

THINGS TO COME;

BEING

A SHORT OUTLINE

OF

Some of the Great Events of Prophecy.

BY

JOHN R. CALDWELL.

GLASGOW :

OFFICE OF THE "NORTHERN WITNESS," 40 SAUCHIEHALL STREET.

LONDON :

JAMES E. HAWKINS, 36 BAKER STREET, W.,

AND 12 PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

DUBLIN : DUBLIN TRACT REPOSITORY, 10 D'OLIER STREET.



CONTENTS.

	CHAPTER I.	Page
INTRODUCTORY		1
	CHAPTER II.	
CHRIST IS ALL		10
	CHAPTER III.	
THE JEW, THE GENTILE, AND THE CHURCH OF GOD . . .		13
	CHAPTER IV.	
THE PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM		19
	CHAPTER V.	
JACOB'S TROUBLE		24
	CHAPTER VI.	
THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES		29
	CHAPTER VII.	
ANTIOCHRIST		35
	CHAPTER VIII.	
CHRIST THE HOPE OF ISRAEL		41
	CHAPTER IX.	
I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF .		46
	CHAPTER X.	
THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST		51

CHAPTER XI.		Page
AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED		57
CHAPTER XII.		
THEN SHALL THAT WICKED BE REVEALED		62
CHAPTER XIII.		
GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION		68
CHAPTER XIV.		
JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE THE TIME		71
CHAPTER XV.		
WHEN CHRIST SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM		76
CHAPTER XVI.		
THE TARES ARE GATHERED AND BURNED IN THE FIRE . .		80
CHAPTER XVII.		
A KING SHALL REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PRINCES SHALL RULE IN JUDGMENT		85
CHAPTER XVIII.		
THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING		90
CHAPTER XIX.		
A DELIGHTSOME LAND		97
CHAPTER XX.		
ALL NATIONS SHALL CALL HIM BLESSED		102
CHAPTER XXI.		
AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND BEFORE THE THRONE		106
CHAPTER XXII.		
AND I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH		110



THINGS TO COME.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

IT is in the very nature of man to look forward. He cannot help it if he would. Thoughts as to the future will and do occupy his mind ; and in so far as these are the offspring of fancy, or the reasonings of mere natural sagacity, they are for the most part utterly false. But God has in this, as in all else, anticipated the need and the desire of His own redeemed children. He has not left us to be tossed about by winds of fancy or reason. In Jesus our Lord "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3) ; in us is "the Spirit that searcheth the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 10) ; and in the Word there is revealed for our blessing so much of God's wisdom as He has deemed fit to impart, as much as it is for our good to know, and infinitely more than the most enlightened and diligent have ever learned. "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. viii. 2.)

It is most blessed to come to the Lord Jesus, as lost

and guilty ones, and to find in the Word of God all that our souls need—pardon and life through His name. Very blessed is it also as saved ones knowing the grace of God in truth, and fully owning the authority of the Lord, to come to the same Word to know His will, that we may do it. In the former we are as sinners learning the grace of the Saviour, in the latter we are as disciples and servants, learning the mind and will of the Master; but, blessed as these attitudes of the soul undoubtedly are, they are not the highest into which the grace of our God would introduce us. “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” (John xv. 15.)

Surely this is higher, nearer, more blessed! It is the intercourse of friendship—the telling out of the deepest counsels of the heart to the dearly loved ones for whom He would lay down His life; it is taking us into confidence, even as He had done long ago with Abraham. “Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?” (Gen. xviii. 17.) And was it not in exultant allusion to this that Jehoshaphat, with the boldness of faith, called him God’s “friend”? (2 Chron. xx. 7)—a word that long afterward the Lord Himself, who had treasured it up, brought forth by the lips of Isaiah (Isa. xli. 8), and again confirmed by His apostle James (Jas. ii. 23.) Yes, it is the very joy of God to take His servants into the confidence of friendship. It was so in patriarchal days—it was so when “the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;” and, when “received up into glory,” we have “the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass.” (Rev. i. 1.)

What then is the fitting response to such manner of grace as this? Is it to declare that any truth beyond the knowledge of forgiveness of sins and life eternal is specu-

lative, and therefore of no practical value; that beyond the mere knowledge of the precepts of the Lord concerning our daily walk, all inquiry is a kind of presumption, and sure to end in variance, puffing up, and bitterness?

Such things have been said by some, who have confounded the vain intrusions of curiosity with the reverent gaze of the worshipper—the searchings after hidden things by the carnal mind with the holy inquirings in God's temple after the things that are revealed.

But is this the response that is due to such condescension—to such a confiding love? Is it not becoming rather to seek by obedience to be taken much into communion with the Lord? according to His word, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John xv. 14.) “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” (Ps. xxv. 14.) With such will His Spirit, ungrieved, hold high communion, unfolding, according to promise, the things of Christ, guiding into all truth, and revealing “things to come.” (John xvi. 13, 14.)

But more than this; we live in a dark and evil day. Many and subtle are the devices of the adversary. Cunning craftiness and specious falsehoods are his means of beguiling the unwary. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” (Prov. xxii. 3.) Hence it has been also written, “We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.” (2 Peter i. 19.) God has foreseen the evil, and has forewarned *us*. Shall we give heed to His warning voice, and seek to know those things that are coming upon the earth—or shall we “pass on” and be punished?

Again, not only has He given warning of coming snares and judgments, He has set before His people an infinitely blessed hope, even “the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” and our sharing with Him in the glory and

blessedness of His coming kingdom. His people shall be "like Him ; for they shall see Him as He is." "And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure." (1 John iii. 3.)

It is therefore a purifying hope, and cannot be held in the heart without its purifying power being experienced and manifested.

But is it not now as it was of old ? He has mourned unto His people of dark and evil days, and they have not wept, and fain would they turn the night into day, and call the darkness light. He has piped unto them of coming glories, and they have not danced, but rather have turned away from the bright and blessed prospect, and sought a place and portion on earth, where Christ is disowned.

The world has scoffed, and raised the cry, "Where is the promise of His coming ?" and the saints have said in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming ;" but God has foretold it all. Happy is he that heeds the gracious warning : "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

When Israel had forsaken Jehovah and turned to idols, the work of their own hands, the Lord reasons with them by Isaiah His prophet—commending Himself to them upon three leading grounds ; firstly, as *creator* (Isa. xlv. 18), secondly, as *Saviour* (ver. 21), and thirdly, as the "*declarer of the end from the beginning*." (xlv. 9, 10.) No other could do any of these things but God Himself.

And it is in this last character, as the declarer infallibly of what is future, that the prophetic word so mightily approves itself as of divine origin. In this it is its own witness ; and the lax views that so widely are held as to the inspiration of the Scriptures are not a little traceable

to the fact that the prophetic character of the Word of God has been so largely ignored.

Some have been deterred even from examining the subject of unfulfilled prophecy because of the difference of judgment that exists amongst those who have chiefly studied it. But have such given attention even to the subject of *fulfilled* prophecy? Is it not a lamentable fact, that most Christians are in almost total ignorance, even of those prophecies which have already had their accomplishment—albeit that about such there cannot possibly be any difference of opinion, all being fulfilled literally, and to the very letter? On the other hand, many have been occupied much with prophetic truth, who have had little heart for Him of whom it testifies.

The wise men of the East had a heart for the Lord, as well as for His truth, and to them His star was revealed, that left them not until it brought them to Immanuel in the manger.

The scribes and chief priests knew from the Scriptures the very place of His birth, and could answer the inquiry of the troubled Herod; but not one step would they take to see or worship the Messiah that was born at their door. (Matt. ii.) Such there may yet be—some, hiding the Word in their hearts, with little insight as to the details of prophecy, are indeed waiting for the Son from Heaven; others with greater knowledge, and readier to impart it too, have little of the waiting and watching spirit.

Nevertheless, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Rev. i. 3.)





CHAPTER II.

CHRIST IS ALL.

Col. iii. 2.

“**T**HE testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev. xix. 10.) “To Him give all the prophets witness.” (Acts x. 43.) This is He “of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.” (John i. 45.) “All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.” (Luke xxiv. 44.)

“Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man : but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;” and “the Spirit of Christ which was in them testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow.” (2 Peter i. 21 ; 1 Peter i. 11.)

Christ is the “Alpha and Omega” of the purposes of God, the centre toward which every line in the circle of revelation points.

Christ is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature : for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by Him, and for Him : and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He

is the head of the body, the church : who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead ; that in all things He might have the preeminence." (Col. i. 15-18.)

It is the purpose of God, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in Him." (Eph. i. 10.) "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 9-11.) To study the prophetic word, without the soul being led to Christ as the one object of which it testifies, is utterly to miss its import and design. If God speaks of the future of the church, it is only as the body of which Christ is the head, as the temple of which Christ is the foundation and the glory, as the wife whose husband and Lord is Christ. If He speaks of the future of Israel, Christ is their salvation, their righteousness, their strength, their glory, and their king. If He speaks of the future of the Gentile nations, it is to tell of Christ being King of kings, and Lord of lords, whom all the earth shall worship, and with whose glory all the earth shall be filled.

If He draws aside the veil, and points us to the throne, it is to see Jesus set at the right hand of the Majesty on high—Jesus the object of heaven's adoring worship. And if in quick succession judgments and wrath are poured upon apostate man, it is to make His enemies His footstool, and to take the purchased inheritance, from the usurper's power, for Him who is appointed "heir of all things."

Had the true desire of those who have studied prophecy been "to behold the beauty of the Lord," such enquiries had been more blessed, more fruitful in holiness and worship, and less the occasion of differences and divisions.

Satan is well pleased to have us occupied with the letter, if so be that we miss the Spirit; to have us hold the shadow, if so be that we lose the substance. May the Spirit of truth the Comforter, as He shows us things to come, lead us evermore to Jesus.





CHAPTER III.

THE JEW, THE GENTILE, AND THE CHURCH OF GOD.

1 COR. x. 32.

FROM the call of Abraham to the death of Christ, the broad distinction between Jew and Gentile was fully maintained. This distinction was of God, and therefore not to be interfered with. A middle wall of partition separated them. (Eph. ii. 14.)

To Israel, that is, to the seed of Jacob according to the flesh, "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." (Rom. ix. 4, 5.) "To them were committed the oracles of God." (Rom. iii. 2.) Great and special were their privileges—the Lord avouched them to be His peculiar people, to make them high above all nations which He had made, in praise, and in name, and in honour. (Deut. xxvi. 18, 19.) "What nation so great, who hath God so nigh unto them? and what nation so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" (Deut. iv. 7, 8.) "I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people." (Lev. xx. 24.) "Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy

servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt." (1 Kings viii. 53.)

And be it specially observed, that these high privileges above all other nations did not pertain to them on the principle of faith, but on the principle of natural descent according to the flesh from Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob. It was the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, who were forbidden to make a covenant with, or marry, the people of the land. (See Deut. vii. 2, 3.) Hence, on their restoration from captivity, the strange wives they had taken, and those also who were the issue of such marriages, were put away; for the holy seed had mingled themselves with the people of those lands. (See Ezra ix. x.) All other nations are comprised in the term Gentiles; and howsoever God might exalt or abase Gentile nations, at one time delivering them to unmitigated judgment, at another delivering into their hands universal dominion, even over Israel, as in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, still the secret of the Lord was with the chosen people; and if individual Gentiles be honourably mentioned, such as Melchisedec, or Hobab, outside of Israel; or Uriah the Hittite, Shobi the Ammonite, Araunah the Jebusite, or Ruth the Moabitess, inside Israel, it is only in their individual, never in their national character.

Yet such instances of blessing flowing out to others than the seed of Jacob, as individuals, both inside and outside the commonwealth of Israel, had their significance, as foreshadowing the purpose in the mind of God, that blessing should yet be given to the Gentile. Nor, indeed, was this purpose in any wise a secret; for it is written in Isaiah xi. 10, "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse; . . . to it shall the Gentiles seek;" and again, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the

Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Isa. xlix. 6); and again, "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." (Isa. xix. 24, 25.) Many other Scriptures might be adduced to prove that God had in view from the beginning to bless the Gentile nations, as nations, when Israel should be restored, and not before. Meantime Israel as a nation is cast off and dispersed, "a people scattered and peeled;" and so long as this is so, God cannot and does not recognize any nation as His. Meantime, consequent upon the rejection of Christ by Israel, and the death of Christ, God has brought forth a new order of blessing. No longer for the time recognizing Israel in the flesh, or Gentiles in the flesh, He has been gathering out of both Jews and Gentiles a people for His name (see Acts xv. 14), uniting them in one body to Christ the ascended Head at God's right hand, and in positive distinction alike from Jew and Gentile, calling this elect membership the *Church of God*. (See 1 Cor. x. 32.)

The fullest distinctive teaching upon this point is to be found in the epistle to the Ephesians. There, in chap. ii., we find the natural state of both Jew and Gentile described—verse 2 being descriptive of "*ye*" Gentiles, and verse 3, "among whom also *we*," that is, "we Jews." Both were alike "dead in sins," and both the objects of God's love (ver. 4, 5), as we read, "God so loved the world." (John iii. 16.) The result of that love is, that they were now quickened *together* with Christ, raised up *together*, and made sit *together* in heavenly places *in Christ*. (Ver. 5, 6.) Mark the force of that word "*together*." No longer separated by earthly and fleshly

distinctions such as had obtained in time past (and will again be observed when God resumes His dealings with nations as such, in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies), but united, being made one in the risen life of Christ.

This is further expounded with special reference to the Ephesians, in verses 11, 12, "in time past Gentiles in the flesh—without Christ—aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world—now in Christ Jesus made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Then we read how this bringing of the Gentile into the place of nearness to God was effected. Certainly not by making him a Jew through circumcision, or in any way identifying him with the commonwealth of Israel. Such had been the case with Gentiles before, and these were called Proselytes—they ceased to be regarded as Gentiles, and forthwith were regarded as Jews. But the character of the blessing here spoken of is unique; for those who are partakers of it are no longer regarded as in the flesh at all; they are *in Christ*, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus. (See Gal. iii. 28.) They are "members of the body of Christ" (Eph. v. 30), being "by one Spirit baptized into one body," of which Christ is the Head. (1 Cor. xii. 13.) They form corporately, and in union with Christ, "ONE NEW MAN." (Eph. ii. 15.)

That this *new man* had no existence, and could have none, till the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was broken down, is evident from verses 14 to 16. Moreover, it is certain that, until the death of Christ, this middle wall was fully maintained; for the Lord had respect to all the Mosaic and Levitical institutions, interfering with none, and being Himself "a

minister of the circumcision" (Rom. xv. 8), He never overstepped the bounds of Canaan. It therefore follows of necessity, that not until by His death He had abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, did He begin to make in Himself out of the two (*i.e.* out of Jew and Gentile) this one new man. The Head being in heaven, the body began to be formed on earth—that body which indeed is "fearfully and wonderfully made"—and "curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth," and of which every member was "written in God's book, when as yet there was none of them." (Ps. cxxxix. 14, 16.) Such is "the Church, which is His body." (Eph. i. 22, 23.) In vain do we search in the Old Testament Scriptures for prophecies concerning such a dispensation—there, *all is Jewish or Gentile*—the "one new man" is the secret which God had kept hid in Himself since the world began. (See Rom. xvi. 25; Col. i. 26.) But now it is made manifest, even "the mystery of the Christ," committed to, and written of, by the apostle Paul (Eph. iii. 4), and very vaguely referred to by the Lord Himself. "This mystery in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel whereof I was made a minister." (Eph. iii. 5-7.) Hence this apostle speaks of the gospel which he preached as "my gospel." (Rom. xvi. 25.) And again, of his communicating to those at Jerusalem that gospel which He preached among the Gentiles. (Gal. ii. 2.) Moreover, he says he received it not of man, neither was he taught it (that is, as a matter of previous revelation), but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prophecies indeed of a Christ to come, of His sufferings and of His glory, but the New reveals the wondrous fact, that a people chosen out of all nations, both Jews and Gentiles,

are, by the sovereign grace of God, joint-heirs with Christ, members of His mystic body, sharers of His sufferings and rejection here, and of His glory and His throne hereafter. A people who shall come with Him when He comes, reign with Him when He reigns, judge with Him when He judges, and be glorified with Him when He shall be glorified. May the eyes of our "understanding be enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. i. 18 ; iii. 9.)





CHAPTER IV.

THE PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM.

GOD called Abraham alone, and blessed him, and increased him. (See Isaiah li. 2.) He took him from the other side of the flood, where he, with his fathers, had served other gods, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. (See Joshua xxiv. 2, 3.) Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, was set aside, according to the word of God—"In Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Gen. xxi. 12.) Again, of Isaac's two sons, Esau was set aside, and Jacob was the chosen one. Again and again did God make great and unconditional promises of blessing to Abraham and to his seed, promises unsought by him, and upon which he had no claim any more than any other man upon the face of the earth. But they were the expression of the sovereign will and purpose of God, in love to Abraham, whom He had separated from all the earth unto Himself.

The first of these promises is in Gen. xii. 1, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee : and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing :

and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

In Gen. xvii. 1-8 these promises are repeated, and enlarged upon ; and again confirmed with an oath in chap. xxii. 15-18.

To Isaac, the heir, the promise is also confirmed (see Gen. xxvi. 2-4) ; and afterwards to Jacob, as he slept and dreamed at Bethel. (See Gen. xxviii. 13-15.)

The furnace of affliction was also foretold as part of the heritage of that elect seed. They were to be strangers in a land not theirs, four hundred years, to serve them and be afflicted by them, and in the fourth generation to return to the land of promise ; and finally to possess it, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the Euphrates. (See Gen. xv. 13-18.)

With the fulfilment of much of this most Christians are familiar. How Israel groaned in the land of Egypt, serving under and afflicted by Pharaoh and his taskmasters ; how God at length did visit them, raising up for them a deliverer, even Moses ; how the nation that afflicted them He judged ; how He led them through the desert, never forsaking them, though grieved with their incessant provocations. "For He remembered His holy promise and Abraham His servant. And He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness : and gave them the lands of the heathen." (Ps. cv. 42-44.)

But though undoubtedly much that was promised to Abraham and to his seed has been fulfilled, does there not yet remain very much to be accomplished ?

It was promised—"To thee will I give this land ;" but Abraham, to the end, "sojourned by faith in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." (Heb. xi. 9.) So thoroughly did he confess

himself a stranger in it, whilst knowing that he was the heir of it all, that he would not even own a grave in it without purchasing it of those who then possessed the land. (See Gen. xxiii.) For the fulfilment of this promise. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still wait.

Again, the land was promised to Abraham's seed for "an everlasting possession." But although brought into it by Joshua—very soon, through departure from Jehovah—all the curses written in the law fell upon the apostate nation. Instead of the blessings of the covenant with Abraham, the terrible denunciations of Deut. xxviii. (read the whole chapter) have been their portion to the very letter, every word being marvellously fulfilled. But is the promise therefore never to be fulfilled? Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." (Rom. xi. 1-28.) "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, *cannot disannul*, that it should make the *promise of none effect*. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by *promise*." (Gal. iii. 16-18.)

We here have clearly explained to us that the law, coming in as it were by the way, to prove the utter impossibility of man's ever earning for himself a title to blessing—could indeed *postpone*, but could never frustrate, the ultimate fulfilment of every word that God had promised to Abraham and to his seed.

The curses of that law are still being borne by Abraham's seed. Cast out from their land, a byeword and a hissing among all nations, and yet reserved as a separate people,

they are living monuments and witnesses of the truth of the prophetic Word, and of the faithfulness of God, who, though true to the judgments He has pronounced, will also, in His own time, be true to the mercy He has promised.

And so, according to the prophetic utterance of the Lord Jesus Himself, Jerusalem was laid even with the ground and her children within her (Luke xix. 44); and still is "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke xxi. 24.) But Jerusalem shall not be *for ever* thus downtrodden by the Gentile. He, who foretold her desolation, has fixed the duration of her shame. The "times of the Gentiles" shall be fulfilled, and then the seed shall inherit the land and hold it in everlasting possession.

Further, it is written, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Can this in any sense be said to have received its fulfilment? Surely not; for we know that the kingdoms of this world have not yet become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, but Satan is the "god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4), and "the prince of this world." (John xii. 31.) The children of God in this age are "not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world," though He was in it. (John xvii. 16.) "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." (1 John iii. 1.) "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John v. 19.)

But, as already stated, the fulfilment of every promise made to Abraham, in its fullest sense, is yet in reserve, being, through the law and Israel's apostasy, postponed till the time arrives in the purpose of God, when, setting aside entirely the intervening covenant of Sinai, and acting in grace upon the everlasting covenant "confirmed before in Christ," He will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, the essence of which shall no longer be, "*Thou*

shalt not," as in the law, but the sovereign and gracious "*I will*" of the living God.

To some of the Scriptures detailing the events preceding and accompanying the final restoration and blessing of Israel, and, through Israel, of all nations, it may be well now to turn.





CHAPTER V.

JACOB'S TROUBLE.

JER. xxx. 7.

IN many Scriptures the present scattered condition of the nation of Israel is foretold, and, in connection therewith, there is also foretold their being gathered again into their own land.

Some have tried to attach only a *spiritual* signification to those Scriptures which speak of Israel's restoration, whilst forced to admit that they are *literally*, and not figuratively, scattered.

But this cannot be tenable in the face of such a Scripture as Romans xi., where the whole subject of the breaking off of the natural branches, viz., the seed of Abraham after the flesh, because of their unbelief, and the consequent bringing in of the Gentile to the place of blessing and witness for God, is treated. For it goes on to state not only that God is able to graft them in again, but that, according to His ancient Word, He will do it. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Ver. 25, 26.)

The same is alluded to in 2 Cor. iii. 14-16: "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away."

Again, in Hosea iii. 4: "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days."

Again, in Ezekiel xxxvii. 15-28, by the figure of two sticks having written upon them the names of Joseph and Judah, the Lord foretells their restoration: "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be to them all: and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all," &c. &c. The whole of this prophecy is clearly applicable only to the literal nation of Israel; and as it never has to this day been in any sense fulfilled, it must, according to the other Scriptures referred to, be yet reserved for accomplishment.

Many more Scriptures might be adduced in proof of the literal restoration of the nation of Israel to their own land, did space permit; but these may suffice to show how unmistakeably God writes upon this subject, as on all others, for those who will simply receive what He says, whether it agree with the traditional beliefs they have been brought up in or not.

It is also, however, clearly shown that, between the time of Israel's return as a nation to their own land, and the time of their being ushered finally into the blessing and glory that awaits them, they must pass through a fearful and unprecedented ordeal of judgment, out of which few, if any, of the nation but the elect remnant shall issue. Of the circumstances under which the Jewish nation will return to the land and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, we have little information, but we do find unmistakably that the scenes of the latter-day judgments do find them again in the land whence they were scattered, and conducting there an order of worship after the pattern of that which existed in the days of the Lord's sojourn upon earth, until an oppressor, of whom much is written, shall, in self-will and blasphemy, set aside their order of worship, wear out the saints of the Most High, think to change times and laws, pollute the sanctuary of strength, take away the daily sacrifice, set up the abomination that maketh desolate, exalt himself and magnify himself above every God, and prosper until the indignation be accomplished; *for that which is determined shall be done.* (See Dan. vii. 25; xi. 31-36.)

Solemn words of determination: judgment to be "poured upon the desolator." (Dan. ix. 27.)

For whilst in faithfulness to His word God shall fulfil to Abraham's seed, through Christ, every promise of blessing He has made, yet has He shown that judgment shall fall to the uttermost upon the nation that murdered His beloved Son. Already have we heard and seen, in the destruction of Jerusalem, the scattering of the nation, and the fearful treatment they received at the hands of their oppressors, the severity of God; but the very hottest hour of the furnace of affliction is yet reserved for the very last, that out of it, in the counsel of Jehovah, and by the might of His power, a chosen remnant of every tribe might be

brought. Of this period, yet future, we read in Dan. xii. 1 : "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people : and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time : and *at that time* thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Now some have tried to show that this prophecy had its fulfilment at the past destruction of Jerusalem. But clearly this cannot be ; for the nation was not then delivered, neither has it yet been followed by the resurrection spoken of in the second verse.

Again, in Jer. xxx. 7 : "Alas ! for that day is great, so that none is like it : it is even the time of Jacob's trouble ; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his" (that is the oppressor's) "yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him : but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them."

Another passage referring to the same time of tribulation is in Matt. xxiv. There, at verse 14, we find the gospel to be preached among all nations for a witness, then an allusion to Daniel's prophecy ; and in verse 21, the "great tribulation," especially in relation to a Jewish remnant in Judæa, a time like to which there had been none before, nor ever should be again, corresponding exactly to Daniel xii. 1 ; and finally, the appearing of the Son of man, the mourning of the nations, and the salvation, in the flesh and on the earth, of an elect people to be gathered from one end of heaven to the other.

From all these Scriptures, taken together and compared, it will be evident—1st, that this elect people is to be saved in the flesh from death, by the limiting of that period of extreme tribulation, and not through death and

resurrection, or instantaneous transfiguration, as the church will be ; 2nd, that they shall be saved by judgment upon their enemies, and not by being caught up into the clouds, as the church shall be ; and 3rd, that this salvation will usher them into the possession of inheritance and blessing upon the earth, and not into the heavenly inheritance that is the portion of those saints who compose the body of Christ.





CHAPTER VI.

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES.

PARALLEL with the period of Israel's captivity, scattering, and final tribulation, run what our Lord calls "the times of the Gentiles." (Luke xxi. 24.) Of these much is written in the prophecies of Daniel, and to this book it is that Christ Himself refers, when speaking of the period of Israel's oppression under Gentile supremacy. (See Matt. xxiv. 15.)

The promise made to Israel *under the law*, and conditional upon their obedience, was that they should be "set on high above all the nations of the earth;" that in everything they should be manifestly a blessed people. All the people of the earth were to see that they were called by the name of the Lord; and to be afraid of them. They were to be the head, and not the tail; to be above only, and not beneath. (See Deut. xxviii. 1-14.) But on account of their subsequent disobedience and utter apostasy from Jehovah, they forfeited all these blessings, and, instead thereof, the curses that follow in Deut. xxviii. have come upon them to the full. It was not until after long trial, during the times of the Judges and of the Kings—after many warnings by prophets, many partial judgments and deliverances—that finally the threatened scattering and captivity took place, first of the ten tribes (see 2

Kings xv. 29 and xviii. 9-12) and then of the remaining two; viz., Judah and Benjamin. (See 2 Kings xxv. 1, 2, and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15-21.) "Thus was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; so that they that hated them ruled over them." (Ps. cvi. 40, 41.)

It is of this period of the supremacy of Gentile power, called by the Lord the times of the Gentiles, that the book of Daniel principally treats. We have there recorded two distinct visions, each of which embraces the whole period, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the second coming of the Lord Jesus to execute judgment upon the nations.

The first of these is that which was given in a dream to king Nebuchadnezzar himself (Dan. ii. 31): "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

The interpretation that follows is plain and explicit. The head of gold represents Nebuchadnezzar himself. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, strength, and glory. Thou art this head of gold."

After him was to arise another kingdom, inferior—the inferiority consisting probably in the fact that the dominion was less immediately conferred by God—represented by the silver, then a third represented by brass, and a fourth by iron, and lastly, the deterioration still continuing, this fourth kingdom assumes the form of a mixture of iron and clay. That these kingdoms were the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, there can be no doubt—indeed, upon this all are agreed. (See Dan. ii. 38, v. 28, viii. 21, Luke iii.)

More details are given in the interpretation by Daniel as to the fourth kingdom than any of the others. In the course of its duration it undergoes a change in its character, the clay being introduced in the feet and toes, and not before.

It is upon this fourth kingdom, in its final form, that the stone falls. The stone is one throughout Scripture, the same that, being rejected by the builders, is made the Head of the Corner, and which shall grind to powder all upon whom it shall fall. The end of Gentile supremacy is thus shown to be in judgment, by the setting up of “a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

It is thus that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. Vainly do we search in Scripture for a prophecy that can in any degree justify the commonly received opinion, that a change will be effected, by the “leavening” (?) power of the gospel, aided by education, science, political and sanitary reform, in the character of the kingdoms of this world. The boasted progress of the nineteenth century rather betrays, to the opened eye, that development of pride and blasphemy, of absence of natural affection, of fierce and high-minded assertion, each class of its own

rights, that surely indicates the last days. Nor is it without significance that in these nationalities of Europe which occupy the sphere of the ancient Roman empire, there should, at the present time, be such an accession of the republican element, and even of that lower form of the lowest of all government—the *communist*, that has shown too plainly in France its hideous character. But as the purely autocratic form of government was typified by the Head of Gold, we may safely conclude that the lowest form of *democratic* government is typified by the clay. And how evident it is that the iron sway of Roman imperial authority is being broken up by the introduction of the democratic element—that the two have no cohesion, that the interests of the whole are sacrificed to the interests of the party. The kingdom is partly strong and partly broken *already*, and even thus shall it be when the *Stone* shall fall and make the whole as the chaff upon the summer threshing-floor.

Answering to the vision given to Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel has also a vision—embracing under the figure of four beasts—the same kingdoms and periods that to Nebuchadnezzar appeared as a magnificent image, of which himself was the head.

There is nothing to the eye of faith that can please or attract, in all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. Satan might show them to the Lord Jesus, and offer them by way of temptation; but to Him and to every son of God with anointed eyes they are “great beasts,” wild, untameable, cruel, and monstrous; and the fourth is the most dreadful, and terrible, and strong of all.

Of the fourth beast, as of the fourth section of the image, more detail is given than of the others. And it is in the days of this beast that the thrones are cast down, and the Ancient of days is seen sitting upon His throne. “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him :

thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him : the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." (Read Dan. vii. 1-11.) At the same time there is given to the Son of man "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages should serve Him : His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Ver. 14.)

And again (verse 23), "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, . . . and the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise : and another shall rise after them, . . . and he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws : . . . but the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, . . . and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

Turning from Daniel to the book of Revelation, we find again the Gentile power represented by beasts. (See chaps. xiii. and xvii.) But here the first three beasts of the vision in Daniel have no place—they having passed away in the time when the book of Revelation was written.

Consequently in this book we have, with fuller details, that which answers to the fourth section of Nebuchadnezzar's image, and to the fourth beast in Daniel's vision ; and here, as in those previous prophecies, judgment is executed upon the beast (which retains all its enmity to God up to the close of its existence upon earth), by the Lord Jesus Christ, *in person*, coming from heaven, accompanied by the saints, He being now "King of kings, and

Lord of lords," and the saints—the armies, clothed in fine linen and associated with Him in all His judgment and victory. (See Rev. xix. 11–21.)

It is well to see beneath the garb of seemingly honest inquiry after truth, the real character of the governments of the present day, and their various political creeds. They are all utterly godless; they all deny the Lordship of Christ; under the veil of liberty they are gradually, with one consent, becoming first tolerant of all religions, next sceptical of all, then infidel, and lastly, openly anti-christian, intolerant towards truth, persecuting to the death God's witnesses, and worshipping the devil incarnate in the person of "the man of sin."

Such is the course of this world; already Satan is its god and prince, its religious and its political head. A Christian has no more to do with the world's politics than with the world's religion. His path is that of strangership here—like the Lord Himself—who walked apart from all the political questions of His day, disputing not the claims of Cæsar, nor contending for the emancipation of His nation, but looking for the joy that was set before Him at God's right hand.





CHAPTER VII.

ANTICHRIST.

LITTLE children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists." (1 John ii. 18.) "He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." (Ver. 22.) Here we have a person spoken of under the name of antichrist, or, literally, "The Antichrist," as yet to come.

Already the spirit of antichrist is in the world, and has been ever since the time when John wrote his first epistle (see iv. 3), taking many forms, more or less subtle and blasphemous. But, notwithstanding those numerous developments of the spirit of antichrist, *The Antichrist*, concerning whom so much is written in the word, is not yet revealed.

In Old Testament prophecy we see him chiefly in relation to the people of Israel—to the nation as deceived by him; and to the elect, or the saints, as persecuted and oppressed by him. It is thus that he is presented to us in Dan. viii., the "little horn" rising up among the ten horns of the fourth beast—having eyes and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them *until the Ancient of days came.*

Again we find him as "the king" in Dan. xi. 36, corrupting some by flatteries; whilst those that know their God are strong and do exploits, and they that understand are instructing many, yet falling by the sword, by flame, by captivity, and by spoil. He shall enter into the glorious land, and shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious Holy Mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

Of this his final entrance into the Holy Land, and his sudden destruction by the Lord, there is a magnificent description in Isaiah x. 24-34. He is there called "the bough" that is to be "lopped" with terror; and in the next chapter we have in contrast the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and the Branch out of his roots, who shall judge the poor with righteousness, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (or the "wicked one").

This exactly corresponds with the prophecy in 2 Thess. ii., where the same "lawless one" is to be destroyed at the appearing of the Lord Jesus; "that wicked one whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." Again, we read of this same period in Zech. xiv., "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations . . . and His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east . . . and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee . . . and the Lord shall be King over all the earth."

Finally, in Rev. xix., we again find this same judgment "upon the beast and the false prophet," executed by the Lord Jesus in person, when He comes from heaven accompanied by the saints.

All these Scriptures agree in pointing to the one act of

judgment and deliverance. It is by the Lord in person, it is at His coming to the earth, it is sudden and at the hour of the enemy's greatest apparent success, and it is by the sword that proceedeth out of His mouth.

The name antichrist is most significant. It might be rendered "against, or instead of, Christ." He is to be Satan's masterpiece of ingenuity and power, to simulate the true Christ in such a way as to deceive all who have not believed the truth, and yet morally in every respect the direct contrast to the Holy One of God.

Of Christ it is written, "He humbleth Himself." (Phil. ii. 8.) Of antichrist, "He exalteth himself." (2 Thess. ii. 4.) Of Christ, that He "came not to do His own will ;" of antichrist, "He shall do according to his will." (Dan. xi. 36.) Of Christ, "He is despised and rejected of men." (Isa. liii. 3.) Of antichrist, "All the world wondered after the beast." (Rev. xiii. 3.) Of Christ, that "He was a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him." (Acts ii. 22.) Of antichrist, that "his coming is after the working of Satan with all miracles and signs and lying wonders." (2 Thess. ii. 9.) Christ is "the truth." (John xiv. 6.) Antichrist is "the lie." (2 Thess. ii. 11, literally.) Christ is "the branch." (Isa. xi. 1 ; Zech. iii. 8 ; vi. 12.) Antichrist, "an abominable branch." (Isa. xiv. 19.) Christ is "the good shepherd" that "giveth His life for the sheep." (John x. 11.) Antichrist, "the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock." (Zech. xi. 17.)

Many more instances might be given showing outward resemblances and moral contrasts, but these may suffice as indications of a most fruitful line of inquiry. Christ is the perfection of life, and walk, and fruitfulness according to the Spirit of God. Antichrist, the perfection of the development in humanity of the spirit of Satan.

And indeed are not these two within, lusting the one against the other? Is not the flesh always antichrist,

“exalting itself”? Are not all its motions and desires directed against the development of the life of Jesus within? Do they not “war against the soul”? There can be no truce between the two—utter and eternal destruction is for the antichrist at the hands of Christ, and nothing but death in the flesh can end the inward conflict with the Spirit of God. Even so, Lord, let the body of sin be destroyed; work out within us for Thine own glory this blessed deliverance!

The power of antichrist in the world will be immense. God will give unto the ten kings that are to arise “one mind,” so that they shall all “agree,” and give their kingdom, power and strength, unto the beast. (Rev. xvii. 13-17.) All the world—attracted by his lying wonders and great words—shall wonder after him, *all* except those whose names are in the book of life. All that believed not the *truth* shall believe the *lie*. Already the advanced thinkers of the age, the leaders of modern thought, whatever else they may differ upon, are agreed upon this, that much of the word of God, if not all, is out of date and fabulous—thus throwing aside the only light in which the true character of antichrist can be discovered, and preparing themselves to be swept away in the torrent of delusion that ere long shall roll over Christendom, with power that nought but that faith which is divine can possibly resist.

But chiefly will he appeal to the unbelieving expectations of the Jewish people. Foreseeing this time, the Lord Himself declared, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, *him ye will receive*.” (John v. 43.) The bulk of the nation shall enter into a covenant with him, receive his mark, worship his image, believe in him as their promised deliverer and Messiah. Many are the details given of the sufferings of those who refuse to own him thus;

like the three Hebrews of old who were cast into the seven times heated furnace—such shall be the fiery ordeal through which the elect of that day shall pass. Very many shall be slain “for the word of God, and for the testimony which they hold.” We see their souls in Rev. vi. awaiting the time, when their fellow-servants and brethren who were to be killed, as they were, should be fulfilled; and finally, in Rev. xx. 4, we see that martyred remnant raised from the dead as part of the first resurrection, and sharing the heavenly glory of the millennial kingdom with the Lord.

The revelation of this man of sin shall find the Jewish people again in their land, not indeed as a saved people, but in unbelief, with Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt, and the order of sacrificial worship restored. They return indeed to their land, like the man out of whom the unclean spirit had gone, after centuries of wandering about through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. The unclean spirit of idolatry seems never to have taken possession of Israel after their return from the Babylonish captivity. Amid all the abominations recorded by Malachi, no mention is made of idolatry, nor did there appear to be such a thing as an idol in the land in the days of the Lord. Thus they return to their land; they find it all ready for them to dwell in—empty, swept, and garnished. But nationally their moral condition is worse than before. Seven other spirits enter in more wicked than the first, the “green tree” becomes the “dry tree,” ripe for the fire of judgment.

But whether it be the sacrificial worship of Israel or the spurious religion of Christendom, no acknowledgment of the true God can be tolerated by antichrist. Under his authority, and in fulfilment of the will of God, the mother of harlots, that false church that had professed to be married to Christ, but in truth had committed adultery with the world, is hated by the ten kings; they make her

desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; and turning from Christendom to Jerusalem, he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, he shall pollute the sanctuary, and place there the abomination that maketh desolate. He shall exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped as God; and shall sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (Comp. Dan. ix. 27; xi. 31-36; 2 Thess. ii. 3-12.)

To the full reception of such a king, and the acknowledgment of him as worthy of universal dominion, all things are now tending.

As the insubjection of servants to the authority of masters finds its reaction in the slavery of the trades' unions, and the insubjection of subjects to the authority of kings its reaction in the despotism of the commune, so shall the general dissolution of all the social fabric that is now so surely progressing—the pride, and independence, and insubordination, so evident in every relationship of life—find its outcome in the last and most fearful of all despotisms, the despotism of the man of sin.

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” (Rev. iii. 10.)





CHAPTER VIII.

CHRIST THE HOPE OF ISRAEL.

JER. xiv. 8; ACTS xxviii. 20.

AMIDST the fearful and unprecedented oppression to which the faithful remnant of Israel shall be subjected by antichrist and his worshippers, their only hope shall be the appearing for their deliverance of the Lord Jesus, their own rejected but faithful Messiah. For Him they shall "mourn and be in bitterness" (Zech. xii. 9, 10); for Him they shall wait, and long, "more than they that watch for the morning." (Ps. cxxx. 6.)

We have already seen how suddenly, and with vengeance upon their enemies, He will redeem them—"Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." (Isa. i. 27, 28.)

Knowing as they undoubtedly will, being taught by the Spirit to understand the Scriptures (Dan. xi. 33), that such shall be the manner of their deliverance, their prayers and groans shall be of corresponding character.

Much of their souls' experience shall find expression in the language of the Psalms, many of which are indeed the prophetic utterance of the Spirit of Christ in anticipation of that period. And this accounts most simply for the

imprecatory tone that pervades such Psalms—the burden of their cry not being as with the Lord Jesus on the cross, “Father, forgive them,” or with Stephen, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”—but a constant pleading with God to avenge them of their adversaries, by the speedy execution of judgment.

Such also is the character of the cry of the souls seen under the altar, in Rev. vi. 9, 10. They had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held, and then with a loud voice they call on the Lord to avenge their blood.

Such dispensational distinctions it is most important to apprehend. When James and John, jealous of their Master’s honour, would have avenged the insult done to the Lord Jesus by the Samaritans—asking leave to command fire to come down from heaven to consume them as Elias did—the Lord rebuked them, saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” (Luke ix. 54, 55.)

It was according to the mind of the Spirit that Elias should do so in his day; but that did not justify such a course, when the testimony was that of the Son from the bosom of the Father, full of grace and truth—the Prince of Peace proclaiming peace—the purchase of His blood.

Equally discordant would it have been for Stephen to have called upon God to avenge his blood, though righteousness might well have claimed it; but Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, was in perfect sympathy with the purpose for that time occupying the mind and heart of God; viz., the display of the riches of His grace. Hence, instead of judgment there is salvation; for Saul, at whose feet the witnesses laid their garments, is saved in answer to that very prayer, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth a pattern of all long-suffering.

And still such is the mind of God. If it be asked why so many years have passed since it was written, “Yet a

little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." No answer can be furnished but one, "God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish." He lingers over the testimony of grace—stretching out the acceptable year—the day of salvation, and postponing, if we may so speak, to the very last, His strange work of judgment.

But this shall end when the saints, whose home and portion are in heaven and not on earth, are caught up to be for ever with the Lord.

God's testimony *then* will be in connection with a people whose very hope is the destruction of their oppressors. As we by the Spirit are taught to have fellowship with the Lord in His thoughts of grace now, so they by the same Spirit will be taught to have fellowship in His thoughts of judgment then. Thus we find that the two witnesses in Rev. xi. 3 have power to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will, but we read not of their having power to heal, as the heralds of grace were wont to have. In that day "judgment shall return to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;" the acceptable year shall give place to the day of vengeance, and the spirit of the witnesses will be in keeping therewith.

All this stamps with a character foreign to the present dispensation the whole book of Revelation, from chap. vi. to xx. The Church is not seen in those chapters on the earth, but seated in heaven, and finally following the Lamb, when, as King of kings, and Lord of lords, He comes to destroy the foes and fulfil the hopes of Israel.

The Old Testament is full of songs prophetic of that great deliverance which the Lord shall work for His people in the latter day.

It shall be said in that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him." (Isa. xxv. 9.) "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxviii. 26;

Matt. xxiii. 39.) "O sing unto the Lord a new song ; for He hath done marvellous things : His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation : His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel : all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." (Ps. xcvi. 1-3.) "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved : He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth ; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder ; He burneth the chariot in the fire." (Ps. xlv. 6-9.) "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say ; If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us : then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us : then the water had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul : then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers : the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Ps. cxxiv.)

These and many other such Scriptures celebrate the deliverance of that day ; to Israel it will be "the morning without clouds" (2 Sam. xxiii. 4) ; the morning when the upright shall have dominion over the wicked (Ps. xlix. 14), when the meek shall inherit the earth, when they that mourn shall be comforted, and the pure in heart shall see God. (Matt. v. 4, 5, 8.)

Then shall they that come of Jacob take root : Israel, like Aaron's rod cut off from nature's stem, shall blossom

and bud, by the quickening power of grace (Isa. xxvii. 6 ; Num. xvii. 8), and fill the face of the world with fruit. "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains ; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon : and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." (Ps. lxxii. 16.)

Meantime their eyes are blinded, the veil of unbelief is upon the face of Israel, and they know not that He whom they crucified is their only Hope. Nevertheless the veil shall be taken away, and some out of every tribe, elect of God, shall see that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God.





CHAPTER IX.

"I WILL COME AGAIN, AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF."

JOHN xiv. 3.

OUR God is "the God of hope" (Rom. xv. 13), and the hope that He sets before His people is ever worthy of Himself. We have seen how all the hopes of Israel centre in Christ—the "seed of David," the "seed of Abraham," the "seed of the woman." Though meantime rejected by them, apart from Him, their Messiah, they have no hope or portion on earth; and the very cutting off by death, in which this hope might seem to have been quenched, has become, through the mighty power of God in raising Him from the dead, the basis and assurance of the fulfilment of every mercy that God has promised to the nation.

"As concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." (Acts xiii. 34.) The seed of David is raised from the dead (2 Tim. ii. 8), and as such shall inherit the throne of Israel. The seed of Abraham is raised from the dead, and in Him shall all the families of the earth be blessed. The seed of the woman is raised from the dead, and, according to the ancient word of God, He shall bruise the serpent's head.

Such are the dignities that belong to Him as Son of man, but higher and more glorious still are His place and portion as the Son of God. As such His home is in the highest heaven—the Father's house—His rest the bosom of God. Thither has He ascended, not as a stranger from earth, but as an absent one returned to the glory and the love wherein He dwelt before the foundation of the world. (John xvii. 5, 24.) But, though meantime we may say He is there alone, He has gone in the double character of representative and forerunner of His people. Whilst, through infirmity and weakness, beset with temptation, oftentimes failing and sinning here, He represents us there before the face of God as the High Priest did of old with the names of the tribes upon the breastplate, and holiness to the Lord upon the mitre, His own most precious blood maintains our place of acceptance and way of access into the presence of God as worshippers.

But He is also there as a "forerunner"—as such He has gone, according to His own word, to prepare a place for us, and then to come again and receive us to Himself. (John xiv. 2, 3.)

It is for this hour that we are taught by the Spirit to wait and to be ever in readiness—at once the end of our trial and conflict, and the consummation of our joy and glory—the spoiling of death, and the grave, and Satan, of their prey, and the crowning triumph of the Lord Jesus.

Prior to this—the return of the Lord for His Church—we have no intimation that any event must necessarily take place. Indeed the language used in reference to this—the hope set before us—is not at all consistent with the theory that an extended course of prophetic events *must* first be fulfilled.

It does not seem that, after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, in any case (with the one exception of

Peter,* whose death and the manner of it were foretold, 2 Peter i. 14) the writers of the epistles anticipated death otherwise than as a mere possibility.

Their immediate prospect is the coming of the Lord; death is never contemplated as a necessity, not even as a probability.

Thus, when the Lord, in answer to Peter's inquiry regarding John, said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" no one ever dreamt that Christ's coming meant John's departure by death. Immediately the saying went abroad that "that disciple should not die."

Again, where the apostle Paul is referring to the coming of the Lord, he uses the third person in relation to the saints who should have fallen asleep, and the first person in relation to those who should be alive at His coming. Thus, in 1 Thess. iv. 15, "WE who are alive and remain—THEM which are asleep." Again, in 1 Cor. xv. 52, "THE DEAD shall be raised, and WE shall be changed;" clearly showing that Paul regarded it at that time as quite possible that he might remain unto the coming of the Lord, and consequently never die, but be "changed."

Moreover, such expressions as, "To wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 10); "From whence also we look for the Saviour" (Phil. iii. 20); "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13); "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 7); "That we may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. i. 10); "Preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 23), show very conclusively to a mind unbiassed by a preconceived theory, that neither death, nor the fulfilment of Old Testa-

* And perhaps also at the very close of his ministry the apostle Paul (2 Tim. iv. 6.)

ment prophecy, was, in Scripture times, regarded as of necessity to precede the coming of the Lord.

But, in opposition to this view, it has been urged that the second epistle to the Thessalonians was written to correct the mistaken impression of the Thessalonian saints, that the Lord's return was imminent, and to show that certain events, involving the expiry of a considerable period of time, must first take place. But is this really the teaching of 2 Thessalonians? Is the "day of Christ" of 2 Thess. ii. the same as the coming of the Lord of 1 Thess. iv.? Is not the one a hope of unalloyed blessedness, and the other a prospect of great dreadfulness? Is not the one that by which they were to be comforted, and the other that which they could not but exceedingly fear? How then can the "coming of the Lord" and the "day of Christ" be one and the same event?

But in order to a right understanding of this chapter, it is necessary to observe that the word in verse 2, rendered "at hand," ought, as all the best critics agree, to be rendered "present." It is thus translated in Rom. viii. 38; 1 Cor. iii. 22; and Gal. i. 4, and undoubtedly has this signification here also.

Evidently they had been troubled and shaken in mind by some deceiver, who, personating the apostle, had sent them word, or written to them, that they were actually in "the day of Christ," and that consequently, instead of being caught up to meet the Lord as they had been taught to hope, they were left to pass through the unprecedented tribulation and anguish of that day.

The "day of the Lord" is an expression often used in the Old Testament, and by reference to the Scriptures where it occurs, it will be seen at once what reason they had to fear being left on earth to pass through that period. (See Isa. ii. 12-22; xiii. 6; Joel i. 15; ii. 1-3; Zeph. i. 14-18; Amos v. 18-20.)

To reassure their hearts, and confirm them in the hope that from the first they had cherished, was the real object of the second epistle.

There the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him is distinctly marked off from the course of events necessarily to precede the day of Christ. *That day* would not come until many things had taken place, but *the Lord* might come and they be gathered to Him in the air at any moment.

Such is still the attitude in which the saints are called to stand, a waiting, watching, expectant people, longing for the shout that shall summon them aloft to be "for ever with the Lord."





CHAPTER X.

"THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST."

1 THESS. iv. 16.

WAITING," "watching," "hasting," "looking for" **THE LORD!** Not merely for deliverance from foes, or for rest from toil and warfare, or for entrance into an inheritance, but for a **LIVING PERSON**—for a known and trusted friend—for Him whose love, stronger than death, was set upon us while yet we were alienated and enemies in our mind, who, having loved His own, loves them to the end, Jesus the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely! To see Him as He is, to be like Him, to be with Him, to worship Him, to walk with Him, to serve Him, to hold unbroken communion with Him, to be the friends with whom He shall take sweet counsel, the partakers of His glory, the sharers of His dominion, for ever and ever to be in the full enjoyment of what now is indeed true, but so feebly apprehended—"One Spirit" with the Lord, "members of the body of Christ." Blessed hope!

Let it once take hold of the heart, and surely as God hath spoken it, the result will follow—"He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

But it has also pleased God to gather around this hour of expectation, as into an ineffable focus, every circumstance of joy and triumph of which the heart can conceive, every satisfaction for which it can yearn. He has withdrawn from it every terror, and circled it with a halo of grace and glory ; so bright, so sweet, that indeed the only marvel is that it should ever for a moment fade from the vision of our faith.

And surely of the accompanying circumstances, the first in importance as well as order is the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

“By one man sin entered, and death by sin.” (Rom. v. 12.) Everything within us by nature recoils from death and clings to life. “The wages of sin is death,” and great as are the alleviations introduced by the gospel, so great that death is said to be abolished, and life and immortality brought to light, still it remains, the last enemy—an enemy though vanquished—the last humiliation that sin and Satan can bring to bear upon the redeemed, a monster instinctively abhorred, though robbed of its sting.

There has been a tendency in many minds to view death rather as a friend setting free the imprisoned soul ; and one would not willingly deny any measure of truth there may be in this. Grace has indeed provided sweet consolation for those who fall asleep in Jesus. Little is said in the Word about the state or experience of the spirit separate from the body, but enough is said to hush every murmur and calm every doubt. It is to be absent from the body, and at home with the Lord ; to exchange faith for sight, to rest from labour and suffering, to be with Christ, which is “far better.” And such terms are very far from implying a state of unconsciousness, as some have said ; rather do they convey ideas of unspeakable enjoyment in the conscious and visible presence of the Lord Jesus. Yet nothing is said concerning the disembodied spirit of activities in service or

of glory ; these, so far as we know from Scripture, are postponed to the hour of resurrection.

Resurrection is the prospect constantly held out to the believer, since Christ became the first-fruits of them that slept. The Spirit has laboured to give abundant detail by many figures and illustrations of this victory of the Lord. Then and not till then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." It is only in prospect of that hour that FAITH can sing, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The salvation for which we wait, the redemption for which we groan, is not death, but resurrection. Death may, indeed, be our deliverance from a body of sin, but it is not the triumph of Christ ; and the heart in sympathy with His thoughts and desires will long for the hour of His victory being completed, when of all that the Father hath given Him, it will be manifest that he has lost nothing—not even a hair of the head of one of His saints being left in the enemy's hand as a trophy. (John vi. 39 ; Luke xxi. 18.)

It is not for us to know the times and the seasons (Acts i. 7), nor does it appear that any warning will be given of this resurrection hour. The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and summon from their graves "the dead in Christ."

The corruptible shall put on incorruption, by no process of recovery, but in answer to the voice of the Son of God.

Often has the question been repeated, "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" The divine answer is doubtless as plain as such a mystery could be made to our feeble understanding.

"That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which 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. 37, 38.)

That there is a connection between that which is sown and that which is raised is evident, for it is in their graves they shall hear, and from their graves they shall rise; but the nature and extent of that connection is a mystery at which reason has ever stumbled, but concerning which faith has no questions to ask. Suffice it that He who cannot lie has said it shall be done.

As for the rest of the dead, they rise not again till the thousand years be finished. (Rev. xx. 5.) "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning." (Ps. xlix. 14.) In due time they too shall rise, not in "the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 14), not "unto the resurrection of life" (John v. 29), not as part of the "first resurrection," for blessed and holy is he that hath part in it; but "unto the resurrection of damnation," "unto shame and everlasting contempt," to stand for judgment, according to their works, before the great white throne, and to find their portion in the lake of fire, the second death. What a prospect!

Many are the religious and systems of theology that Satan has proposed to his deluded subjects, but none of them ever dared to enter the chamber of death with a ray of hope so bright as that which the gospel reveals.

It is comfort indeed, real substantial comfort, that is offered to the sorrowing child of God. God has not said, Go thy way, be warmed, be fed, without giving what is needed. If He calls upon Rachel, as she mourns for little ones slain by the sword, to refrain her voice from weeping, it is because "they shall come again from the land of the enemy." (Jer. xxxi. 15.) If He would comfort the heart of a sorrowing sister, He says, "Thy brother shall rise again;" and now to His mourning people it is, "Them also

which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The separation is but for a little while, there will be a real meeting again—an eternal reunion of the redeemed—a gathering unto Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life."

And is there not even an earnest and a pledge of this in the manner of those three resurrections wrought by the Lord Jesus while on earth? There was the raising of the daughter of Jairus, of the widow's son, and of Lazarus, and in all the three cases the joy of the Lord would appear to be in giving the lost ones back in resurrection to the hearts from which they had been torn. Most specially is it so with the widow's son, "He delivered him to his mother." (Luke vii. 15.) Well might *He* say, "Weep not" who could afford such comfort as this; and well may He charge His people now to sorrow not as those that have no hope: the comfort He offers is as real, as substantial, only it may be a little farther off; but it may be very near.

That Satan should so far have worked upon the credulity of the people of God, as to raise a doubt as to the mutual recognition of the saints in resurrection, is truly a marvel; but it is ever the enemy's way to spoil us of the comfort and blessing that are for us in the Word.

Were Moses and Elias not recognizable on the mount of transfiguration? Is Paul not to know his children in the faith when he says, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1 Thess. ii. 19.) Is the comfort of 1 Thess. iv. 18, that a multitude of unknown persons shall be associated with us in the hour of His coming again? Shall we sit down in the kingdom with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and shall we not know them? Surely this is to wrest the Scripture, and abstract from the prospect the very sweetness and comfort it is intended to convey.

True, they will be "changed," and such a change ! that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power ; that which was sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption ; that which was sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory ; that which was sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body. Such was the transfiguration that passed upon the Lord Jesus (corruption excepted), between the hour when John beheld Him bleeding on the cross, and the day that he saw Him resplendent in heavenly glory, and fell at His feet as dead. How could John recognize Him as the same, or feel at home in the presence of such majesty ? Yet it is here that He tenderly laid His right hand upon His prostrate servant, and assured him of His being the very same who *was dead* ! It is enough. John's recognition of the Lord is as complete in Patmos as it was when, on the lake of Galilee, he said, "It is the Lord."





CHAPTER XI.

"AND WE SHALL BE CHANGED."

1 COR. xv. 52.

TO the saints who shall be alive on the earth at the coming of the Lord no precedence shall be given. They shall not prevent (or go before) those who shall have fallen asleep. (1 Thess. iv. 15.) But immediately following the resurrection of the dead in Christ the marvellous "change" shall be wrought upon all the living saints which shall instantaneously fit them for their place with the resurrection company in the glory of the heavens.

As the corruption of the grave shall be exchanged for incorruption, so the mortality of the living shall be exchanged for immortality. The two companies transfigured and fashioned like unto the body of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. iii. 21) shall form one great assembly or "gathering together unto Him." (2 Thess. ii. 1.)

It would seem as though the resurrection of the dead, the changing of the living saints and their being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, would all be the work of a *moment*, or like the twinkling of an eye.

Blessed, glorious moment, when the patience of Christ

shall have its perfect work, when the long-restrained affections of our Lord and Saviour—now constantly and wisely bent on blessing us rather than on enjoying us—shall find its full, unhindered outburst, and lavish on the long-loved, and cherished, and disciplined purchase of His blood, the treasures of glory and of grace.

The girded loins shall be loosed, and the Nazarite shall drink wine; for the family shall be at home.

“Home, oh how soft and sweet
It thrills upon the heart!
Home, where the brethren meet,
And never, never part.
Home, where the bridegroom takes
The purchase of His love;
Home, where the Father waits
To welcome her above.”

What an answer there is in the *rapidity* of this transaction to the murmur of unbelief, “My Lord delayeth His coming.”

Is it not as though the Lord Jesus awaited the very moment appointed by the Father with eager expectation, then to descend with a shout, swift as the lightning flash to fulfil the cherished purpose of His heart, and receive His people to Himself?

It has ever been God’s way to give foreshadowings of His great purposes. Thus were the person and work of Christ foreshown in many types, from the days of Adam and Abel down to the rending of the veil of the temple.

So also was resurrection foreshadowed, with earnest and pledges, both in Old Testament times by Enoch and Elijah, and in New Testament times by the Lord Himself, as we have seen in three distinct instances.

Nor has He left us without an earnest of this further triumph—the transfiguring and taking up of the saints at His coming.

It was but fifty-seven years after the grave had been

dug for our first father, Adam, the solemn sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," having at length been carried into effect, and fifty-eight years before the second recorded death, viz., that of Seth (Abel being excepted), that God chose to give a memorable pledge of the immortality that should be brought to light through the gospel.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him." (Heb. xi. 5.)

"He walked with God: and he was not; because God took him." He prophesied of the coming of the Lord with ten thousands of His saints, and of the judgment He should then execute in company with the saints upon the ungodly, and knew that his place would be among that glorified company which should appear with Him.

Thus, according to his faith, he was translated, taken away without tasting death, to be a witness in the heavens, and to all ages an earnest and a pledge of the coming victory of the Son of God.

So was it with Elijah—by a whirlwind taken up into heaven—another faithful one, in another time of universal apostacy, honoured by passing, without the humiliation of the grave, from earth to heaven.

Nor is it without signification for us that the Lord Himself ascended thus from Olivet, in the presence of His disciples, until a cloud received Him out of their sight.

And as to the transfiguration scene recorded by three of the evangelists, we have Peter's inspired commentary declaring that it was really a foreshadowing of the same august occasion: "For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." (2 Peter i. 16.) There on the mount transfigured—the glory that had been veiled out-

shining with brightness above the sun—was seen the Lord Himself, and with Him Moses and Elias—the one a dead one raised, the other translated without having tasted death—thus, as it were, representing the whole scene of His appearing, and the gathering to Himself of the sleeping and the living saints.

Moses and Elias were in glory along with Christ, and their converse with Him was of that which was nearest His heart and theirs—the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Not one of the foregoing instances in which the translation of the saints is foreshadowed was public. It is said, "Enoch was not found," as though he had been sought for by those who missed him ; and this proves unquestionably that the world did not witness his translation. Elijah was only seen by Elisha—the fifty who "went to view" saw nothing, and instituted a search, lest, perchance, he might be found upon some mountain.

The Lord Jesus, when transfigured, was seen only by the chosen three ; and when He ascended up to heaven, it was in the presence and view of saints only.

True, there will be the shout of the Lord Jesus, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God ; but it by no means follows that such sounds will be understood or even heard by the world. On the road to Damascus, those who journeyed with Saul "saw indeed the light, and were afraid ; but heard not the voice of Him that spake to him. (Acts xxii. 9.) So when the voice came from heaven to the Lord Jesus, they who stood by said "it thundered ;" they heard a sound, but its import they knew not.

It is not well to dogmatize on such subjects ; but from what may thus be gathered from Scripture, it does seem as though, according to all analogy, the gathering of the saints to meet the Lord in the air would not be of that public character that will form a conspicuous element in

the appearing of the Lord in glory with His saints to judgment.

In the epistle to the Ephesians the saints are viewed as already risen with Christ, and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In Colossians they are also seen risen with Christ, and already translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In Hebrews the scene of the worship of God's people is transferred from earth to heaven, and already by faith we anticipate the coming glory, and enter with boldness "within the veil," whither for us our great High Priest has gone.

Death is therefore to the saints no "debt of nature" left unpaid by Christ. There is no imperfection in His work, leaving it as essential that those whom He has redeemed should pass through it at all. Being already, and in virtue of the infinite preciousness of Jesus, "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," the people of God require no purgatory beyond the discipline common to the family in this life : at any moment they may be called hence, as in the twinkling of an eye, to meet the Lord in the air. The very next song of praise may be sung in the great congregation, with Jesus in the midst ; the next remembrance of His death may be, not with the broken bread and wine, but around Himself, looking into that very face that once was marred more than any man's, beholding crowned with glory that very brow that once for us was wreathed with thorns.

"Seeing therefore that ye look for such things, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"





CHAPTER XII.

"THEN SHALL THAT WICKED BE REVEALED."

2. THESS. II. 8.

THE saints having been "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air, according to 1 Thess. iv., shall subsequently appear with Him in glory.

But the intervening interval shall be occupied by momentous events, both in heaven and on earth.

The course of these events is detailed in the book of Revelation, from the end of chapter v., in which the saints are seated around the throne of God, to chapter xix., where they are again seen marshalled as the armies in heaven, and accompanying the Lord Jesus on His march to judgment, as "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

As to the earth—owing to the presence and testimony here of a multitude of God's children, in each of whom the Spirit of God is dwelling, and by whom He is continually reproofing and restraining evil—there is at present a barrier or hindrance raised to the full development of apostasy, and its culmination in the man of sin; and so it is written in 2 Thess. ii. 7, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth (or hindereth) will let (or hinder), until he be taken out of the way."

But with the removal of the Church to heaven, the last

obstacle to the full outburst of wickedness shall have been removed; and "then shall that Wicked 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. 8.)

The mighty current of infidelity and infidel politics has already set in, its true character known only to those who, being in the "secret of the Lord," are forewarned by His word. Under the guise of liberty, it is opposed alike to Christianity true and false; and when those who hold and testify for the truth are withdrawn, the infidel beast will turn and devour the harlot of professing Christendom.

Into the details of this mighty uprising of lawlessness it is not purposed here to enter; suffice it to note, that two great scandals shall culminate, and be judged by the Lord. The one professing Christendom, which is shown in Revelation as "the Mystery of Iniquity, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots." The judgment upon this shall be, first, by the oppression and hatred of the political power, "the beast;" and secondly, by vengeance from heaven. (See Rev. xvii. 16, and Rev. xviii.)

The other, the great political confederacy, headed up in antichrist, or the man of sin—who, exalting himself above all that is called God, and saying that *he is God*, shall be worshipped by many nations, received as Messiah by apostate Israel—shall cause all to be slain who will not receive his mark, and finally be destroyed by the Lord Jesus, when He shall come personally, with His saints, to take possession of the kingdom, and deliver and bless the faithful remnant of Israel.

Often has the question been raised and discussed: "Shall the Church be on earth to pass through these scenes of unprecedented tribulation and judgment, or shall it have been removed ere then to heaven?"

That there will be saints on earth in the midst of it all,

suffering and slain for their testimony, is certain ; and if they be not the Church, who are they ?

In answer to this, we find first that, in Daniel xii. 1, they are called "the children of Thy people."

Of those an election, viz., "every one that shall be found written in the book," shall be delivered. The whole book of Daniel treats of the period of Gentile supremacy in the earth, of the time when Israel is captive and oppressed, and its prophecy goes on to "the time of the end"—foretells the final tribulation of Daniel's people, and their deliverance by the coming of the Lord to take vengeance upon their oppressors.

The whole period from the cutting off of the Messiah till His coming again to reign is overstepped, so that this present parenthetic dispensation does not at all appear. The saints, therefore, spoken of throughout Daniel as passing through these events, are not Christian, but Jewish; and as such shall be saved by judgment on their foes, and shall be blessed in the land of Israel.

In perfect harmony with this are the words of our Lord in Matt. xxiv. 15-31. The whole of this passage treats of a time of trouble in the land of Judæa ; there also an *elect* remnant is seen, who cannot be deceived by Satan's imitations of Christ ; for the *false* Christ cannot deceive those who know the *true*.

This remnant shall be saved *in the flesh*, and to this end those days "shall be shortened."

Such language is inappropriate to the Church ; for we, being destined for a heavenly and not an earthly inheritance, shall not be saved by sparing us in the flesh, but by death and resurrection, or by a changing of our mortal bodies equivalent thereto.

Moreover, those who are looking for the Son of God from heaven, to take them in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to meet Him in the air, could not be deceived

by any saying, "Lo, here is Christ, or lo there;" but such a temptation might have power with a people who were looking for deliverance on earth, and in the flesh, from a cruel oppressor.

At no time does God leave Himself without a witness, and in the midst of those days of tribulation and apostasy He will certainly have His faithful witnesses; but the character of their testimony will not be such as the Church is called to bear, viz., of grace, but rather analogous to that of Moses and Elias, a testimony of judgment. Such is the character of the testimony of the two witnesses in Rev. xi. Fire proceeded out of their mouths and devoured their enemies. Compare Rev. xi. 4 with Luke ix. 54-56. The contrast is conclusive proof that the "acceptable year" shall have ended, and a new dispensation have begun; and strictly in accordance with this is the prayer of the martyred remnant in Rev. vi. 10, presenting an equally distinct and characteristic contrast to that of Stephen, in Acts vii. 60.

Again, the fact that an angel flying in the midst of heaven, proclaims the everlasting gospel to men (see Rev. xiv. 6, 7), is strongly presumptive evidence that the Holy Spirit in the Church had previously been withdrawn.

Some have maintained, that between the coming of the Lord for His saints, and His return with them to judgment, there will be no interval, and based this conclusion upon the Second Coming of Christ being ever spoken of as one event. They argue that if there be an interval between, during which antichrist reigns, then there must be "*two Second Comings of Christ*;" and if there be saints martyred and raised again after the Church is caught away, there must also be "*two first resurrections*."

This may appear at first sight conclusive, but a very slight reference to the manner of prophetic scriptures will show that, though plausible, the argument is fallacious.

When viewing an extensive landscape, those objects in the foreground which are a mile or less apart are seen to be so; distances are easily estimated by the eye; but, in the far distance, mountain peaks that may be many miles apart appear as one, or close together. Such is the manner of prophecy. In the Old Testament Scriptures the "sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," are almost invariably foretold as though the glory would immediately follow the sufferings. No mention is made of a parenthetical dispensation, stretching out for well-nigh two thousand years, between the rejection of Christ and His coming a second time in glory. Indeed, strange as it may seem to some, it is only from the New Testament that we know of any such distinction as a *first* and a *second* coming of the Lord Jesus. As far as the Old Testament Scriptures are concerned, the two events appear as one.

In witness of this see Ps. xxii., where the sufferings of the cross are immediately followed by the glory of the kingdom. See also Isa. lii. 14, "the visage marred;" verse 15, "Kings shall shut their mouths before Him." Also in Isa. lxi. 2, "the acceptable year" and the "day of vengeance" are seen close together; but in the synagogue of Nazareth the Lord Himself, when quoting this verse to the people, closed the book at "the acceptable year," knowing that the day of vengeance was long postponed, because of the long-suffering of God. (Luke iv. 19.)

So also in Zech. xi., xii., xiii., xiv., the sufferings of Christ are spoken of with many minute details; but the restoration of Israel, and their turning again as a nation to the Lord, and the taking away of the veil of unbelief, are also foretold as immediately consequent, whereas these events are yet future, though the selling for thirty pieces of silver, and the smiting of the Shepherd were accomplished 1800 years ago. Many other instances might be given, but these may suffice to remove from our minds any surprise

that the coming of Christ should be regarded as one event, although it should be accomplished as it were in two parts, with an interval between, which even if it should extend to seven years is very short in prophetic reckoning.

As to the "two first resurrections," this idea arises from not seeing that the "first resurrection" comprises all who rise to life eternal, *including* Christ as the first-fruits ; some who were raised immediately after Him (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53) ; the Church ; the Old Testament saints ; the two witnesses of Rev. xi. 11, 12 ; and finally, the entire company of those who shall be slain under antichrist, for the word of God and the testimony which they hold. Compare Rev. vi. 9-11 with Rev. xx. 4. Then, and not till then, is the expression used, "This is the first resurrection."





CHAPTER XIII.

"GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION."

2 THESS. ii. 11.

ANOTHER notable feature of the period immediately following "the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him," is the attitude that God will then assume towards men.

Now, God is beseeching sinners to be reconciled to Him. (2 Cor. v. 20.) He is commanding "all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30), and by His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, is seeking to lead men to repentance. (Rom. ii. 4.) The present long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter iii. 9, 15.) "Now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2.) It is yet "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 19); but the long-suffering of God must have an end, and the fearful prediction of Proverbs i. 24 must be fulfilled upon the rejecters of Christ, even upon all who, in the "day of salvation," refused to believe the gospel: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear

cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me."

When they that are ready shall have gone in with the bridegroom to the marriage, then shall the door be shut, and those who stand without shall be *without* for ever—their knocking in vain, their urgent cry unheeded, and, in exact correspondence with the Scriptures quoted in 2 Thess. ii. 11, the very God who, up to a certain moment, was the long-suffering beseecher of sinners, becomes the sender to those very sinners of "strong delusion," that those who refused to believe "the truth" might be compelled to believe "the lie," and this in order "that they all might be damned." There is, therefore, no possible escape for one who (having heard and rejected the gospel) is left on earth when the saints shall be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air."

The acceptable year shall then have ended, and the day of vengeance shall have begun to break—vengeance that shall do its terrible work with a rapidity most strikingly in contrast to the lingering long-suffering of grace.

It is an acceptable YEAR, but it will only be a DAY of vengeance ; for a short work will the Lord make when He rises up to judgment.

Knowing that such will be the inevitable doom of the unbeliever when the Lord shall come for His own, how intensely urgent ought the believer now to be for the salvation of those around him, especially for those "his kindred in the flesh," to whom, by the ties of nature and of natural affection, he is bound, but from whom, were the Lord to come, he would be severed for ever.

And is it not a plea to urge, in dealing with such, that the moment for which the saints are waiting will be the

sealing of their eternal doom, as surely as the entrance of Noah into the ark and the shutting of that door was the sealing of the doom of the world before the flood? No warning had they that their day of mercy had expired, but the voice that for 120 years had witnessed for God was withdrawn.

No warning will the ungodly have of the change in God's attitude toward them ; but the voices of the saints shall no more be heard, and the strong delusion shall lay its deadly grasp on mind and heart, and seal for damnation the infatuated rejecters of the TRUTH.





CHAPTER XIV.

"JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE THE TIME."

1 Cor. iv. 5.

THE sleeping saints having been raised from the dead, and the living changed, and both together, in one glorious congregation, having been taken from earth to heaven, it can be a matter of no small interest to one who is destined to be among that company, to know what shall take place ere they again appear with Christ to judgment.

First, from many Scriptures already glanced at, there will be the seeing of the Lord Jesus as He is. Even now, by those who walk in the light, there is a seeing of Him by faith, and an enjoyment of His presence, that others know little or nothing of; to such He manifests Himself in a way that He does not unto the world (John xiv. 22, 23); but then there will be a vision of His glorious person, and an enjoyment of His presence to which faith cannot attain, to which even the indwelling of the Spirit of God does not usher the saint, but for which that Spirit causes him to long and pant.

Then there will be the Father's house where the many mansions are, and the place that He has gone to prepare for us, as we sing—

"He is fitting up my mansion, which eternally shall stand,
And my stay shall not be transient in that holy, happy land."

But of this we have little detail. "He suffered the just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God;*" and He will complete this purpose in all its fulness, and "present us faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

There was a law in Israel, that "when a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year." We know that Moses in the law spake of Christ; these ancient enactments were shadows in many, if not in all cases, of good things to come. Comparing this one with Eph. v., where we find the relationship of husband and wife applied to the great mystery of Christ and the Church, where He is spoken of as "presenting it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," is it not evident that there is a parallel, and that He to whom we are now espoused, when He comes to receive us to Himself, and to His Father's house, shall not go forth to battle, or marshal the saints for the execution of judgment, until He have remained with them a certain period "*at home*"?

And this merciful statute was for the cheer of the wife whom he had taken. It is the husband that is to "*cheer*" the wife, even as he doth "nourish and cherish." And who can tell what cheer the Lord hath prepared for those that love Him? what wiping away of tears? what girding of Himself and coming forth to serve—the eating of the hidden manna—the stone with the new name written in it, that no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it? what compassing about with songs of deliverance? what remembrances of the way the Lord hath led us, and fresh and ever new outbursts of praise as every step and turn are seen in fuller light? "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then we shall know even as also we are known." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.)

In Rev. xix. the saints are seen as the armies of heaven,

accompanying the Lord Jesus on His march to judgment as "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The very idea of an army presupposes appointment to positions of trust and responsibility, in proportion to ascertained faithfulness. Accordingly, many Scriptures speak of a tribunal at which the saints shall stand, at which their works shall be reviewed and tested according to perfect holiness, and by the result of which their position in the age to come shall be finally determined. The period at which this judgment shall take place is distinctly pronounced in 1 Cor. iv. 5. The apostle has been speaking of his stewardship and responsibility to the Lord ; he asserts his indifference to all human judgment, and his want of confidence even in the judgment which he habitually passed upon himself. He that judgeth him is the Lord ; "therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts : and then shall every man have praise of God."

The same judgment is spoken of in 1 Cor. iii. 13-15 : "Every man's work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire." To this same judgment the apostle confidently looks forward in 2 Tim. iv. 8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, *the righteous judge*, shall give me at that day ;" and in prospect of it he laboured that, whether present or absent, he might be acceptable to the Lord. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. v. 9, 10.) From

these Scriptures it appears that the period of this tribunal is when "the Lord comes," consequently when the saints appear before His "judgment-seat," having already been changed and glorified, and made like Himself, the question of their personal salvation is not raised at all. As sinners, they have already been judged, condemned, and executed at the cross in the person of their substitute. Who is he that condemneth? The judge is Christ that "died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 34.) But although there is no *personal* condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, there may be condemnation of much, very much, that has been DONE by the saints.

Their WORKS may be burned, while THEMSELVES are saved; and thus they may "suffer loss," though by grace they are for ever with the Lord. From the parable of "the pounds," in Luke xix. 12, it is further evident that the present period of the absence of the Lord from earth, is that in which the Lord tests the fitness of His servants for the large responsibilities of the age to come, when His kingdom shall be manifested.

He who with one pound had gained ten pounds, has ten cities placed under his authority, because he had proved himself faithful in a very little; and God's principle of judging is this, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." (Luke xvi. 10.)

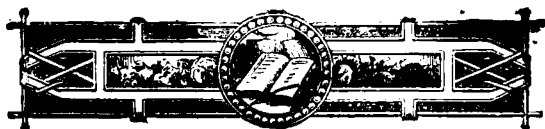
Many other Scriptures might be cited on this subject, which indeed is so important, and forms so prominent an element in the apostolic teaching, that it might be well to devote a larger space to its consideration.

Meantime, happy are they who are seeking to please God; who, walking habitually in the light of that judgment-seat of Christ, where "every one of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 10-12), are, by their faithfulness in the least things entrusted to them

here, approving themselves for those positions of honour which the Lord has in reserve as His high rewards for those who shall be found worthy.

The "mighty men," when David came to the throne, were those who had companied with him in his rejection, sharing his sufferings and risking their lives for his sake. Such will be the mighty men when the Lord Jesus shall reign—the deeper in the sufferings of Christ now, the higher in the glory of Christ hereafter.





CHAPTER XV.

*"WHEN CHRIST SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL YE
ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM."*

COL. iii. 4.

JESUS of Nazareth, the rejected and despised one, will indeed appear again. He will come as the King of kings, and Lord of lords, to assert in mighty power His right to the dominion of the world. He will come as the man whom God has ordained to be the judge of the quick and the dead, as the avenger of His people, as the restorer of Israel, as the promised seed in whom all nations shall be blessed, and as the deliverer of this groaning creation from the bondage of corruption.

When He thus appears, the saints whom He had previously taken to be with Himself shall appear with Him. Thus Enoch testified, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." (Jude 14.) Again, in Zechariah xiv. 5, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee;" and again, in Col. iii. 4, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Thus, in Rev. xix., the saints are seen in vision as the armies of heaven upon white horses, and clothed in fine linen, clean and white, accompanying the King of kings on His march to judgment.

When He came before, He came not to judge, but to save (John iii. 17; Luke ix. 56); and His people, the members of His body and partakers of His spirit, are called to fellowship in this gracious testimony, refusing, like the Master, the place of dominion or judgment in this world, and seeking only to commend the grace of a long-suffering God.

But when He comes again, it will be in righteousness to judge and make war (Rev. xix. 2); and again, His people, in fellowship with Himself, shall "judge and make war."

Of this we read in 1 Cor. vi. 2, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" And again, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" The Corinthians had been seeking great things for themselves in earth, desiring as it were to antedate the reigning time, as the Church, with its pretensions to temporal authority, has ever sought to do since. The apostle rebukes them: "Ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you."

The apostle knew that any position of influence attained in this world was an evidence of carnality rather than of true spiritual power, and so he is drawn out to long for the time when with Christ they would reign indeed, and he, the "fool for Christ," would reign together with them.

In Rev. ii. 26, 27, we find the Lord Jesus making the same promise to His overcoming people that in Psalm ii. 9 the Father had made to Himself. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father." And again, in iii. 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

Again, in Daniel vii., the kingdom under the whole heaven is taken by the Son of man ; but it is also written, "The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever and ever."

In accordance with this, the Lord Himself said, "Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32) ; and to the apostles He specifies the place in that kingdom which shall be theirs : "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke xxii. 29, 30.)

And that this is the common portion of all the saints is shown in Psalm cxlix 5-9, "To execute upon them the judgment written : this honour have all His saints."

The glory and power with which the believer will then be invested can little be imagined now. "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come ;" *that* is reserved for the MAN who is now crowned with glory and honour, and for those who shall be kings and priests, and joint-heirs with Him.

The miraculous powers of the Lord when on earth, and of His apostles, were but specimens of "the powers of the age to come" that will be committed to the saints.

He shall be "glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 10.) Their beauty and glory shall be the very beauty and glory of Christ outshining from within ; it is Christ that shall get the glory, and not the saints. As the summer sun is reflected and admired in every ripple upon the sea, so shall Christ be reflected and admired in each of His ransomed myriads.

Well may those who have such prospects decline the preferments that Satan would offer in this present world, and wait God's time to be honoured.

The olive, and the fig, and the vine were offered pro-

motion over the trees of the forest (Judges ix.), but they saw that the bargain would cost them the loss of their fruitfulness, and the offer was rejected. Such is many an offer of advancement to worldly honour now presented to the child of God ; he may indeed accept it, and for a time be looked up to, but it costs him his sweetness, his fatness, and his joy.

Meanwhile the whole creation groans, and is subject to bondage ; it travaileth in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Then it shall be ushered into their glorious liberty—liberty from sin, and Satan, and corruption, and death, and pains, and tears. It cannot be set free till the sons of God appear—till, in company with "the First-begotten from the dead," they execute the vengeance written, and destroy those that destroy the earth.

Might it not be said to many now as of old, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written"? These wondrous prophecies concerning the age to come are read as though they were idle tales ; faith lays but a feeble hold on them, and hence they have but little power to wean the heart from earthly things.

But let the believer, like the patriarch of old, be *persuaded* of them, and *embrace* them, and *confess* that he is but a stranger and pilgrim here ; then shall the star of hope grow brighter as the night grows darker, and earthly things shall fade, while heavenly things, unseen before, are manifested to the uplifted eye.





CHAPTER XVI.

*"THE TARES ARE GATHERED AND BURNED IN
THE FIRE."*

MATTHEW xiii. 40.

THAT a faithful remnant of Israel shall be found in their land and elsewhere, oppressed under the heel of antichrist, when the Lord shall appear with His saints for their deliverance and the destruction of the oppressor, has been already shown in chapters vii. and viii.

"Every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. xii. 1) shall at that time be delivered. An elect company, sealed and preserved, shall be brought through that fearful passage of tribulation and judgment, and ushered into the brightness and peace of "the morning without clouds" (2 Sam. xxiii. 4) which shall yet dawn upon this dark and ruined world.

"The sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands: but the man who shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7.)

They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, because they "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. ii. 12.)

As has already been shown, this execution of vengeance will be at the very time of the Lord's appearing with His saints—as if by a single stroke—instantaneous as the lightning's flash.

It was foreshadowed on the night of the passover, when at midnight there was a cry raised throughout all the land of Egypt; and again in the destruction in one night of 185,000 of Sennacherib's host.

As this destruction will take place when many nations are gathered together against Jerusalem in one immense and apparently invincible army, though local, its effects will be felt through every corner of the vast confederate empire of "the beast." But the Lord will not stop with the destruction of those who composed the assailing army. Many of the faithful remnant shall have been scattered through every nation; and their presence, wherever they were carried, would be a test of the real disposition, for or against God, of those amongst whom they dwelt.

And this is the test the Lord will apply: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered ALL NATIONS: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." (Matt. xxv. 31, 32.)

Now, this passage has been generally supposed to teach that all people, of all times and of all nations, would be raised from the dead, and judged together by the Lord; and that then, and not till then, could it be known whether one was really the Lord's or not. *That* is said to be the "decisive hour" which will fix the eternal destiny of all mankind.

But, strange to say, there is not a word in this chapter about resurrection at all; it is the living nations ("Ethnos," or "Gentiles") who are gathered before the Son

of man. And as He shall then have come in His glory, "THE SAINTS" shall be in company with Him as co-assessors in the judgment, and not at His bar to be judged.

It would seem as though the saved and blessed remnant of Israel were gathered in the Lord's immediate presence; and that, according to their treatment of *these*, "His brethren," in the time of their tribulation, is determined the character as righteous or wicked of all those who are before Him in judgment.

Being Gentiles, they are not judged by the law: if they perish, they perish without law; but the true condition of their hearts is thoroughly revealed by the reception or rejection of those "who kept the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Rev. xiv. 12.)

And it is even so now. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14); "And every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him." (1 John v. 1.) Alas for those who profess to be Christians, but whose hearts know no attraction to those "who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Their profession may pass among men, but at the bar of God it will be torn aside. And "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" (Job xxvii. 8.)

From this tribunal the righteous "go away into eternal life." We do not read that, like the church, they are caught up or transfigured; it may be that, even halt or maimed, they pass from that throne of judgment, but they enter upon the possession and enjoyment of eternal life. It will be easy for Him who cured the halt and the maimed before to restore them to perfect soundness again; but "it will be better to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into hell fire." (Matt. xviii. 8.)

The wicked "go away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." No mercy is offered; no space for repentance given. The time has come to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and to cast them into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. xiii. 42.)

So long ago as the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel had been rent in two; Judah and Benjamin forming the one kingdom, and the other ten tribes under Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, forming a separate kingdom, and setting up an independent and apostate order of worship, having resemblance to the true order appointed by God at Jerusalem. (See 1 Kings xii.) To this day these two kingdoms have never been reunited; but numerous and explicit are the prophecies which foretell that they shall again be one in their own land. Suffice it to refer to that in Ezekiel xxxvii. 15, &c., where, under the figure of the two sticks becoming one in the prophet's hand, it is clearly shown that such is the purpose of God concerning Israel. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

Many are the speculative theories that have been adduced to explain the mystery of the lost ten tribes, each having a certain amount of plausibility, and some not a little ingenuity; but still it remains unsolved, and we may conclude that it will remain a mystery until the Lord comes; for as they are being brought from all nations whither they had been scattered, the remnant, like a be-

reaved and captive mother, finding again her long-lost children, is represented as saying, "Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?" (Isaiah xlix. 21.)

Thus, their return is like a resurrection; the Lord alone knows who and where they are, and He that scattered shall gather.

But ere establishing the whole nation in their land there must also be a judgment and a purging of these gathered outcasts. "I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered. . . . And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and *there will I plead with you face to face*. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezek. xx. 34-38.)

Thus, as the tares were gathered in bundles to be burned, so company after company of the ungodly, whether Jew or Gentile, shall be gathered for judgment, and then "shall the work of righteousness be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah xxxii. 17.)





CHAPTER XVII.

*"A KING SHALL REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND
PRINCES SHALL RULE IN JUDGMENT."*

ISAIAH xxxii. 1.

THE millennium" is a term familiar to most students of Scripture. It simply means "the thousand years," and derives its origin from Rev. xx. 4-6, where alone this period is defined.

It is there described as that epoch during which the Lord Jesus Christ and His saints shall reign over the earth. No longer despised, rejected, oppressed, the meek shall inherit the earth, the mourners shall be comforted, the pure in heart shall see God, and those who hitherto have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, shall inherit the kingdom. (Matt. v.)

It has already been shown by many Scriptures that this period of blessing and glory, for which the whole creation groans, is to be introduced by judgments unprecedented. It must needs be so; for God cannot display His glory where sin is tolerated. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne" (Ps. xcvi. 1); hence, where He reigns He must reign in righteousness; and if earth is called upon to rejoice before the Lord, it is because "He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth."

That the heavenly department of the millennial kingdom will be occupied by Christ and His saints has already

been shown in chapter xv. First, He associates His saints with Himself in the execution of judgment, and then He appoints them to their service of rule and blessing during the age to come.

Though pre-eminently heavenly, theirs shall also be a ministry towards earth, of joy and blessing; for hereafter heaven will be open, and upon the Son of man, like Jacob's ladder, shall heavenly messengers ascend and descend, fulfilling the commands of Him who then shall be manifested as the "Blessed and only Potentate: the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

As to earth, the centre of all God's plans of blessing for it is the nation of Israel. Next to the manifestation of the sons of God, in their heavenly glory with Christ, come the restoration of God's ancient and beloved people to their own land, and their establishment and blessing there.

It is of this that the Old Testament prophets spake more abundantly than of almost any other future event, ever connecting Israel's restoration with the glory of their Messiah and King, and showing that all blessings for other nations was to be consequent upon the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham's seed. Thus, in Luke i. 32, it is written: "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Again, in Isaiah ix. 6, 7, "For unto us a Child is born, and unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder. . . . Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." Again, in Psalm lxxii. 6, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace as long as the

moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow down before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust."

Nor is it in Old Testament prophecy alone that we find the coming kingdom and glory of Christ foretold. Above His cross the superscription written by Pilate declared Him to be the "the King of the Jews;" and the Lord Himself acknowledged to Pilate, "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth." Again, it is evident that of these things Paul spake in his preaching; for in Acts xvii. 7 he is accused of "doing contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus." And in writing his second epistle to Timothy, as though to impress upon his son in the faith this special aspect of the authority and glory of Christ, he says, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel." (2 Tim. ii. 8.)

Unquestionably, then, must it be concluded from these Scriptures that the coming reign of the Lord Jesus, as David's son and heir, will not be a merely spiritual dominion, such as He now exercises in the hearts of His saints, but a personal visible reign as King at Jerusalem, and exercise of government, as David and Solomon had done before, though in an infinitely more glorious manner and degree.

But let it ever be borne in mind that, during that period of earth's deliverance from sin, and Satan, and curse, the heavenly and the earthly shall be blended as now we cannot conceive.

Doubtless even now messengers wing their way from heaven to earth, ministering for those who shall be heirs of salvation; but a veil is drawn over all such intercourse, which even the most spiritual cannot penetrate. Not so then; for the long-closed heavens shall be open, as once

for a moment to the eye of the martyr Stephen, and earth shall find its rest and blessing in the very beams of the presence and glory of God.

When the truth of this coming personal reign of the Lord Jesus and His saints is seen and received, many Scriptures, otherwise dark, become full of meaning, and their application simple and direct. For instance, take that little group of millennial psalms, from the 96th to 100th. Who has not felt their inappropriateness to the present age, even though by means of sundry mental reservations and ingenious processes of spiritualizing they may have been sung with a measure of sincerity? Without doubt there is a spiritual application of every word of Scripture, and there is a kingdom of God "*within*," the principles of which are identical with that kingdom which is to come. This inward and spiritual application of Scripture is not lost, but intensified, when the primary and literal application is seen and admitted.

Of these psalms the key-note is, "The Lord reigneth." It has been observed that never, under any previous dispensation, did God seem to retire so far from the management of affairs in this world as during the present age.

The "signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost," whereby God gave witness to the heralds of the gospel (Heb. ii. 4), have passed away, and, to the outward sense, there is no apparent interference by the living God with the ordinary course of nature, with all its corruption and apostasy.

Not a sound from heaven has broken the silence of the eighteen centuries, and only to faith is it apparent that, while Satan, as prince and god of this world, is indeed ruling and carrying it to perdition, God is over all, and overruling for ends known and purposed by Himself.

But the time is approaching when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Then shall the elders before the throne give thanks, and the nations

nstead of rejoicing shall "*be angry*," and before the reign of righteousness shall ripen into peace and joy the fire of judgment shall destroy those which destroy the earth. (See Rev. xi. 15-18.)

Then shall these millennial psalms be sung by redeemed Israel with an intelligence and fervour unknown before. When He shall have remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel, and all the ends of the earth shall have seen the salvation of our God ; when the Lord shall "sit between the cherubims," and send the rod of His strength out of Zion ; when the heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory, then shall it be fitting to sing—

"All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice ;
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice."

Meantime, to sing this is to invite the children of the devil to sing the praise of God : it is not the message suited to the present age. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent : because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.)

Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ having taken place, men are welcome, through grace, to sing His praise ; but without this change they had better weep than sing. But, blessed be God, the time will come when the tares, being gathered and burned, the goats severed from the sheep, the sinners destroyed out of the land, the enemies of the Lord visited with judgment, the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, all that remain upon earth having come to trust in the shadow of His wings, shall be welcomed to the courts of the Lord's house as worshippers to thank and bless His name.



CHAPTER XVIII.

"THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING."

MATT. V. 36.

JERUSALEM ! What a halo of glorious associations the Scriptures have thrown around that beautiful name ; yet how sad has been its history ! Most highly privileged of all spots upon earth, it has nevertheless been the scene of continual apostasy, culminating in the murder of the Son of God. He who knew it from the beginning, and had marked the ways of its guilty inhabitants, pronounced its character when He said, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen her brood under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate : and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Luke xiii. 34, 35.)

Many other Scriptures foretell the present protracted desolation of Jerusalem and of the temple. "When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy

day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke xix. 41-44.)

Again : "For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword ; and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke xxi. 23, 24.)

And again : "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without a pillar, and without an ephod, and without teraphim : afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king ; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." (Hosea iii. 4, 5.) And again, "Blindness in part has happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Rom. xi. 25.)

From the consideration of all this the Spirit of God would teach us a deep practical lesson. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God : on them which fell, severity ; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness : otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

The "severity of God" is a fearful term, but it must have its way against sin if grace be despised. Grace *was* despised by Israel, and what a witness are they during 1800 years of God's "severity." Grace *is* despised by Gentile Christendom, and turned into lasciviousness (Jude 4) ; and so surely as the vengeance written was fulfilled literally and to the very minutest detail upon apostate

Israel, so surely shall the vengeance foretold be executed upon the Gentile rejectors of the gospel.

But the time is coming when the "glorious things" (Ps. lxxxvii. 3) that are spoken concerning Jerusalem shall have their fulfilment; for the city shall be built again "upon its own heap" (Jer. xxx. 18); not as an act of unbelief, to be again the scene of desolation (though doubtless this will first take place), but "built to the Lord," "and it shall not be plucked up nor thrown down *any more for ever*." (Jer. xxxi. 38-40.) "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the BRANCH* OF RIGHTEOUSNESS to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell in safety: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." (Jer. xxxiii. 14-16.) "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." (Ps. cii. 13-21.)

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." (Acts xv. 16.)

From these and very many other Scriptures that might be referred to, it appears that Jerusalem shall again be rebuilt upon its former site; in it shall be mount Zion, and upon mount Zion the temple which the Lord Himself shall build. The city shall be holy. "Every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness to the Lord." (Zech. xiv. 21.)

* This title of the Lord Jesus denotes His kingly character as David's Son and heir. See Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12, 13; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; Isa. iv. 2; also especially Isa. xi. 1, where, as to His manhood, He is the Rod out of the stem of Jesse; as to His Godhead, the Branch out of his roots. Just as, in Matt. xxii. 45, He is David's Son and David's Lord. Such distinctions are of value to faith, but folly to those who deny the Godhead of the Son.

The Lord Himself shall dwell there; for it shall be called "Jehovah-shammah"—"The Lord is there." (Ezek. xlviii. 35.) "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14.)

Consequently Jerusalem shall be the gathering-place for all nations. "They shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts." (Zech. xiv. 16, 17.) "The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Micah iv. 1-3; see also Zech. viii. 20-23.)

The worship of God shall then be *established* in the earth; the "King of kings" shall be the Head—the final appeal of the religion as well as of the politics of all nations. There will be the HOUSE OF THE LORD—one house, built by Himself, and called "the house of prayer for all nations" (Mark xi. 17); such a house as man could not build; its architecture divine. It shall be "the perfection of beauty." (Ps. l. 2.) The glory of Jehovah that Ezekiel beheld as with a fond lingering over the much-loved spot, slowly departing (see Ezek. viii. 4; ix. 3; x. 4; xi. 23), "till it stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city, shall again have returned, as it is written, "Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came

from the way of the east : and His voice was like a noise of many waters : and the earth shined with His glory." (Ezek. xliii. 2.) "The glory of the Lord *shall be revealed*, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isa. xl. 1-5.) "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously!" (Isa. xxiv. 23.) "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." (Ps. xlviii. 2.) And although it was the scene of our Lord's most bitter opposition, and named in the very hour of His glorious transfiguration as the place where His decease should be accomplished, yet did He look forward to the fulfilment of all that had been written concerning it. To Him it was indeed "the city of the Great King;" for He knew that where He was shamefully crucified He would also gloriously reign.

The glory and wealth of all earth's great and influential cities are meantime, in comparison with that which shall yet be in Jerusalem, mere glitter and tinsel ; for they are not monuments bearing witness to the grace of God, but to the pride and selfishness of man. The palace and the princely mansion, whose inmates are rolling in luxury, may be but a stone's-throw from the workhouse, where the suffering poor are dying on the tax-gatherer's pittance, "cold as charity;" yet the little space between is a gulf that no man passes over. Are not such the brands that tell of the city being the city of Cain? They can increase in wealth, and be artificers in brass and iron, and handle the harp and the organ ; science and art may prosper, and men congratulate themselves on PROGRESS, as they flutter along the surface of life, not knowing or caring to inquire into the depths of misery, poverty, and sin that lie around. Practically they say with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

or with the Pharisee who, in self-justification, parried the thrust of the "two-edged sword," "Who is my neighbour?"

But of Jerusalem it is written, "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." (Ps. xlviii. 3.) Blessed guarantee of peace and prosperity. Each one shall have come to **THE MAN** who is the "hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." (Isa. xxxii. 2.) No longer, like Adam, hiding *from* God, they shall hide *in* God. "They shall all know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest." (Jer. xxxi. 34.)

Their eyes "shall see the King in His beauty;" "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick;" "the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. xxxiii. 17-24.)

It will be the "city of solemnities"—"a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down." (Isa. xxxiii. 20.) "Thus saith the Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jerusalem shall be called **A CITY OF TRUTH**; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, **THE HOLY MOUNTAIN**."

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." (Zech. viii. 3-5.)

"Their fasts shall be joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts." (Zech. viii. 19.) "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. . . . And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their

hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble ; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock : and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." (Isa. lxxv. 18-25.)

Truly GLORIOUS THINGS are spoken of this city, which time and space are alike wanting to tell. May the thought of what God is thus about to do for His own praise upon this sin-blighted world make all its present pomp and ambition—its godless progress and outside refinement—to be in our eyes, as it is in God's eyes, "vanity of vanities."

Attempts have often been made to spiritualize and apply to heavenly things those Scriptures quoted, and many others which describe the coming glory of Jerusalem. That there is a heavenly Jerusalem and a spiritual mount Zion, to which we, as believers in Jesus, are brought, is indeed true (see Heb. xii. 22-24) ; but, as already indicated, nothing is gained, but, on the contrary, very much is lost by seeking to spiritualize such Scriptures, to the exclusion of their literal and primary application.

There is the glory of the *terrestrial* as well as the glory of the *celestial* (1 Cor. xv. 40) ; and if ours be the latter, Israel's shall be the former. The seed of Abraham of the heavenly calling may be "as the stars for multitude, but the earthly shall be "as the sand upon the sea-shore. (Gen. xxii. 17.)





CHAPTER XIX.

"A DELIGHTSOME LAND."

MAL. iii. 12.

IT is generally supposed that "Immanuel's land" is heaven. But a very cursory reference to the chapter where the expression occurs (Isa. viii. 8) will show that it applies not to heaven, but to the land of Israel, as promised to Abraham and to his seed, yet to be inhabited according to the covenant, and now, though downtrodden by the Gentile, and desolate, reserved for the glorious accomplishment of every prophecy regarding it.

Very early did the earth share in the blight that fell on the whole creation through the entrance of sin—"Cursed is the ground for thy sake : . . . thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. iii. 17, 18) ; and ever since then, only to hard and persevering labour does the ground "yield her strength." Yet much has been left of fruitfulness and of beauty, not alone for human enjoyment, but also for His delight, for whose "pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. iv. 11.) Moreover, there is a witness for God in nature that is often much overlooked ; as we read, "Nevertheless He left not Himself without a witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

(Acts xiv. 17.) But *gladness* is one thing and *thankfulness* is another ; and herein does God complain of man, "They glorify Him not as God, neither were they thankful." (Rom. i. 21.) How often are men, and even Christians, glad because of the gifts of God, whilst the incense of praise and thanksgiving scarce at all ascends. But in the land of Immanuel it shall not be so ; for "the Lord hath sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies ; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured : but they that have gathered it *shall eat it, and praise the Lord* ; and they that have brought it together shall drink it *in the courts of My holiness.*" (Isa. lxii. 8, 9.)

The abundance of the gifts of God shall not then lead the hearts of Israel *from*, but *to* the Giver. Instead of fostering the spirit of independence, as they had before done (see Deut. viii. 11-17), they shall lead the soul into joyful communion with Him, who shall then be known as the source of all blessing ; Himself better than all His gifts, and His loving-kindness better than life. At the present time the land of Canaan gives but little indication either of its former or its future fruitfulness and beauty. The prophecy of Lev. xxvi. is under fulfilment : "I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you : and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land ; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest ; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it." (vv. 33-35.)

Much of its present barrenness and desolation is owing to the long withdrawal of the "latter rain," rain that once fell regularly in its appointed season. Because of Israel's wickedness we read, "Therefore the showers have

been withdrawn, and there hath been no latter rain." (Jer. iii. 3.) "Neither said they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season : He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you." (Jer. v. 24, 25.)

But it shall not be for ever so. "Fear not, O land ; be glad and rejoice : for the Lord will do great things." "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God : for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil." "And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you : and My people shall never be ashamed." (Joel ii. 21-27.)

So also we find in Hosea vi. The remnant of Israel, as though seeing that their blessing and restoration is bound up with the death and resurrection of Christ, are represented as saying : "Come, and let us return unto the Lord : for He hath torn, and He will heal us ; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us : in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord : His going forth is prepared as the morning ; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and the former rain unto the earth."

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed ; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt." (Amos ix. 13.) Thus shall the promises of Leviticus xxvi. 4, 5, be at last fulfilled to Israel in the sovereign grace of God, though for the

present they are utterly forfeited, because conditioned upon their obedience to the law.

Most thoroughly has the law proved man's need of grace. Not a precept left unbroken—and that in full view of both promises and threatenings unexampled—tells too plainly the depth of depravity that is in the revolted heart.

But though man may fail, God has in reserve the right to bless—a dearly-purchased right, acquired through the blood of His Son—a right that He is now exercising abundantly towards us, and which He will yet exercise towards His ancient and beloved people Israel, and not to them only, but through them to the whole world, and to the very creation that has been blighted, and the land that has been desolate because of Israel's sin.

Truly, then, it will be “a delightful land.” Even the wild beasts will partake in the universal blessing, owning the second Adam, Lord, and His presence restraining their appetites, they shall not hurt nor destroy. (See Isa. xi. 6, 9.)

“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. xxxv. See whole chapter.)

At present the Dead Sea is a standing witness to God's judgment upon sin. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah doubtless being there submerged, and its waters so impregnated with salts, that no living things are to be found in it.

It is like the waters of Marah, so bitter that it cannot be used; but the restoration of this is also in the purpose of God, when He shall restore all things, and efface every trace of what sin had done, excepting only that “dust shall be the serpent's meat.” The account of this is to be

found in detail in Ezek. xlvii. 1-10. It is impossible to spiritualize such a passage. And is it not wonderful how God has contrived to connect even this with the blood of atonement? The living stream that shall heal the deadness of those waters shall proceed from *under the altar*. It deepens and widens as it proceeds, spreading life on all its banks, and at length emptying itself into the Dead Sea, the bitter waters again are healed, and Jehovah-Rophi is known anew, as the fishers stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eghlaim, spreading forth their nets, and finding fish according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.





CHAPTER XX.

"ALL NATIONS SHALL CALL HIM BLESSED."

PSALM lxxii. 17.

IT is written of Christ, "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David : and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." (Luke i. 32, 33.) But the sphere of His reign shall not be limited to the house of Jacob ; for it is also written, "There was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him." (Dan. vii. 14.)

It has already been observed, that whilst at the present time an election out of all nations is being gathered to the name of Jesus, the nations, as such, are not blessed in Him ; on the contrary, their condemnation is greatly increased, and their rejection of the light is only deepening the darkness in which they are enveloped, and preparing them to be hurried headlong to destruction under the power of the last "strong delusion." (2 Thess. ii. 10-12.)

But as it was promised to Abraham that in his seed should all nations of the earth be blessed (Gen. xxii. 18), so in confirmation again of that promise it is written, "Men shall be blessed in Him : all nations shall call Him blessed." (Ps. lxxii. 17.)

It is thus evident that all nations shall be brought into

subjection to the lordship of Christ, and they shall go up from year to year to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts. (Zech. xiv. 16, 17.) It is not to be from this concluded that all upon the face of the earth shall be truly regenerate persons; on the contrary, it would seem as though some would even refuse to yield their homage to the King of kings, and incur the penalty written, even the plague of having no rain. Again, in Psalm xviii. 43, 44, the marginal reading is interesting, being made the "Head of the heathen," the sons of the stranger will yield unto Him "feigned obedience." Again, in Psalm lxvi. 3, through the greatness of His power His enemies shall "yield feigned obedience unto Him;" a different character of subjection from that which is now yielded by those who know the constraining power of the love of Christ.

Doubtless very many out of all nations will be truly the Lord's, and in His day shall the righteous flourish, showing that the righteousness which is called to suffer in the patience of hope now shall be dominant then. Those whose hearts remain unchanged shall not then be energized as now by the spirit of Satan (Eph. ii.); for Satan during that period shall be confined in the bottomless pit, and not roaming about at will as he now is (Rev. xx. 1-3), and this alone will occasion a mighty change from the present order of things, both as to the saved and unsaved. Evil, if it does exist, will be comparatively powerless, and will, through the omniscience of the King, meet with speedy and infallible judgment.

The saints living in the world will not then, as now, be subject to the assaults of the adversary, either through the injection into the mind of evil thoughts, or through his appealing to the lusts of the flesh, or by those sicknesses and pains which he has power, as in the case of Job or Paul, now to inflict upon the bodies of the people of God. It will be the world's Sabbath—a rest from conflict in the

presence and vision of the glory of God, and in the perpetual enjoyment of His blessing. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab. ii. 14.) But a thousand years of the blessing and manifested glory of God and of rest from Satan's oppression will not suffice to eradicate the corruption of the nature of man. The heart of all but those who shall have been created anew will yet be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and this will be fully manifested at the close of the millennial period.

"When the thousand years are expired Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." Immediately he shall set about his ancient work of deception; for his long incarceration shall have wrought no change upon him, and multitudes will again be found in the four quarters of the earth ready to believe his lies. The evil of their unrenewed nature, though dormant and kept in restraint, ready to be fanned into a flame of opposition to God whenever the breath of the spirit of Satan should blow upon it, shall burst forth in a fearful and final insurrection against the authority of Christ.

The camp of the saints and the beloved city will again, as in the day of antichrist, be the object of envy and malice; for Satan's opposition, first and last, is directed against the object of the favour of God.

In full view of the glorious presence of Christ the Lord, and of all that His grace shall have wrought for Israel and for man, with hardihood unparalleled, shall this innumerable host of Satan's last dupes be marshalled to do battle with the living God.

But it is only for a little season. Power is now on the side of the saints, not on the side of the ungodly, and Satan and his hosts may compass the camp and the city about, but they cannot touch a hair of the head of God's redeemed.

Their destruction is instantaneous and final : "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." (Rev. xx. 9.)

So far as God has revealed, this ends the long conflict between light and darkness. Man has been tried without law, and found utterly ungodly : and the flood ended that test of man. Then in Abraham's seed the trial is renewed with all the restraints that law could impose ; but man is proven to be a sinner, and this trial ends in the murder of God's Son.

Again, in the present dispensation, man is being tested by grace by the universal offer of pardon through faith in God's testimony—God beseeching men to be reconciled to Him, and not imputing to them their trespasses. The result is only to bring out the utter enmity of the natural man. He will not only tread under foot the Son of God, but do despite to the Spirit of grace.

Finally, as we have seen, God reveals Himself in His glorious power to deliver from sin and Satan, and death and curse, ushering the groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.

For a thousand years He maintains unbroken calm ; it is the kingdom of God, the reign of the Prince of Peace, the world's great rest and jubilee. But, at its close, yet once more man is tested, through Satan being again let loose, and the issue proves the eternal truth of the verdict of God : "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John iii. 3.) "Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Gal. vi. 15.)

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. xxi. 5.)





CHAPTER XXI.

*"AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND
BEFORE THE THRONE."**

REV. XX. 12.

TWO short but infinitely weighty expressions stand forth prominently in Rev. xx. ; viz., "This is the first resurrection" (ver. 5), and "This is the second death." (ver. 14.) It is as though God would make very little of the first death ; viz., the death of the body, and as little of the second resurrection, which is "the resurrection of damnation." (John v. 29.) These two events, important though they be, are of little moment compared with the two here emphasized. To have part in the first resurrection is to be "blessed and holy." We read of none such appearing before God in the resurrection of judgment. Emphatically it is **THE DEAD** who are then called to judgment.

But of whom are "the dead" composed, who shall then be summoned from the grave and from the sea to stand before God ?

The last witness for God who was slain by the sword of antichrist shall have been raised from the dead and glorified with Christ a thousand years before.

At "the coming of Christ with all His saints" the grave shall have been thoroughly robbed of its victory, for not one shall be left as a trophy of Satan's power.

* So all the oldest MSS.

After that, in the millennial earth, there will be death by the judgment of God ; the sinner shall be accursed, and the man of an hundred years old shall be accounted only a child. (Isa. lxx. 20.) But nowhere do we read of the elect being subject to death ; on the contrary, they enter into life, it may be halt or maimed, but it is into everlasting life on earth. (Compare Matt. xviii. 8 with xxv. 46.) They go to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

Who, then, are the dead ? Can it be shown that amid that vast resurrection company there is one saved person ? It is the resurrection of judgment—judgment according to works. And if it be so, alas ! who shall stand ? "Enter not into judgment with thy servant : for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxliii. 2.) In strict accordance with this view is the description of the judgment throne. Once there had been a **THRONE OF GRACE** (Heb. iv. 16), where mercy gloried against judgment. (James ii. 13.) It was foreshadowed in the mercy-seat sprinkled with blood. In Isa. vi. the Lord is seen sitting upon a throne high and lifted up ; but it was in the temple, and before it was the altar that spake of grace, mercy, and peace for the guilty. In Rev. iv. again there is a throne, and out of it proceeded voices and thunders and lightnings ; but around it was a rainbow, the token of sure and covenant mercy for a sin-blighted world. But here, at the close of earth's history, stands a "**GREAT WHITE THRONE.**" There is no blood, no altar, no rainbow ; One sits upon it to whom God has committed all judgment. (John v. 22.) From before His face the earth and the heavens flee away ; there is no shelter, no refuge from the fearful sight. God is enthroned for judgment inflexible, eternal, and without mercy ; and the sinner, in all his guilt and defilement, and blackness, will stand revealed in awful contrast to the dazzling whiteness of the throne of God.

Condemned in righteousness, they are cast into the lake of fire that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Such is the inevitable doom of all who are not washed in the blood of Christ. The "fearful and unbelieving," as well as "the abominable and murderers," shall be there; the small and great, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, to suffer the pangs of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.

The prospect is intolerable. Little wonder is it that, in these last days of Satan's power and subtlety, it should be broadly asserted by some that the second death is annihilation, and that the punishment is unconscious; or by others, that even out of the second death there will be a glorious exit into life eternal. It is not hard to understand how such theories find access to the minds of such as have never bowed their reason to God's revelation, backed as they ever are with the seemingly plausible argument, that these views exalt the merciful character of God.

Surely, had God intended to leave one ray of hope for the unbeliever, He never would have used the language He has in speaking of this subject.

Let it be no matter of doubt in the minds of God's children that the idea of conscious existence amid torments as of the burning of fire and brimstone, and that for ages of ages, is no fiction of man's imagination, but God's revelation in His own Word of the punishment that He deems it just to inflict inevitably upon the ungodly.

It is not within the scope of these papers to enter into a discussion of the arguments adduced to prove the non-eternity of punishment. Suffice it to say that it cannot be "unconscious punishment," for the word rendered "punishment" in Matt. xxv. 46 is the same as rendered "torment" in 1 John iv. 18, and cannot mean that of which the subjects are unconscious.

Again, the period of punishment cannot be limited, for in Rev. xiv. 11 and xx. 10 the expression "ages of ages" has no limit; but, as if to fix its meaning indisputably, it is applied frequently throughout the book of Revelation to the duration of the life of God. (See Rev. iv. 9; v. 14; x. 6; xv. 7.)

"After death the judgment." (Heb. ix. 27.) Many a man has boldly faced the cannon's mouth—has unflinchingly looked death in the face; but who has been so brave as calmly to ponder appearing in judgment before God without desiring another plea to trust in than his best performances can afford?

Happy are they whose judgment is past at the cross of Christ, who, because "in Him," shall not come into judgment, but are passed from death into life!





CHAPTER XXII.

"AND I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH."

REV. xxi. 1.

THE first creation is like the vessel which Jeremiah saw marred in the hands of the potter. "So he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." (Jer. xviii. 3, 4.)

This new creation, which God brings forth as it were out of the sepulchre of the old, does not appear until all the purposes that God has to fulfil in the old are accomplished.

Christ Jesus Himself, rising from the dead on the third day, is indeed "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14), and if any man be *in Christ*, he too is "a new creation." Thus, in the new covenant, there is a new man brought into a new creation to sing a new song, and inherit the new Jerusalem, the new heavens, and the new earth. Old things shall have passed away, and all things shall have become new.

Up till this present time evil is dominant, and righteousness suffers upon earth. "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus he shall suffer persecution;" and as this age closes in the heavier will be the oppression brought to bear upon the truth. During the millennium order will be restored through the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. Evil shall then be repressed by judgment, and righteousness

shall be dominant, as it is written, "In His days shall the righteous flourish." (Ps. lxxii. 7.)

But though righteousness may have the dominion, while evil, though repressed, is still present, the end to which God is working, and which alone can fully satisfy the soul that is in fellowship with Him, is not reached.

"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein DWELLETH righteousness." (2 Peter iii. 13.)

There at last the conflict between light and darkness, between truth and error, between sin and righteousness, shall have ended. Righteousness will not suffer then, for "God shall be all in all;" neither shall it reign, for there will be no evil to be kept in subjugation; but righteousness shall find a dwelling-place—a home, a rest, never again to be disturbed.

Thus all things, even death itself, shall have been subdued under Christ, as the last Adam, the head of the new creation. "He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet." Then, when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power, He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. xv. 24-28.) Blessed and glorious consummation of all things—"GOD ALL IN ALL." God is light, God is love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Such will be the new heavens and the new earth; dwelling in God, it shall be filled with light and with love for ever. Standing, not merely as *creation*, but as redeemed creation, it shall be the eternal witness of God's infinite satisfaction with the work of His Son.

The long-past night of sorrow, the former creation with its groans and travail, shall not be remembered, nor come upon the heart.

Strangely are the finite and the infinite combined within us—circumscribed as to our powers of mind and body within but narrow limits. Yet is there that in man which even a millennium of blessing in prospect fails to satisfy. The mind in vain attempts to compass the thought of eternity, and yet nothing short of the eternal has power to fill the aching longing of the soul after satisfaction. God knew this, and hence that which He brings to us in Christ Jesus for our acceptance is all eternal. It is eternal redemption, everlasting righteousness, eternal life, eternal inheritance, eternal glory. Hence it is not merely in Old Testament prophecies, which so seldom take cognisance of anything beyond the millennial reign of Christ, that we find our true and ultimate expectation ; but when, apart from the course of ages, upon earth, we are introduced into those counsels and purposes of God which run through and beyond all ages. Such is Eph. iii. 21 : “Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus *to all the generations of eternal ages. Amen.*” (See Alford.)

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

