them in his epistle—the first he wrote—the date being about A.D. 54, or very soon after his visit to them. Not only was their reception of the gospel truth “in power,” v. 5, and themselves examples of true Christian walk, but they became active missionaries to all the surrounding population, verse 8, all heathen, be it remembered; three things are enumerated concerning them. 1st, “That they turned from idols to God.” 2nd, “That they served the living and true God,” and 3rd, “That they waited for His Son from heaven,”. now the first two points are intelligible enough to all Christians, but what can be the meaning of the third point?

These early Christians were sor-

rowing because some among them had died, (ch. iv. 15) and so (as their friends thought) had lost all share in the joy of a coming Lord; and the apostle writes to correct these erroneous ideas, and proceeds to unfold his revelation, v. 15, "for this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord," that sorrowing Christians may have their sorrows turned to joy; others might sorrow, unconverted men, for they had no hope, (v. 13), but these Thessalonians had a glorious hope; and he goes on to explain, and every word here demands our serious attention, so the reader is entreated to read this with his Bible open before him at 1 Thess., chap. iv, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again," v. 14,—why every Christian believes this! very well, then let him also believe that which follows, for Paul's argument is that if we believe this fact, we must also believe what he is going to declare to them, "those that have died [sleep in Jesus is the

expression] will God bring with Jesus." How? The dead in Christ will rise at a given signal—the Lord Himself will descend from heaven, iv. 16—it does not say He will come to the earth—*He does not do so*—v. 17 is conclusive on that point. At the time of this great event the Lord descends with a shout—with the voice of the archangel—with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ hear and rise—they are the first to obey the summons—we who are living have our bodies changed, 1 Cor. xv. 52, Phil. iii. 21,—we should have thought that the living would ascend first—afterwards the raised from the dead would follow, but this is not God's order—they rise first—we are changed—and together we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air—the other side of the clouds—far away from the earth—how far matters little—the LORD is there, we see His face, and never part again—we remain with Him for ever—this—this—is the Christian's hope!

"For ever to behold Him shine!
 For evermore to call Him mine!
 And see Him still before me;
 For ever on His face to gaze!
 And meet the full assembled rays,
 While all His beauty He displays,
 To all the saints in glory!"

How different is this language to Zec. xiv. where we are distinctly told that *His feet touch the mountain*.

Now this explains the third point that distinguished these Christians—their attitude was one of "waiting for the Lord from heaven."

This epistle speaks three times more of the Lord's coming, in chap. ii. 19, chap. iii. 13, and chap. v. 23, but these passages refer to the Lord's coming to the earth *with His saints*, how they got to heaven we have already seen: in chap. v. he speaks of the "day of the Lord," the day in which the Lord comes to the earth as a Judge: in his second epistle he says, chap. iii. 5, "And the Lord *direct your hearts* into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,"

but his main theme is, the Lord coming as the Judge of the wicked.

17. FURTHER DETAILS—DEATH.

Scripture needs no confirmation—once a fact is declared, or a doctrine propounded it is sufficient, but we are seldom left to one statement. In the first epistle to the Corinthians we have these main facts of 1 Thess. iv, brought before us in connection with the doctrine of the resurrection, and the apostle prefaces his statement with the words (chap. xv. 51), “Behold I shew you a mystery,” it was a mystery that had been revealed to him by the word of the Lord—he goes on to state “*We shall not all sleep.*” He states the general fact in Hebrews ix. 27, that “it is appointed unto men once to die,” (the emphasis is on the word “once,” which is repeated many times in the line of his argument) but here he explicitly excepts certain persons from passing through death at all, but the mortal

body can never go into heaven as it is—it must be changed, and this change takes place at the instant of the sounding of the trumpet, about which he had already enlightened the Thessalonian Christians, so he does not repeat it here, but in this remarkable passage he does point out the fact that this wonderful event was predicted in the Old Testament, quoting from Hosea, xiii. 14, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from DEATH; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction,” in this quotation we have a remarkable proof of the way in which prophecy is unfolded as the time of its fulfilment approaches—the truth is there—wrapped up—but now made wonderfully plain by the apostles detailing the circumstances under which its truth will be proved when this wondrous—startling—marvellous event takes place—when this trumpet sounds. The Thessalo-

nians were "waiting for the Lord from heaven," he exhorts them in the second epistle to "wait patiently," chap. iii. 5. The Bridegroom may tarry, (Matt. xxv. 5) the man on the long journey may come "after a long time," v. 19, but "He that shall come *will come*, and will not tarry," Heb. xj. 37, because His last words to us are, "Behold I come *quickly*," (Rev. xxii. 12). Are we patiently waiting? and are we "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus, ii. 13.

18. THE LAST TRUMP. WHAT IT MEANS.

The expression in this chapter (I Cor. xv.) in the 52nd verse, "the last trump," has been supposed by careless readers to apply to what they call the last Judgment—to the end of the world, but in the Scriptures where that awful event is described, we hear nothing about trumpets, nor can the

final destruction of this world ever take place until the Lord has reigned for a thousand years on this earth, sitting on the throne of David, according to the prophecies we have already been looking at, and this involves His personal coming to the earth, while what the apostle is speaking of takes place *before all this*, for when he does come, *we come with Him*, and how we get into His presence, and into heaven, he is now describing in these letters to the Corinthians, and to the Thessalonians. The apostle is said here to be using a military expression, referring to the breaking up of a Roman camp—at the last sound of the trumpet all marched off—disappeared entirely from the spot so lately alive with their presence.

There are other points connected with the quotation from Hosea xiii, which, though of great interest, we cannot take up here.

To make everything definite and

clear to the reader we must beg him to turn to what we have previously stated as to the manner, and as to the place of the return of the Lord when He comes to the earth in power as the King.

19. THE MANNER AND PLACE AGAIN, BUT CHANGED.

We will now briefly notice the manner of the Lord's coming, and the place to which He comes to call up His chosen ones to Himself, in direct contrast to all that we have before stated: the *place* is the same, but the *manner* is vastly different, and the time *precedes* the public appearance of the Lord to all men.

That the place is the same, is made clear by Acts, i. 12, the manner is fully detailed in I Thess. iv. 14, 18, and in I Cor. xv., and also in a remarkable manner in Rev. xiv. Here a white cloud is the prominent thing connected with the Lord—when it was a question of kingship, a white

horse is brought prominently before us—He sat upon the horse—now it is a cloud—He sat upon the cloud—and it is very interesting to trace this word “cloud,” through the New Testament scriptures, which any one may do by means of a Concordance, for only one word is used in the Greek, in this instance, and so no confusion can arise from consulting an English concordance like *Cruden's*, which cannot be said to be the case in tracing most other words: it will be found in every instance (save four, including Heb. xii. 1), to refer in some way, to the personal presence of the Lord, from the time that the cloud became visible to the people of God; when they were being redeemed from Egypt, as referred to by Paul, up to this fourteenth chapter of the last book of the New Testament—but we need not here further enter into this matter, only directing the reader's attention to the chapter in the book of Revelation, because it appears to

bear on the point before us in strong contrast.

20. SUMMARY.

Now without further reference to the Scriptures, we think we have said enough to prove the following six points, taking it for granted that the reader has no doubt that the Lord came in person to this earth to suffer in "a body prepared for Him," according to Heb. x., with all the blessed results that follow.

1. That He will come again in person to this earth.
2. That He will come as a Judge.
3. That He will come as the King to rule the world.
4. And that above all these three points, He will come to call up His saints, whether dead or living, and this by a miracle.
5. That in so coming He does not come actually to the earth, but near to it.

6. That when He comes again to the earth, He brings His saints with Him.

And if we have proved all this, what a field have the Scriptures opened up before us for contemplation—study—praise—hope: the prophetic parts for study; the Lord coming for us—for our hope and praise—and let us remember, that this is not a subject that we can call prophetic in the usual acceptation of the word, for it depends not at all on the course of events—no time is stated—it is put before us a hope—a blessed sustaining hope—something to raise us above the prospect of death—but we may be sure of this, that when we are so called home by that trumpet, prophetic events will flow on apace.

“O Saviour! Whom absent we love,
Whom not having seen we adore,
Whose name is exalted above
All glory, dominion, and power.

O! come and display us as Thine,
 And leave us no longer to roam;
 Let the light of Thy presence, Lord, shine,
 Let the trumpet soon summon us home.

O! then shall all mists be removed,
 And round us Thy brightness be poured!
 We shall meet Him, Whom absent we loved,
 We shall see, Whom unseen we adored."

"Our earthen vessels break;
 The world itself grows old;
 But Christ our precious dust will take
 And freshly mould:
 He 'll give these bodies vile
 A fashion like His own;
 He 'll bid the whole creation smile,
 And hush its groan."

"Lord Jesus, come!
 Nor let us longer roam
 Afar from Thee, and that bright place
 Where we shall see Thee face to face
 Lord Jesus, come!

Lord Jesus, come!
 And take Thy people home;
 That all Thy flock, so scattered here,
 With Thee in glory may appear,
 Come, Saviour, come!"

21. POPULAR ERRORS CONCERNING THE SUBJECT, AND THE END OF THE WORLD.

The Destruction of this World. In many persons' minds, the coming of the Lord is inseparably connected with the end of the world, and is thus put off, as a remote event too far removed into the future, to merit any present attention. This is a capital device of the enemy of their souls, and is very successful, as closing up all entrance of the real truth into their hearts. Such persons will quote the Scriptures sometimes, such as Matthew xxiv. 3., not knowing that this verse should read—"and of the end of the age," or dispensation, as we say—a question of *time* only, not of the solid earth at all.

Now, the true order of events is this :—

1. The Lord is coming for His own true people. This may occur at any instant, and will probably only be

known to them, they only will hear the Trumpet; they may be missed from their accustomed places, and the opened graves in churchyards and cemeteries may attract a passing notice, otherwise it is a family secret.

2. Shortly afterwards — very shortly “The Day of the Lord” so frequently and so fully dwelt upon in the Scriptures—a time of fearful calamity to the world, sets in in all its terrible force.

The results of this “day” on the world are lasting and momentous. On Christendom they are crushing; all scandals are cleared away; it is the great Day of Judgment *on the Living*.

3. The Lord appears, and sits upon the throne of David, ruling the whole world. This lasts for a set time, called “a thousand years;” commonly called in religious language, “The Millennium.” Certain great events take place at the close of this period.

4. The Judgment of *the dead* now takes place (called the judgment of the Great White Throne) and this world is destroyed by fire.

We purposely avoid going further into the wonderful details of prophetic truth, our object being simply to place the facts of the Lord's coming, the fact that He is coming, before those who have not hitherto thought at all on the subject, or whose thoughts have been anything but clear about it.

Another form of error is that those persons who are waiting for the Lord cannot consistently engage in the ordinary occupations of life. A very little thought will dissipate this silly notion.

They know not the time ; it may be to-day, to-morrow, or years hence ; it is a hope, a blessed and certain one, a purifying one, but a hope and not a *fixed* date. They must go on with the ordinary duties of life.

A simple anecdote will illustrate

this :—A Christian man, living in a neighbourhood where the good people bought their coals by the single sack, bought the large quantity (in their eyes) of half a ton at the beginning of winter. “Oh !” said the neighbours, “He cannot be waiting for the Lord, as he says he is. What does he want with all that coal ?” At last, one person challenged him on the subject. This was his answer :—“Look here, my good man, I have a trifle of money in my box upstairs, if I spend it in coal, I have the coal, and not the money. If the Lord comes to-day, what does it matter to me which I had ? Can I take either away with me ?”

It is a very different thing indeed, to allow the heart to go to sleep, to forget that the Lord is coming for me, and to sit down at my ease, and try and enjoy the world.

22. A WORD TO THE UNSAVED.

But if prophetic events may be expected to flow on apace after the Lord

has called up to Himself all those who believe in Him, it is certain from what we have already seen, that Judgment is the first of them. The appointed day of which the apostle speaks in Acts xvii., 31, is a day in which the living will be judged—men living in the world as they now are, men who have heard the gospel of the grace of God, it may be many and many a time, but who have hardened their hearts against it, men who would not receive the truth in the love of it (2 Thess. ii., 10), men who will not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, men who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His Power (2 Thess. i., 8.) Dear Reader, have *you* obeyed this gospel? Think of the wondrous times in which you live, times in which this gospel of love and grace is preached with such persistent activity; “doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of

high places, by the way in the places of the paths," for instance, in the main streets in this town of Reading, and in leading approaches to it. 'She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors," at the churches, chapels, halls, and such like places. "Unto you, O men, I call * * * all the words of my mouth are in righteousness * * * they are all plain to Him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge; receive my instruction——."—Prov. 8. Is it not so, dear reader? Beware then if you are neglecting and trifling with these precious present opportunities, for Solomon, the same writer, writing by divine inspiration, declares, "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."—Prov. i., 24. Did you never see a man stretch out his arm in

preaching in Reading—thus, the very attitude of the servants of God and the very places where their warnings are given are here pointed out by the divine writer, and what is true of the town of Reading is true of a vast number of other places also, for these are the days of final warning and entreaty. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.”—Is. i., 18. “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”—Is. lv., 6. 7.

Safe myself within the Ark,
 How my spirit yearns o'er thee
 Tossing in thy fragile bark,
 Out on life's tempestuous sea.
 Safely I in Christ abide,
 Raised above the floods of sin;—
 While **THE DOOR IS OPEN WIDE**,
 Oh! that thou wouldst enter in.

For the door will be soon shut.

Luke xiii. 25.

Once I also went astray,
 Loved the world and sin too well,
 Madly followed my own way,
 And a tale of woe could tell.
 Grace it was that rescued me;—
 Drew me to the Father's home.
 Grace is pleading now with thee,
 Oh, that thou wouldst also come.

“And behold! I come quickly; and
 My reward is with Me, to give every
 man according as his work shall be.”—
Rev. xxi. 12.

J. D. B.

Reading,

August, 1886.

HYMN.

FAREWELL to this world's fleeting joys,
My home is not below;
There was no home for Jesus here,
And 'tis to Him I go.

To Him in yonder home of love,
Where He has gone before:
The home He changed for Calvary's cross,
Where all my sins He bore.

He bore my 'sins, that I might be
His partner on the throne;
The throne He 'll shortly share with those
For whom He did atone.

Up to my Father's house I go,
To that sweet home of love:
Many the mansions that are found
Where Jesus dwells above!

And He Who left that home above,
To be a sufferer here,
Has left this world again for me,
A mansion to prepare.

His errand to the earth was love,
Love to a wretch like me!
To pluck me from the jaws of death,
Nail'd to th' accursed tree.

Th' accursed tree was the reward,
Which this sad world did give,
To Him who gave His precious life
That this lost world might live.

And has this world a charm for me,
 Where Jesus suffer'd thus?
 No! I have died to all its charms,
 Through Jesus' wondrous cross.

The cross on which my Lord expired
 Has won the crown for me!
 All hail, then, fellowship with Him!
 Whose death has set me free.

Nor free alone—He vanquish'd him
 Who held me in his chains—
 But more than this, He shares with me
 The fruit of all His pains.

To all His ransom'd ones He 'll give,
 (To me among the rest)
 With Him to dwell, with Him to reign,
 With Him for ever blest.

Farewell, farewell, poor faithless world,
 With all thy boasted store:
 I'd not have joy where He had woe—
 Be rich—where *He* was poor.
