

The Voice of the Watchman

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD," ETC.

'We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." 2 Peter i. 19.

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THE VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN.

INTRODUCTION—THE WATCHMAN.

“The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.” (Isa. xxi. 11, 12.)

THESE remarkable words were uttered by the prophet Isaiah on the eve of a most terrible calamity that befell the house of Israel. For Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, was then coming down to beseige Samaria, and carry the inhabitants of the land into captivity. This he accomplished after three years' siege of the city, when nearly all the ten tribes of Israel were carried captives into Assyria, where their descendants have ever since been hidden or lost.

This sad event occurred in the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel, and the sixth year of Hezekiah, king of Judah. (2 Kings xviii. 9, 10.)

The watchman is represented as standing con-

tinually on the watch-tower, and had thus foreseen the coming down of the lion of Assyria. So also their old enemy of Seir had seen the coming calamity of Israel, and in view of it he tauntingly cries out to the prophet of Israel, "Watchman, what of the night?" Thus sneeringly saying, "Ah, your great trouble is now coming upon you. What have you to say to it? Where is boasting in your God now?" The watchman, while seeing the night of Israel's troubles approaching, instantly glances down the long vista of ages to the morning of deliverance that would ultimately come to all Israel, and first announces (before alluding to the darkness then near at hand) the cheering prophecy, "The morning cometh," thus rebuking the cruel sneer of the enemy. Then he admits the near coming of the night also, though his first desire was to minister hope and comfort to Israel in directing their gaze to the bright morning of deliverance that was to come to the whole nation in the end of days.

Looking at the peculiar state of things around us at the present time, the restlessness and the foreboding fears of the nations, as well as of individuals, and the underlying apprehension of some impending crisis being near at hand, we may appropriately adopt that cry that came from Seir—not as then mockingly, but with sincere desire to know what may now be coming on the earth—"Watchman, what of the night?"

The signs of the times are indeed ominous,

while the rapid developments of stirring events from day to day are truly startling, so that many are naturally much concerned in "looking after those things which are coming on the earth." To all close observers it is evident we are now passing through the first stage of the dark night of the world's history, just before the dawn of the bright morning that is soon coming.

So that we may well inquire of the watchman, "What of the night?" and take comfort from the consoling reply, "The morning cometh."

If we seriously consider the present condition of things in the political, the social and the religious world, we cannot fail to see unmistakable indications that we are now passing through the state of moral darkness pointed out in scripture as one of the special characteristics of the "last days," which, with other more cheering indications, might be expected, according to the prophetic word, to precede the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of the many signs that could be mentioned we will in the next chapter look at some of the most prominent and significant which are now coming so distinctly to the front, and which are attracting the earnest attention of many true Christians and students of scripture, who regard them as premonitory indications of the approaching nearness of the Lord's coming.

CHAPTER I.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

FIRST.

The Great Eastern Question to the front again.

THE great Eastern Question, that has caused such commotion among the nations for so many years, is now evidently coming prominently forward again; probably for its final solution (or at least a prelude to that end), which cannot be far off now.

To all careful readers of the Bible it is clear that the final solution of this vexed question, or the chief and most important part of it (whatever intermediate contingencies and agencies may arise to bring it about), must be the full and complete restoration of the Israelites to their own land of Palestine. For that must inevitably come to pass in due time, according to the determinate counsels of God and His promise to Abraham and his seed. (Gen. xvii. 7; Deut. xi. 24.)

At the same time, all who have carefully considered this difficult problem must be aware that the above solution of it may involve grave consequences, fierce political contentions, and most probably a gigantic war. Still, the land of promise must assuredly be restored to God's people, the seed of Abraham, who have a divine

right to its possession, be the consequences what they may.

For God in His almighty and overruling providence will bring it to pass at the appointed hour, even if all the nations of the earth be combined together to prevent it. There is nothing more certain than this, because God's covenant can never be set aside or frustrated. Moreover, we know from many prophetic scriptures that this great event—the restoration of Israel to their own land—will take place at the “time of the end”; *i.e.*, the end of this age or dispensation; when Christ, the true Messiah, will come personally to deliver His people, and set up His kingdom on the earth, to reign on the throne of His father David. (Luke i. 32.)

Therefore the prominence of the Eastern Question just now, with all its attendant conflicts, in the counsels of the nations—whom God will no doubt use as providential instruments to accomplish His purposes with regard to Israel—is indeed a very significant sign of the approaching nearness of the “time of the end,” when great and momentous events will occur to change everything and prepare the way for the establishment of Christ's literal kingdom on the earth.

SECOND.

The Rumours and Prospects of Great War.

The sounds of war are continually ringing in our ears, and the dark cloud of a mighty conflict

of the nations that has been hanging over Europe and the East for many years, is becoming darker and darker every day; while some who are in a position to speak with authority on this subject are saying confidently that it must inevitably burst before long. The vast preparations that are going on in all the leading nations of Europe seem to shew that a terrible conflict of the great powers is rapidly approaching. Nor can we doubt that the governments of these nations know and believe that it cannot be long averted now, though from motives of policy they may not venture to say so.

With feverish haste the nations are vying with each other in the preparations of the most tremendous engines of destruction and a variety of fearful war-like appliances, such as were never dreamt of in former ages. Surely all this has but one meaning--war!

Millions of money are being lavished on enormous ironclads, torpedoes and torpedo-boats, machine guns and magazine rifles, etc., and all this on a rapidly increasing scale for some years past; and it is awful to contemplate that all these gigantic preparations are expressly designed for the purpose of destroying human life and property! Never before in the history of the world has there been such a spectacle seen as is now presented to us in these extraordinary preparations for war in all the chief nations of the world.

To this we may add the statement recently made, that there are some twenty millions of men

fully armed in Europe, ready at a week's notice to plunge into all the horrors of a great international conflict, the dreadful consequences of which would be inconceivably appalling.

Yet with all these preparations going on increasingly, it is a singular fact that some of the chief rulers and statesmen of these nations are constantly asserting that all are intended for the promotion and maintenance of peace. We, however, know from scripture there never will be true and permanent peace on this earth until the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, comes to set up His kingdom of peace and righteousness. But wars will certainly come before that day, because they are clearly predicted in the word: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

In Revelation vi. 2-8 we see great future wars and their consequences foretold, under the symbols of four horses, which will probably take place soon *after* the church and the saints of the "first resurrection" are caught up to heaven, and seen there around the throne, as recorded in chapters iv. and v. The great and general war now so much talked about and expected, and sometimes spoken of as the "European Conflagration," may prove to be the precursor of or prelude to the war of Revelation vi., which may begin on the eve of the church's translation to heaven.

There is also a prevailing impression that this great and general war, now so universally expected, may arise out of the attempts of the

leading powers to settle the Eastern Question, which has an obvious connection with the future of Palestine and the Jews, so that its final settlement may be the instrumental means in God's hands of opening out the way for the Jews to return to their own land. Consequently this pending war sign, looked at in its bearings upon the Israelitish problem, becomes specially significant of these times, taken in connection with what is just now transpiring among the Jewish people—their persecutions on the Continent, and their yearnings to return to Palestine.

THIRD.

The Remarkable Movements among the Jewish People

The various movements that have been going on of late among the Jews, and the conduct of some of the continental nations towards them, constitute another very noteworthy sign of these times.

For centuries since their dispersion after the destruction of Jerusalem they have remained in a state of torpor or apparent indifference—as if in the apathy of despair—as to their future prospects as a nation.

But of late there has been a great awakening among them, a wonderful revival of a national feeling, and an intense desire to return to the land of their fathers. As an expression of this they have recently formed a great society called “Chevovi Zion,” or “Lovers of Zion,” which

seems to have for its object the rallying of their affections as a nation around their dearly-loved Zion in Jerusalem, with the reviving hope and expectation of soon returning thither, to be restored to the privileges and blessings they formerly enjoyed as God's favoured nation.

Another striking, and still more recent, manifestation of this remarkable awakening appears in the formation of a most extensive organisation among the Israelites, having ramifications and branches in all parts of the world, which goes by the name of the "Zionist Movement." Last year a great conference of Jews assembled in the city of Basle in Switzerland to promote and extend this newly-formed organisation, at which some two hundred delegates from different parts of the world appeared to represent an immense number of their brethren abroad.

The sole object of this great gathering was to consolidate the Zionist movement into a definite and practical society, for the purpose of consulting and arranging together as to the best measures that might be adopted to secure the end in view—the national return of the Israelites to Palestine. During the several meetings held the utmost enthusiasm was displayed, with reference to the one object before them, such as has never been witnessed before since the days of their dispersion. Such a marvellous awakening, after nearly two thousand years of torpor (although it is entirely a political movement), must have an immensity of meaning for all who carefully read

the prophetic word, and have eyes to see the trend of present events.

In addition to this thousands of Jews are now gradually wending their way to Palestine in small bands from time to time, to engage in agricultural and other pursuits, while some flourishing little colonies have already been established by them in different localities. Daily trains also now run regularly from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and another line is projected to run further north, from the Mediterranean *viâ* the Jordan valley to Damascus.

Another noteworthy sign is the fact that thousands of New Testaments in Hebrew are now being read with avidity and earnestness by a great many Jews on the Continent as well as in England and Palestine; while not a few are converted to Christianity.

Surely this preliminary stir among the "dry bones" cannot be other than a direct movement from God acting on the hearts of His ancient people, in order to prepare them for their final restoration to His favour, and to their inheritance in the land of Canaan.

When Jehovah in His providential dealings with mankind begins to move in some special way, we may be sure that there will be a steady and certain advance, until all His purposes are fully accomplished.

So that if God is indeed now providentially moving on the hearts of Israel, in turning their affections once more to their much-loved Zion, and calling on them to be ready to arise and

possess their inheritance, we may be sure that great and wonderful events are impending in the East, and Europe as well, to open out their way into the Holy Land. It will be the Red Sea of difficulties over again, opening to its depths for them to pass over, after which the mighty waves will return and swallow up all their enemies.

The excellent Jewish Mission at Mildmay Park, in addition to its great evangelical work, is continually sending forth a large amount of most interesting information, in numerous books and pamphlets, concerning the movements of these peculiar people, which is well worth the attention of prophetic students.

But the most extraordinary movement among the Jews is that which was commenced a few years ago, and is still conducted by Mr. Joseph Rabinowitch, a pious and devoted Jew, residing in Kischineff, in South Russia. While trying to solve the problem of the return of his people to their own land, and by a diligent examination of scripture, he was marvellously led to see that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they rejected and slew, was indeed the true Messiah, and that now if they—the Jews—confessed their sin in rejecting Him, He, the risen One in heaven, who has the key of Palestine, would speedily open the land for their national return. Thousands of Jews have already accepted his testimony and are now in his following, waiting earnestly for their restoration by Jesus, who is now their sole hope of deliverance and final blessing in their own land.

One peculiar feature of this movement is, that while they accept Jesus as their Messiah and coming King, they still retain their Jewish position and religion, and do not wish to be known as Christians, but simply Jews, as they have ever been. As they thus do not accept the essential principles and doctrines of Christianity, they could not, of course, be regarded as Christians—a title they themselves do not wish to adopt. They may be true Israelites after the Jewish model, with their hopes centred upon an earthly kingdom—according to Old Testament prophecies—and be earnestly longing for their Messiah (whom they now say will be Jesus) to come and reign over them on the earth, but this is entirely different from the *heavenly* hope that Christians connect with the coming of Christ. Therefore they cannot be looked upon as in God's testimony on the earth at the present time; for the true church of God, as the exponent of the truths of Christianity, is the one and only testimony owned of God in this dispensation. There never could be two such dissimilar testimonies as Christianity and Judaism owned of God on the earth at the same time.

In scripture we have frequent references to a certain *remnant* of Israelites, who will, towards the close of the present dispensation, return to Palestine—in unbelief as to Christianity—to set up their temple worship in Jerusalem, which will be recognised by God in a preliminary way, preparatory to their fuller restoration a little later

on. "Measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein" (Rev. xi. 1), seems to indicate this recognition.

In Revelation xii. 17 these Israelites are alluded to as "the remnant of her seed" (*i.e.*, of the woman, or nation of Israel), "which keep the commandments of God, and *have the testimony of Jesus.*"

This godly remnant of Jews will be most prominent actors in the day of tribulation that is coming, as preachers of the "Gospel of the kingdom," and will be owned of God as His testimony on the earth in those dark days; while many of them (referred to in Revelation vi. 9 as the "souls under the altar," and in Revelation xi. 3, 7 as the witnesses) will be "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."

In view of these future events concerning Israel, that which gives the present movement among the Jews a special significance is that it appears to be a providential foreshadowing of the remnant who will be found during the day of tribulation as faithful witnesses for God, whose circumstances will be similar to those of their brethren of the present day, both being of the Jewish race, and having the same "testimony of Jesus." Such a fact as Jews having the testimony of Jesus has never been hitherto known among them, and must be regarded as a very remarkable change, when we consider their past history.

Moreover, this movement, pointing so strikingly

as it does to some of the events of the coming tribulation, appears to forcibly indicate the nearness of that day. And if that be so, how much nearer the rapture which must take place before the day of tribulation.

The downtrodden children of Israel have certainly had a long and dreary night of suffering and persecution; but to those who really and true-heartedly look for the Lord Jesus to come as their Messiah and Deliverer that bright morning alluded to by the watchman will (after the very short interval of "Jacob's trouble") assuredly come before long, and bring that fulness of joy and blessing so glowingly described by all their prophets.

FOURTH.

The evident Increase and Prevalence of Scepticism.

The spirit of doubt and questioning incredulity is manifestly spreading rapidly, and insidiously permeating society generally.

The evidences of this, together with the new and peculiar forms which scepticism is taking in these last days, are so often commented upon in the public journals, that it would be superfluous to dwell largely on the subject, with which all the readers of current literature must be more or less familiar.

For my present purpose it will be sufficient just to mention briefly some of the leading and more recent forms which the hydra-headed mon-

ster infidelity is assuming in these closing days of the nineteenth century.

(1) EVOLUTION. This daring and most subtle form of erroneous teaching has made tremendous strides since it was first announced by Darwin in 1859.

At first its found an entrance and spread its poisonous breath among the learned schoolmen and scientific classes; but as time rolls on we find it steadily advancing and taking a firm hold on society, especially among intelligent and educated people, to a large extent. Many of our chief seminaries, colleges and universities are considerably leavened with the germs of this delusive theory, while not a few of our learned professors and teachers have not only accepted this absurd hypothesis of evolution, but frequently make use of it as the basis or groundwork of their lectures and writings on natural history and science generally, as if it were a certain and well-established fact! And more astonishing still is it to find that many ministers, as well as laymen in the churches, actually approve and commend it, and stoutly maintain that it has been proved to be a fixed and fundamental principle of creation!

What, the reader may ask, is this captivating theory that has had such a potent influence on the literature of the day, and on the minds of so many learned philosophers?

In reply to this question every true and loyal heart who believes in the infallible word of God is bound to say that this specious theory of

modern days is, in its main contention, a distinct and *daring denial* of certain important and fundamental truths of scripture.

Or, in other words, that the account given in the Book of Genesis of the creation of the world *is not true!*

That in fact God did not (as the Bible says He did) create all the animals separately: *i.e.*, each class or species of creatures "after their kind" individually, as so explicitly stated in Genesis i. 21-25, where the words "AFTER THEIR KIND" are emphatically repeated seven times. But that God (so say these vain philosophers) many millions of years ago created a minute germ, or several such germs of material life, which had *in themselves* some latent *physical power* of expansion or development, amounting in fact to actual *self-creating energy* when acted upon by the *physical* laws of the surrounding matter or "environment," in which they happened to be placed. So that these germs or minute particles of matter, in the simplest forms of seeds or cells, by gradually developing (during many long ages), apart *entirely from all intelligent control or direction*, have at length produced all the great variety of animals—even including man himself—that now exist on this globe! A most astounding and monstrous conclusion. Yet these are the absurd speculations indulged in by the pretentious philosophers in these degenerate days, who "professing themselves to be wise they become fools." (Rom. i. 22.) And one cannot but be amazed at

the temerity of these false teachers, who, by their oppositions of science, falsely so called, set at nought, and indeed flatly deny and contradict, God's holy word by propagating such a preposterous doctrine as evolution.

In all this, however, they are fulfilling the prediction given in 2 Timothy iv. 4 as to the last days: "They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." How different all this is from the simple, beautiful and satisfactory experience of a true believer's faith: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Heb. xi. 3.)

(2) HIGHER CRITICISM. This is another extraordinary form of scepticism that has recently sprung up among certain theologians, Bible students and expositors, in which the most daring attacks on the inspiration of scripture are persistently made. All sorts of strange and fanciful theories, and quibbles about words, with a great parade of learning, are deliberately employed by them to call in question the authenticity of the Bible. For example—that the books of the Bible were not written by those whose names they bear, nor yet at the times specified; that certain portions plainly given as prophetic statements are not prophecy at all, but history written after the events had occurred; and that the Book of books, which has withstood the wicked onslaughts of carping infidels for centuries, is full of inaccu-

racies and contradictions, and therefore not the wholly inspired and infallible word of God that it professes to be!

Referring to this impious and destructive criticism a recent writer truly states: "Histories and prophecies to which Christ and the writers of the New Testament appealed as of decisive authority are now put aside as no longer reliable; while the question has already been debated in church journals whether our children ought to be taught at all the histories of the Old Testament."

Thus in their false and daring perversions of the sacred scriptures—presented in the most subtle and insinuating manner—they endeavour to undermine the very foundations of truth, on which all our present joys and hopes, as well as our future prospects, wholly depend.

But the most astounding part of all this is that many of those who are thus engaged in trying to fritter away God's word are professed teachers and dignitaries of the church, some of whom are the appointed and paid defenders of the very Book they are helping to destroy!

Thus they are remarkably verifying the words of Peter with reference to the last days: "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies." (2 Pet. ii. 1.)

There are also many other pernicious forms of scepticism that are not only increasing rapidly, but becoming bolder and more pronounced in their opposition to truth every day—such as agnosticism, positivism, socialism or sociology.

and materialism, etc.—all indicative of the evil days now upon us and precursors of still worse days after the removal of the church.

FIFTH.

Spiritualism and Theosophy.

The sudden revival of these old-world pagan abominations, which have advanced with such marvellous strides of late, furnish us with one of the most unmistakable signs of the closing days of this age and a very distinct fulfilment of prophecy: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (1 Tim. iv. 1.) These infernal and soul-destroying delusions of spiritualism and theosophy have been so much referred to and commented upon for some years past, and have thus become more or less familiar to all, that a detailed description of them is not necessary in this short sketch. But in looking at this awful sign of these latter days we seem to be brought face to face, as it were, into the very presence of the Satanic "prince of this world," and all his terrible host of malignant demons, who appear to be now again courting familiarity with deluded human beings, as in former ages. In scripture this awful and wicked connection of evil spirits with mankind is set forth under the various names of witchcraft, enchantment, soothsaying and divination, etc.; while the dupes of all this

abomination (or *mediums* as they would now be called) are alluded to as wizards, witches or persons possessed by evil or familiar spirits, who, according to the law of Moses, were to be stoned to death. "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them." (Lev. xx. 27.)

Theosophy, borrowed from Eastern Buddhism, seems to be a more refined and abstruse or mystical form of this Satanic delusion, specially designed by our crafty enemy to suit the tastes of the learned, or more highly-educated classes. But in whatever form these terrible delusions appear, they are evidently a masterpiece of Satan's subtle wiles to delude and ruin precious souls. For while the demons are entering into familiar intercourse with the so-called mediums—in answer to their own solicitations—they lyingly tell their dupes that they are the spirits of their departed relatives or friends, or some persons of note who once had lived on this earth.

By this ingenious but diabolical device these lying demons—posing, of course, as angels of light—lead their wretched victims into strong delusion to believe a lie. Furthermore, the present-day operations of the evil spirits are but a prelude to, and preparation for, a still more extensive campaign afterwards, during the coming day of tribulation, which we find so graphically described in Revelation xvi. 13, 14. "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles,

which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

In these dreadful facts of spiritualism—clearly the teachings of devils—coming so prominently before us continually, we cannot fail to discern a most startling sign of the times, and the nearness of the approaching end. And in the gloom of these Satanic shadows we may well repeat the cry, "Watchman, what of the night, what of the night?"

SIXTH.

Lawlessness and Insubordination.

One of the most conspicuous features that makes itself so glaringly and offensively apparent in these days is the spirit of lawlessness, which has been growing immensely of late.

The various manifestations of this perverse and evil spirit may be briefly summarised as follows:—

(1) A restless discontent among the masses as to their position in society, or their circumstances of life generally.

(2) A growing dislike to submit to control of any kind—disobedience and insubordination.

(3) A craving for positions of power or supremacy, and rule over their fellows.

(4) Dislike of, and opposition to, the constituted authorities and laws of the land.

(5) A reckless disposition to resort to violence and outrage to accomplish their selfish purposes.

Sad exhibitions of these unholy feelings are constantly occurring everywhere, in distressing conflicts between capital and labour, as seen in numerous and oft-recurring strikes, etc., riots and violent opposition to governments and rulers, diabolical bomb outrages and destruction of life and property, with endless wranglings and disputes, which are the cause of much hardship and misery to many communities.

All these appear to be the fruits of a degrading democracy which have developed during recent years into the most unprecedented forms of daring and defiance, and which have become so notorious as to be almost looked upon as an integral part of the existing state of things.

Moreover, we find that some of the most reckless and desperate of these democratic malcontents have actually banded together to organise secret societies for the deliberate purpose of opposing and upsetting all the constituted laws of established society!

Some of the most prominent of these are familiarly known by the names of Communists, Social Democrats, Nihilists and Anarchists, etc., who are a most disturbing and disintegrating element throughout the whole of Europe at the present time. And the fact that this deplorable state of things is distinctly foretold in scripture makes it another very significant sign of these last days. "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers.

disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. . . . Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Tim. iii. 1-4 and 13.)

"Them that . . . despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." (2 Pet. ii. 10 and Jude 8.)

But it is in the Book of Daniel that we have a most remarkable and striking prediction of this latter-day development. In the great image of chapter ii., which represents the four successive Gentile kingdoms that should exist from the time of Nebuchadnezzar down to the time of the end, we see these graphically set forth under the symbols of gold, silver, brass and iron. And when we come to the last, the iron (the Roman power), we find a most incongruous element introduced, that does not appear in any of the other parts of the image, namely, the "MIRY CLAY." This is very specially noted and described thus: "Thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly,

broken [or brittle]. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." (Dan. ii. 41-43.)

What could this dividing and brittleness-producing element of miry clay be but the lawless democracy we have been considering, notoriously an element of weakness and trouble in all the European nations at the present time? No more appropriate symbols than iron and clay—that can never combine—could be employed to illustrate the antagonism that exists between the ruling powers and this disintegrating democracy which has so prominently come to the front of late years and which is a constant source of disturbances, conflicts and serious riots in almost every country.

Democracy of some sort or other has doubtless existed for ages, but never has it appeared in such hideous forms, nor has it spread so extensively and simultaneously among all nations, as in these last days.

Now the point of importance here—while looking at the clay in the image as one special sign of the present times—is to note that the mixture of iron and clay is only seen in the *last stage of the last Gentile kingdom*, i.e., in the feet and toes, and that its presence there distinctly marks the very *end* of the Gentile nations, as the feet and toes mark the end of the image. For the history of the "times of the Gentiles" finally closes when

it has fully arrived at this last stage, symbolised by the mixture of iron and clay.

Then the next thing to happen, as we see from this wonderful prophecy, will be the falling of the mighty stone, that shall smite the image upon the feet of iron and clay and break the whole image into pieces.

Therefore, while thus recognising the clay element as the symbol of the lawlessness which is now so obviously displayed before our eyes, we are irresistibly led to the conclusion by this democratic sign that the tremendous crisis indicated by the smiting of the stone on the feet of the image (coming of the Lord to judge the nations, Matt. xxv. 31, 32, and Rev. xix. 11-21) cannot be far off. Then again, if that event be near, how much nearer still must the rapture be that is to precede it! For it is plainly indicated in the prophetic word that the first resurrection and the rapture are to take place some time—a few years at least—before the Lord comes to smite and destroy the nations with the sharp sword that goeth out of His mouth. (Rev. xix. 15.)

SEVENTH.

The Decadence and Down Grade of the Church Generally.

The decline of spirituality and of real heartfelt devotion to Christ, the lack of true faithful testimony to His word and the interests of His

kingdom, are becoming more painfully evident every day, all of which may be regarded as a very marked sign of the approaching end of the church's history on the earth, as foreshadowed in Revelation iii. 15-18. The many ways in which this increasing departure from primitive Christianity and the ways of God, as revealed in His word, have taken place, must be apparent to all who have eyes to see, and who take the scriptures alone as their standard of truth and righteousness.

We will only allude for a moment to some of the most obvious. To begin with, let us look at the astounding fact that in these days when the Bible appears to be so much read and taught there should be found many ministers and teachers (not to speak of the vast number of laymen who follow them) in the professing church who are actually endeavouring to undermine—intentionally or otherwise—the very foundations of the christian faith, for in many of their sermons, lectures and writings we find these false teachers—nominally members of the church—persistently ignoring, depreciating, or directly attacking the absolutely essential doctrines of Christianity, such as the divinity of the Son of God, the atonement of Christ and the plenary inspiration of the scriptures.

Witness, too, the rapid advance of the heresy of Unitarianism, that is now so insidiously finding its way into many churches where formerly it would not be tolerated for a moment, the con-

stant efforts to disparage or set at naught the all-important doctrine of the atonement and the endeavours of the higher critics to discredit or wholly destroy the divine authority of God's holy word. The deliberate attacks upon these three fundamental doctrines of Christianity constitute a very special feature of these days of religious declension and a solemn sign of what may be rapidly approaching.

"If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?" (Psa. xi. 3.)

They can only hope that the coming of the Lord may be very near to take them out of the professing church's errors and failures.

But what shall the end be of these detractors of God's truth?

Hear what the prophetic word says: "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Pet. ii. 1.)

Moreover, if these essential doctrines—the very life and soul of the religion of Jesus Christ—be discredited or set at naught, what will be left? Nothing but a dead carcase of formalism. It is, indeed, this cold and lifeless formalism—so manifestly seen in the proud, self-righteous and sentimental morality and the showy ceremonials of ritualism around us—that is already extinguishing the light and depressing the power of all vital religion and true godliness in the churches.

To all this we must also add the extraordinary

flood of WORLDLINESS that has swept over the churches of late; whilst the baleful tide of this worldly influence appears to be rising higher and higher every day as time goes on. Everywhere we hear of amusements, musical concerts, and even some imitations of theatricals, provided by ministers and church officials to attract the people, as they say, to their churches! What a sad descent to the dead level of the world's frivolities!

The good old Puritans were satisfied with *one* attraction, and that was Christ alone. "If I be lifted up . . . will draw all men to me."

With all these sad developments before our eyes, we see the last stage of the church's history on the earth; that marks the close of the present dispensation.

For in Laodicea we see added to lukewarmness (the loss of love and devotion to Christ) the proud, boasting spirit of independence (most hateful to God), which says, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," while the sentence pronounced by the Lord on their deplorable condition is, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

We see nothing of the church on earth after Laodicea, for then comes the day of tribulation and all the judgments of the seals, trumpets and vials, ending with the "battle of that great day of God Almighty." (See Rev. chaps. vi. to xix. inclusive.)

EIGHTH.

Great Awakening among Christians with regard to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the early days of the church all believers were full of the subject of the Lord's coming and were constantly announcing it with great joy and enthusiasm.

They were fresh in the remembrance of the precious promise the Lord had given them, "I will come again and receive you unto myself." (John xiv. 3.)

The Epistles and the Apocalypse also greatly strengthened and confirmed them in this glorious hope. And the Thessalonians particularly seemed to have caught Paul's enthusiasm on the subject, as noticed by Paul himself in 1 Thessalonians i. 9, 10: "How ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven." Plainly this was the settled hope and daily expectation of the primitive church. But after a while, as the church began to fall away from its first love and steadfastness and became more and more identified with the world, this blessed hope gradually faded from the minds of the saints, and then ceased to be taught. Later on, and especially during the long and terrible "Dark Ages," the second coming of the Lord was completely lost to the church as a whole.

From that time up to a comparatively recent period all the passages in scripture relating to the

second coming of the Lord were interpreted to mean His coming for the saints *individually* at their *death*, or, in a general way, to the last day of judgment at the end of the world.

Their only hope was to "die the death of the righteous" and go to heaven. Doubtless it is a blessed thing to die in the Lord and to be in paradise with Him, as millions of saints have realised who have already died and gone to heaven. But surely it is a much brighter and more cheering prospect to be caught up in new celestial and glorified bodies to meet the Lord in the air without dying, just as it was more blessed for Elijah to be translated to heaven without passing through death.

Still many Christians cling to the old idea that the *only* way of entrance into heaven is through death; but this is certainly not the teaching of the New Testament, even though Hebrews ix. 27 may be quoted to prove it: "It is appointed unto men once to die"; for it should be noted it does not say *all* men are appointed once to die. It is true Christians are continually dying and going to heaven, and any one of us may die at any moment; but it is also scripturally true that many persons shall never die and be buried, but shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye and caught up to meet the Lord. (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.)

About sixty years ago a few very earnest and devoted Christians were led by the Spirit of God to consider the subject of the second advent, and after diligently searching the scriptures they

happily recovered and adopted the original truth as it was taught by the apostles, namely, the personal return of the Lord Jesus for His saints, the living of whom should be changed without dying, and caught up to meet Him, as described in 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18. They then began earnestly to proclaim this recovered truth, and many thousands during the last fifty years have gladly received it, and ever thank God for the services of those faithful men who first brought this blessed truth prominently before the church after it had been lost or obscured for centuries.

Then again, about five or six years ago, another very remarkable awakening with reference to this important subject has taken place, and since then has been spreading with wonderful rapidity all over Great Britain and the United States.

So pronounced, indeed, has this awakening become that it is regarded by many as quite phenomenal, and a very distinct movement of the Spirit of God, impressing on the hearts of believers the conviction of the imminent *nearness* of this great event.

For the last three or four years numerous conferences have been held in different towns of England and Scotland to call attention to this subject by leading students of prophecy—ministers and laymen of different denominations—who are deeply impressed with the thought of the Lord's coming soon for His saints, and the importance of being prepared for it. At these interesting conferences many excellent and most edifying

addresses have been delivered on all that is revealed in scripture concerning the second advent, while the burden of their earnest cry has been sounding forth continually, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh."

Two monthly magazines are expressly devoted to the publication of these addresses and other communications relating to this all-important theme. Books, pamphlets and tracts have also been issuing from the press on prophecy and kindred subjects in far greater numbers than has ever been known before, and every month the number seems to be increasing.

What, we might stop to inquire, is the meaning of all this? Surely there can be but one answer to this question, namely, that it is a very noteworthy DIVINE MOVEMENT, a gracious awakening direct from God Himself, who, by His holy Spirit, is now impressing on the hearts of believers that the momentous event of the Lord's second coming is drawing very near.

This divine awakening is what might be expected now, when we remember what took place on the eve of the Lord's first coming. At that time there were many devout saints in Jerusalem and elsewhere "waiting for the consolation of Israel," the Messiah, such as Simeon, Anna and others. These were unquestionably led by the Holy Spirit to believe that the blessed Messiah—the hope of Israel—was soon to appear in their midst. For of Simeon it is said, "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not

see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." We see in Luke ii. the interesting account of Simeon and Anna the prophetess, and what took place in the temple on that occasion.

A divine premonition had been given to them of a great impending event, which they at once heartily believed and accepted as a direct communication from heaven; and in the full power of implicit faith they were waiting daily for its realisation.

In like manner the "wise men" in the east (very probably Israelites, descendants of the ten tribes carried into Assyria by Shalmaneser, 2 Kings xvii. 2-6) were distinctly informed by God of the birth of the King of the Jews; and a wonderful sign in the form of a miraculous star was sent to guide them to the very place where their King was born.

Thus God, in His marvellous love and condescension, has been pleased in all ages to make known His ways and counsels to His servants. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. xviii. 17.) "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts to the children of Israel (Psa. ciii. 7.) "He revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets." (Amos iii. 7.)

As we find, moreover, that undeviating uniformity, as well as unchangeable wisdom, ever characterises all the purposes and movements of the infinitely wise God, we are naturally led to conclude that, if He gave such very plain intimations to His servants of the *first coming* of Christ, He would also give some preliminary indications to

His faithful servants of the *second coming*. This we believe He is now doing. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." (1 Thess. v. 4.)

Because the Holy Spirit is given to all true believers "to guide them into all truth, and *shew them things to come*." (John xvi. 13.)

The wonderful Book of Revelation is a striking exemplification of this fact, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." (Rev. i. 1.)

Many, therefore, rightly see in this late remarkable awakening of Christians to the truth of the second coming of Christ the Spirit of God very distinctly impressing the thought on their hearts, because it is reasonably assumed that the great event is now drawing very near, while these saints in their simple faith are hearing afresh in their hearts the voice of Jesus now saying more emphatically than ever, "Behold, I come quickly."

One happy result of this divine movement is also seen in many believers giving earnest attention to the exhortation in 2 Peter i. 19 by giving heed to the more sure word of prophecy, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." And this day star—the "bright and morning star"—that just precedes the glorious morning that is soon coming, is now manifestly arising in the hearts of many true Christians; and great is their joy and rejoicing in consequence of it.

This true premonitory awakening among Christians should therefore be regarded as pre-eminently the most significant sign that the day of Christ's coming for His saints is, indeed, near at hand.

Because it is a direct movement of the Spirit of God in the hearts of believers, not only enlightening them as to the nearness of the coming, but also quickening the affections and the longing desires of the bride—the church—for the speedy coming of her beloved Bridegroom.

Consequently hundreds of waiting and watching saints are now earnestly praying, in response to the last words in His revelation, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

With all these telling signs passing before our eyes, we should indeed be deeply impressed with the solemnity of the moment we have come to, even the very eve of the momentous crisis, foretold and expected for centuries, when thousands of Christians shall be changed in a moment and translated to heaven, without dying, with millions of risen saints of the first resurrection, followed by stupendous changes, fearful judgments and vast consequences to the whole world at large, of which we have only some brief outlines in the prophetic word, and which are therefore beyond our present conception.

Well then may we anxiously repeat the cry, "Watchman, what of the night? what of the night?" and listen again, with attentive interest, to the cheering reply, "THE MORNING COMETH."

COMING EVENTS.

THE three successive and stupendous series of events that are to precede the millennium will be the following:—

First. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ
FOR His saints, often called the Rapture.
The first stage of His coming.

Second. The events of the day of tribulation.

Third. The coming of Christ WITH His saints,
and the judgment of the nations. The
second stage of His coming.

These three great series of events will be considered in the above order, as they are given to us in the scriptures.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST GREAT EVENT.

The Coming of the Lord for His Saints— The Rapture.

THIS grand and glorious event will be the first stage of His coming, to call all His saints—the risen and the changed ones together—to meet Him in the air; while at the second stage, after the day of tribulation, He will come to the earth to judge the nations and set up His kingdom.

The first coming is never mentioned in the Old Testament, for the obvious reason that it would be quite out of place to mention it prophetically before Christ had come to accomplish His great work of redemption, and had risen from the dead, and had ascended into heaven, and before the descent of the Holy Ghost and the formation of the church.

Now let us note what the scriptures say about this great event, for the New Testament is full of direct and indirect references to it.

The following are some of the leading and more direct passages that announce the wondrous fact of the Lord's coming again to this world:—

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” (1 Thess. iv. 16.)

“The Bridegroom came.” (Matt. xxv. 10.)

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself." (John xiv. 3.)

"Jesus saith unto him, If he tarry till I come." (John xxi. 22.)

"Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. i. 7.)

"Ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. xi. 26.)

"They that are Christ's at his coming." (1 Cor. xv. 23.)

"To wait for his Son from heaven." (1 Thess. i. 10.)

"In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming." (1 Thess. ii. 19.)

"I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23.)

"We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering unto him." (2 Thess. ii. 1.)

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 13.)

"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.)

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. . . . Stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." (James v. 7, 8.)

"Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming." (1 John ii. 28.)

"But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." (Rev. ii. 25.)

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. iii. 11.)

"Behold, I come quickly. Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. xxii. 7, 20.)

From these plain and emphatic scriptures we see that the Lord Jesus will assuredly come again in person to this world, first of all to our air and a little later on to the earth itself.

The main particulars of this transcendent event comprise four distinct parts:--

1. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God." (1 Thess. iv. 16.)

2. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. iv. 16.)

3. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.)

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

We will now consider this sublime subject under the above four divisions as set forth so emphatically in those beautiful and precious passages 1 Thesalonians iv. and 1 Corinthians xv., in which we have the greatest and most wonderful revelation ever given by God to man, with the

exception of Christ's glorious work of redemption, which, of course, transcends all that has ever been revealed, and which is the ground upon which all other revelations are given.

FIRST PART.

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven."

He has been seated at the right hand of the majesty on high for centuries, waiting patiently for this very day, when He shall come forth with delight to gather His own beloved followers into His presence, as He foretold, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

He will come with a commanding "shout," accompanied by two other celestial sounds, "the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," such startling and marvellous sounds as have never been heard in this world, which will awaken in an instant every true Christian to the solemn yet joyous reality of the Lord's presence in the air above. The thrill of delight that will at that happy moment fill every believer's heart, when they hear the enrapturing voice of their beloved Lord and Master calling them up into His glorious presence, will doubtless infinitely surpass all that we can at present conceive.

The voice of God spake on Sinai amid thunders, lightnings and earthquakes when Jehovah announced His holy laws to Israel, and the people trembled and entreated that "the word should

not be spoken to them any more." But what a contrast this scene will be to that when the loving voice of Jesus will be heard calling and empowering all His followers to rise immediately from the earth to meet Him in the air! It may be in a similar manner as John in his wonderful vision heard a voice saying unto him, "Come up hither."

We have no assurance that these sounds—especially the commanding shout of the Lord—will be heard by any but true believers, though possibly the unconverted world may hear some sounds at the time, which they will attribute, it may be, to distant thunder, as the people did when God the Father spake to Jesus, and they said "it thundered, or an angel spake to him" (John xii. 29), and as the men who were with Paul at his conversion "saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." (Acts xxii. 9.)

According to Roman military regulations the first trumpet call was to *prepare*, the second to *fall in line*, and the third or last trumpet call to *march forward*.

The "trump of God," in the passage before us, is doubtless the same as "the last trump" of 1 Corinthians xv. 52, and both refer to the very same occasion, the Lord's coming, when the third or last signal trumpet will be sounded to *march forward* into the presence of Christ. The first and second trumpets, in the numerous calls and admonitions of scripture, have been, and still

are, sounding more loudly than even to *prepare* and be *ready* for Christ's coming, and we are now, or ought to be, waiting every day and hour for the last trumpet call, summoning us to rise and meet our "chief Captain" in the air.

This last trump is not the same, nor has it any connection with the "seventh trumpet" mentioned in Revelation xi. 15, which relates to another and totally different crisis, that is to occur at, or near, the *end* of the day of tribulation. The last trump we are now considering is to sound *before* the day of tribulation begins.

SECOND PART.

"*The dead in Christ shall rise first.*" (1 Thess. iv. 16.)

"*The resurrection of the just.*" (Luke xiv. 14.)

"*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life.*" (John v. 28, 29.)

"*For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.*" (1 Cor. xv. 52.)

This will be the *first part* of the first resurrection, for there will be a *second* part towards the end of the tribulation, when the martyred saints of Revelation vi. 9-11, together with the slain witnesses of Revelation xi. 12, shall be raised and caught up into heaven. "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them.

Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them."

These two companies of martyrs of the day of tribulation—probably some of the godly remnant of Jewish saints—are seen in Revelation xx. 4 with all the Old Testament saints and all the saints of the christian dispensation (who will have been raised a few years before them) as risen and all together in heaven, thus:—

First company. "I saw thrones and they sat upon them"—all Old Testament and christian saints from Adam down to the day of the resurrection mentioned in 1 Thessalonians iv. 16, and included in the words, "The dead in Christ shall rise first," together with all the living saints changed on that day. This is the first division of the first resurrection.

Second company. "The souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus."

These are the same company previously mentioned in Revelation vi. 9 as the "souls under the altar of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."

Third company. "Those who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." These are the witnesses of Revelation xi. 3, 7, 11, 12.

These two last companies will constitute the saints of the *second* part of the first resurrection near the end of the day of tribulation; while the whole three companies are included in the follow-

ing fifth and sixth verses (Rev. xx.) in the words, "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power."

For many centuries a prevalent opinion has existed, and is still held by many, that there will be but *one* general resurrection of the good and the evil at the same time, which will take place at the end of the world, on the one last day of judgment, as it is styled. But this idea is conclusively proved from the scriptures already quoted and others to be entirely erroneous; and that, on the contrary, there will be *two* distinct resurrections, wholly different in character and in the time of the occurrence, as well as in the after-consequences of each of them.

It is true that the two resurrections are referred to in the same passage of scripture, namely, in John v. 28, 29, thus: "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Again, the resurrection of the two classes is mentioned in Acts xxiv. 15: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."

In like manner the final destiny of the righteous and the unrighteous is announced in the same verse (Matt. xxv. 46): "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

There is, however, no intimation in these passages that these two different resurrections and judgments will take place at the same time. But seeing that these statements appear in the *same verses*, it has been assumed that the two events they refer to must necessarily come to pass at the *same period* of time. And no doubt the great error of the one general resurrection and judgment of the good and bad at the end of the world has arisen from this gratuitous assumption, conjoined with a most unaccountable negligence in not giving heed to so many other scriptures that directly contradict such a notion. That this loose method of interpretation is incorrect is clearly proved from the fact that we have many similar instances in the Bible in which prophetic events are inserted in the same passage whose fulfilment would occur at very different times with long intervals between them, such, for example, as Isaiah lxi. 2, where the "acceptable year of the Lord" and the "day of vengeance" are found in the *same verse*; while we know that the first *was fulfilled* at the time when Christ read the passage in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke iv. 21), while the second portion is *not yet fulfilled*. So that some two thousand years will have elapsed between these two prophetic events. Therefore the Lord did not read the words "day of vengeance" on that occasion. So, likewise, it will be with the two resurrections: the first—of the just—will take place before the tribulation, when the Lord comes; while the second—of the

evil—will not occur until after the millennium, or more than a thousand years later on. For that one passage alone in Revelation xx. 5 is quite sufficient in itself to settle conclusively the whole question of the two separate resurrections: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

Who, it may be asked, will be privileged to enjoy the transcendent blessedness of being raised from the dead on that grand occasion of the first resurrection?

Only true believers, those who are referred to in scripture as the "just": "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 14); the "worthy": "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead" (Luke xx. 35); those who die in the Lord: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev. xiv. 13); those who sleep, or have slept, in Jesus: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. iv. 14); "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. xv. 20.); those who are Christ's: "Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." (1 Cor. xv. 23.)

Thus all the millions of saints that have passed out of time into eternity during the past thousands of years, from the days of Adam and Eve up to the day when the resurrection will take place. will

suddenly come forth from their graves at the sound of the last trump, clothed in their glorious new bodies, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven . . . clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." (2 Cor. v. 2, 4.)

The fullest particulars of this sublime subject that we have in the Bible are given to us in that wonderfully plain and explicit chapter the fifteenth of First Corinthians, the main theme of the whole chapter being this first resurrection of the saints of God.

There we learn that the dead shall arise with celestial bodies; though originally sown in corruption, they shall be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (Vers. 40-44.) Moreover—oh, the marvellous thought of it!—their new bodies will then be like the body of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ when He rose from the dead. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (Ver. 49.)

THIRD PART.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.)

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." (Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

Though it is the common or general lot of mankind to die, as stated in Hebrews ix. 27, "It is appointed unto men once to die," yet it is not said that *all* should die. But, on the contrary, we are plainly told that *all shall not sleep*, or die, but be changed.

Thus we have the amazing revelation announced in God's word that all true Christians living on the earth when Christ comes—probably many thousands, if not millions—shall never die and be buried, but their bodies shall be changed in a moment into immortal and incorruptible bodies.

Immediately—probably the next moment—after the dead are raised the same omnipotent power of the Lord will go forth to effect this marvellous change of all true believers that may then be living in different parts of the world. Some in the remotest corners of the earth; some on the high seas in ships, some in the deep mines

of the earth; others again in the great cities and villages engaged in the active scenes of business; some, it may be, congregated in places of worship, and others in their family circles or wrapt in deep slumber at the midnight hour—wherever they may be found, not one will be left out or forgotten, for all at the same moment will instantly, in the twinkling of an eye, be transformed into bright celestial beings, and will realise at that happy moment that their poor frail bodies of humiliation have been entirely changed, from mortal to immortal and (most astounding of all) “FASHIONED LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY,” exalted thus, it may be, even to a higher position of glory than the holy angels of heaven. But what can we say concerning the nature of that marvellous transfiguration?

Natural bodies we know, but we are absolutely incapable of forming any idea of what spiritual bodies may be like. The whole subject is wrapt in mystery and beyond the range of all human conceptions. And though we read of our Lord's wonderful appearance after His resurrection, and hear Him saying: “Behold my hands and my feet, that is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” (Luke xxiv. 39), yet the matter still remains a profound mystery, while the very words just quoted rather tend to intensify than to explain it. And mystery it must ever remain until the moment we ourselves realise the change from the terrestrial to the celestial.

Our blessed Lord's glorious work of redemption included not only the redemption and salvation of the *souls* of believers, but of their *bodies* as well. All true Christians receive and rejoice in the salvation of their souls when they believe in and accept Christ's atoning work, but their bodies are not yet saved or delivered; therefore they are waiting for the full completion of all that Christ's work has procured for them, namely, the full redemption of their bodies, which they shall obtain at the Lord's coming, when He will change them into new glorified bodies like His own.

Believers are thus said to be "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." (Rom. viii. 23.) This will be the full consummation of Christ's redeeming work, for which He is also waiting till it be accomplished on that day when He comes for His saints, and when "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

In view of this consummation, Paul could also say: "For now is our salvation [of our bodies] nearer than when we believed." (Rom. xiii. 11.) If that crisis was considered near in his day, how must nearer must it be now. The same thought is expressed in Hebrews xi. 40: "That they [Old Testament saints] without us should not be made perfect." All the disembodied saints in heaven are *imperfect*, being "unclothed" spirits, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with their house from heaven." And as they and the saints of the latter days shall receive their new bodies at the same time, when Christ comes, it is thus

stated that *all* the saints, risen and changed, shall be *made perfect* on the same day and hour.

FOURTH PART.

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

As soon as the two great companies of the risen and living saints shall have been provided with their new celestial bodies they will immediately arise and ascend together from the earth in one vast and magnificent host of brightly arrayed saints to meet the Lord in the air, thus caught up instantly by His omnipotent hand into His divine and majestic presence.

In all God's wonderful dealings with this world and mankind heretofore there has never been witnessed anything like such a scene of surpassing splendour as will be presented on this notable day of the rapture of the saints. It will, we need scarcely add, be wholly unique, and a grand supernatural display of divine power, love and grace combined. The few pregnant words employed in scripture to set it forth give us only the main facts of this great event, leaving it to our imaginations to fill in the details of the grand picture.

But the more we ponder over its marvels the more do our highest thoughts fail to grasp its immensity or its sublime magnificence.

If the ascent of one saint—Elijah the prophet—was such a glorious sight to Elisha, as no doubt it was as he beheld him ascending in a chariot of fire and taken up by a whirlwind into heaven, what words can we find to express the superlative grandeur of this great ascent, when such an enormous host of transformed celestial beings will rise in their joyous flight from this little earth into the clouds and the vast expanse beyond, all intensely eager to behold their beloved Lord and Saviour, whose resplendent presence will immediately attract those millions of enraptured eyes and doubtless evoke the loudest hallelujahs of praise and adoration that will resound again and again throughout all the heavens above?

Nor can we at present form any adequate idea of the ineffable delight that will fill every heart of all those redeemed saints when they find themselves in His sublime presence and realise the fact that henceforth they are to be “for ever with the Lord.”

The Bridegroom will then receive His bride, who will enter with Him into the marriage (Matt. xxv. 10), called in Revelation xix. 9 “the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

No wonder the account of this great event in 1 Thessalonians iv. concludes with the consoling words, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words”!

The question is sometimes asked, Will these risen and changed saints be seen by those who are left on the earth? Reasoning from analogous

cases in the word, it might be inferred that some may appear in the world for a very short space of time and perhaps be seen ascending up into heaven as the Lord was seen ascending from the Mount of Olives by His disciples.

The two passages from which this inference might be drawn are Matthew xxvii. 52, 53: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many"; and Revelation xi. 12: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them." But considering the short description of this event given to us, in which there is no mention of the risen saints being seen, together with the rapidity that will probably mark the occurrence, it seems more likely that they will not be seen by those who are left behind. The knowledge of their departure will, however, be immediately known to the world by their sudden and miraculous disappearance out of the sight of those who may happen to be with them at the moment. And all who are acquainted with the Bible will then assuredly know that the long-expected rapture of the saints has actually taken place.

The suddenness and rapidity of this stupendous crisis—for the most part totally unexpected by the world at large—will indeed be a most startling and solemn occasion that cannot fail to produce

a tremendous convulsion all over the world, especially in lands where the scriptures are read and known. Naturally the effects of such an unprecedented and supernatural event will be immense on all classes of society, while these effects will no doubt be varied according to the circumstances, intelligence and moral condition of each class of persons.

To the vast millions of the heathen and followers of false religions in distant lands, who know nothing of Bible truth, the accounts of it received from civilised and christian nations will appear a strange, mysterious and incredible tale which they will not believe and will soon forget all about it. To the host of sceptics of Christendom the event will no doubt come as a startling surprise, which for a moment may somewhat stagger them, and appear to upset all their vain speculations; but, in all probability, it will not be long before they will endeavour to find the scientific cause of it, and, perhaps, in their usual blind delusion attribute the phenomenon to some mysterious operations of the occult sciences of theosophy and spiritism. To the countless numbers of indifferent and unbelieving worldlings, whose hearts are wholly engrossed with the things of this life and who care nothing for the revelations of God's word—though they may have often heard them in their churches and chapels—this great event will come as a tremendous shock, and very likely, in many instances, produce widespread consternation and alarm, heightened, it

may be, by harassing fears of impending and immediate judgments from heaven.

But to professing or nominal Christians, members, it may be, of the various churches—and they count by millions in Christendom—who by their self-righteous religiousness deceive themselves into the belief that they are true Christians (the great majority of whom do not even believe in the coming of the Lord at all, though so plainly set forth in 1 Thessalonians iv.), this sudden and unexpected coming of Christ will be to them, above all others, a most awful awakening and the occasion of intense alarm and overwhelming distress.

For when they discover, by the sudden disappearance of their friends and acquaintances, that the Lord has indeed come at last and taken His true saints to be with Him above and left *them* behind because they were not ready, we can imagine that their disappointment and deep anguish of heart will be terrible in the extreme.

The scenes of commotion, the heartfelt sorrow and the loud wailings, it may be, of the unbelieving, and consequently unprepared, professors of Christendom on that day of days, will be such as have never been witnessed before, when they find they have been *rejected* at the great and glorious coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The foolish virgins then, finding their lamps have gone out, and they not ready, while the door is being shut, will hear in reply to their agonising cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," the dread sentence of the

Bridegroom, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not!"

Although God, in His marvellous grace (as already observed), is now giving very distinct premonitions to His servants of the nearness of this great event, yet He has never told us the exact time when it will come to pass. That is God's secret, and will ever remain so until the very moment arrives. It is, therefore, very daring and presumptuous for any one to name the year, the month or the day when the Lord will come, in the face of the explicit statement of the Lord, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven." (Mark xiii. 32.) But we have the authority of the word for saying it may come at any moment; for the fact of this glorious event was given to be the *ever-present hope* of the church from the very beginning of the present christian dispensation. And we are instructed in scripture, over and over again, to be constantly waiting and watching for it. It is, moreover, the privilege and the pleasure of every true-hearted believer to say: "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." (Psa. cxxx. 6.)

The very last words in the Bible, the precious utterances of the blessed Saviour Himself, are "Surely I come quickly. Amen," to which His true, waiting saints are ever responding, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. xxii. 20.)

"That bright and blessed morn is near
When He, the Bridegroom, shall appear,
And call His bride away;
Her blessing then shall be complete,
When with her Lord she takes her seat
In everlasting day.

"The days and months are gliding past;
Soon shall be heard the trumpet's blast
Which wakes the sleeping saints;
The dead in Christ in glory rise,
When we with them shall reach the skies
Where Jesus for us waits.

"What wonder, joy, and glad surprise
Shall fill our hearts as thus we rise
To meet Him in the air,
To see His face, to hear His voice,
And in His perfect love rejoice,
Whose glory then we'll share!

"No more deferr'd our hope shall be,
No longer through a glass we'll see,
But clearly face to face;
We'll dwell with Jesus then above,
Whom absent we have learn'd to love,
Best samples of His grace.

"Oh, may this hope our spirits cheer
While waiting for our Saviour here :
He'll quickly come again.
Oh, may our hearts look for that day,
And to His word responsive say:
'Come, Jesus, Lord. Amen.'"

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND SERIES OF GREAT EVENTS THAT ARE COMING.

During the Day of Tribulation.

"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." (Dan. xii. 1.)

"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." (Jer. xxx. 7.)

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. xxiv. 21.)

THE history of the church on the earth finally closes with its last stage—Laodicea—in Revelation iii. 14–22, and the church is never seen again on the earth as such.

The next great event that naturally follows, as indirectly represented in the Book of Revelation, is the rapture, or the translation of all the risen and changed saints into heaven. Consequently in the two following chapters, Revelation iv. and v., we see the whole church, together with all the Old Testament saints, seated around the throne of God in heaven, symbolised by the "four and twenty elders clothed in white raiment, and on

their heads crowns of gold," worshipping God and the Lamb.*

Soon after the church has thus been translated to heaven a dark and terrible time of trouble and sore judgments shall come upon the world, as referred to in a general way in the three striking passages quoted from Daniel, Jeremiah and Matthew.

Though the distress of nations and the sufferings of all classes of society during this day of tribulation will be very great and unprecedented by reason of the judgments of heaven descending upon an ungodly world, we have good reason for believing that it will continue but a short time—probably not much more than about seven years—while the last half of this period will be the darkest and most awful time, and is therefore called the "Great Tribulation." The period of its duration we infer from the prophecy of the "seventy weeks" of Daniel ix. 24-27.

In that scripture we learn that from the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes (Neh. ii.), when he gave forth his commandment to Nehemiah to restore Jerusalem (B.C. 454), there

* In the threefold division of Revelation that John was instructed to write we have "the things thou hast seen, the things which are, and the things that are about to be after these." (Chap. i. 19.) First division, the person and glories of Christ are seen, as given in chapter i.; second, "things which are"—the history of the church in the seven addresses (chaps. ii. and iii.); and third, "the things after these"—the events of the day of tribulation and all that is recorded from chapter vi. to the end of the book.

should be a dispensational period of seventy weeks, comprising a series of specially predicted events in Jewish history down to the time of Christ's coming to establish His millennial kingdom. Each of these weeks is regarded as a period of seven years; therefore the whole seventy weeks would amount to 490 years ($70 \times 7 = 490$).*

In this prophecy we also find that these weeks—or sevens of years—are divided into three parts, thus: “seven weeks, three score and two weeks, and one week.” During the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, the city of Jerusalem was to be built by Nehemiah and his followers in troublous times, which was literally fulfilled. Then from that date to the time that Messiah should be

* Hebrew scholars tell us that the word in the original translated “weeks” is “sevens,” so that the exact reading in Daniel ix. 24 is “seventy sevens,” or seventy times seven, without intimating what period the sevens refer to. But it is rightly inferred from other parts of Daniel that the sevens mean seven years. Thus in Daniel iv. 32 the prophet says to Nebuchadnezzar, “Seven times shall pass over thee,” which is universally understood to mean that the king should be driven out from men with the wild beasts for seven years. Again, in Daniel vii. 25 and xii. 7 we have a period of time designated a “time, times, and a half,” a statement which is clearly proved from Revelation xii. 6, 14, xi. 2, 3 and xiii. 5 to be equivalent to 1260 days or forty-two months, *i.e.*, $3\frac{1}{2}$ *literal years*. Putting all these passages together, we have unquestionably a sound scriptural reason for inferring that the sevens mean sevens of *years*, and that the seventy times seven years comprise a period of 490 *literal years*. Consequently we have no warrant whatever from ~~this passage~~ for the erroneous year-day theory so much relied upon in prophetic calculations of late years.

cut off was to be sixty-two weeks, or 434 years. Adding these two periods together of seven and sixty-two, we have sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years ($69 \times 7 = 483$), from the going forth of the decree of Artaxerxes to build Jerusalem to the Messiah being cut off, which period of time was literally accomplished at the time of Christ's crucifixion. Since that day the *one last* or remaining week of seven years (separated from the other sixty-nine weeks) has been postponed for nearly nineteen centuries thus far, constituting the long interval of the present christian dispensation.

All these centuries between the end of the sixty-ninth week and the one last or seventieth week may be regarded as a parenthesis in the prophecy of the seventy weeks, an undefined interval of time, never directly mentioned in the Old Testament, during which the gospel of God's grace should be proclaimed and the christian church formed, and which should continue until the church shall be caught up into heaven.

Then immediately or very soon after that great event the long-suspended week of seven years will come on for fulfilment prior to, and immediately preceding, the millennium.

These last seven years will thus constitute the time of the day of tribulation to complete the fulfilment of the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy, which will be concluded at the end of the present age. This inference is also fully established by other considerations further on.

We have another remarkable fact stated in this

prophecy of the seventy weeks, having a **very** direct and special reference to the one last week of seven years, namely, that a certain prince of the people (the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem under Titus) shall come and make a covenant with the many—Jews, of course—for **ONE WEEK**.

The confirmation of that covenant will obviously be the *commencement* of the last one week, while the seven years for which the covenant is to be confirmed may be reasonably regarded as an indication of the time the day of tribulation is to continue, especially in view of several passages in Revelation xi., xii. and xiii., relating to the extraordinary events of the last half of the week, or three and a half years, which lead down to, and culminate in, the events that introduce the millennium, as described in the prophecy of the seventy weeks, thus: “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.” (Dan. ix. 24.)

This prince will not be the Antichrist,* as so

* All the names of, and references to, these two notable persons in scripture:—

THE PRINCE.

1. Little horn. (Dan. vii. 8, 24, 25.)
2. A king of fierce countenance. (Dan. viii. 23.)

THE ANTICHRIST.

1. Wilful king. (Dan. xi. 36; Jer. iv. 9; Isa. xxx. 33; lvii. 9.)
2. Wicked prince of Israel. (Ezek. xxi. 25.)

often erroneously stated, for he will be a Gentile of the Roman people and a great military man, whereas the Antichrist will certainly be a Jew and a priest or sacerdotal character, whose chief sphere of influence and power will be in Palestine, with Jerusalem as his main centre.

The prince shall be a mighty conqueror (Rev. vi. 2), and, as the little horn of Daniel vii. 8, 24, "he shall subdue three kings" and become the leader and head of the ten confederated kingdoms of the revived Roman Empire.

From all that is said of him it may also be fairly assumed that in his many conquests he will take possession of Palestine (after the subjugation of Turkey), and that the chief stipulation on his part in the covenant he will make with the Jews will be to give them back their own land, to which they will then return in large numbers to possess their own country, under his protection at first.

In connection with this subject of the prince

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| 3. Prince to come. (Dan. ix. 26.) | 3. Idol shepherd. (Zech. xi. 16, 17.) |
| 4. Conqueror. (Rev. vi. 2.) | 4. False messiah. (John v. 43.) |
| 5. First beast. (Rev. xiii. 3-8; xi. 7; xvii. 8; xix. 20.) | 5. Man of sin, or wicked one. (2 Thess. ii. 3-10.) |
| 6. Eighth head. (Rev. xvii. 11.) | 6. Antichrist. (1 John ii. 18.) |
| 7. 666 the number of his name. (Rev. xiii. 18.) | 7. Beast with two horns. (Rev. xiii. 11.) |
| | 8. False prophet. (Rev. xix. 20.) |

and the covenant, the very remarkable movement among the Jews during the last few years deserves to be particularly noted as a significant sign of the present time. This is the great ZIONIST movement that is attracting so much attention just now, in which we see the vast majority of the Jewish people suddenly inspired with the most intense desire to return to and possess their own land of Palestine.

And the extraordinary enthusiasm that is being displayed by them with regard to this idea is such as has never been known among the Jews for nearly two thousand years, or since they were scattered as a nation after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. In its universality, and the sudden way it has sprung up, it is quite unprecedented and phenomenal. Moreover, it is not in its first inception a religious movement at all, but wholly political and national, its main object being to collect funds under the auspices of an organised society to purchase Palestine from the Sultan of Turkey, though every faithful Jew ought to be indignant at the thought of purchasing for money the Holy Land, given by God to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting inheritance.

They ought to know and believe that God Himself will restore it to them in His own good time and way, probably without the payment of a shilling to the present usurpers, as declared so often by their prophets: "Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye

have been scattered, and *I will give you the land of Israel.*" (Ezek. xi. 17.) This is but one sample of many such promises throughout the word of God that should be sufficient for the patience of faith.

Daniel's prophecy, as we have already seen, asserts that the prince shall make a covenant with "*the many*"—*i.e.*, the majority of the Jews—for one week. Does it not seem most likely that we are now seeing in this great multitude of enthusiastic Jewish Zionists the very company, "*the many*," coming to the front, and being thus prepared to make the covenant with the prince at the appointed hour, which must now be drawing very near?

And we can imagine, from what is now occurring, with what delight this great political party, the Zionist, will enter into the covenant with the prince, who will have it in his power, as an *instrument* under divine providence, to give them back their much-loved Zion without having to enter into the sordid transaction of purchasing it from the Turks.

Thus, seeing that one party to the covenant appears at present in course of formation—a plain indication that we are approaching a great crisis—we are naturally led to inquire, How and when will the other party to the covenant—the prince—come forward to do his part?

Remembering that, as the "*little horn*" of Daniel vii. 24, the prince shall "*subdue three kings*," and be a great "*conqueror*" (Rev. vi. 2),

we may reasonably conclude that his advent will be in connection with some great war.

Now, looking at the universal unrest that prevails all over the world, and the incessant diplomatic conflicts, aggressive intrigues and hostile manœuvres occurring among the leading nations, we seem to have unmistakable signs, rapidly accumulating every day, that the great and general war so often referred to, is likely to burst upon the world before long. And considering what has been already said about the Jewish movement in connection with many other stirring events of the day, we may fairly assume the possibility of this prince of prophecy coming forth in connection with the impending international war now looming so ominously on the political horizon. Who he may be no one at present may venture to say, but we believe that he will come upon the scene with surprising suddenness and quickly display extraordinary military prowess and strategic ability, and thus soon attain to the position of a chief commander of some of the mighty legions that will then be struggling for supremacy.

Then, by virtue of his great power as a victorious warrior, he will very likely become the generalissimo of the allied forces of several nations, and ultimately the head of the ten confederated kingdoms of the revived Roman Empire. His military career, it is thought, will in many respects be similar to that of the great Napoleon the First, who is regarded by many as a type of this wonderful "man of destiny."

The numerous victories of this warlike prince will then place him in a position to make the predicted covenant with the Jews; and that event will *mark the commencement* of the last week of seven years, during which the day of tribulation is to continue.

This period begins with the great war, led by the conqueror and symbolised by the four horses in Revelation vi. and all that follows from this chapter, including all the judgments of the seals, trumpets, vials and other events, down to chapter xviii. inclusive, will take place during this short but eventful and most extraordinary period of the world's history.

As these momentous seven years appear to be divided into two equal parts of three and a half years in Daniel and Revelation, we will now enumerate and briefly consider the chief events that are to take place in each division, in the order in which they are specially set forth in the Book of Revelation.

FIRST HALF OF THE WEEK, OR $3\frac{1}{2}$ YEARS.

Chapter vi. 1-8.

1. *Opening of the first Four Seals.*

This will be the beginning of the day of tribulation. They represent, under the symbolism of four horses and their riders, GREAT WARS AND THEIR DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES.

We see the conqueror on the white horse going forth "conquering and to conquer," as the great war, represented by the red horse and its rider with a great sword, prevails and extends.

Following this, as a natural consequence of war, we next see the black horse and he that sat on him, having a pair of balances in his hand, representing great scarcity of food and a famine. Then follows the pale horse, with its terrible rider, and the name of him that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him, representing immense sacrifice of human life, the final results of the "killing by the sword, and hunger, and death, and with the beasts of the earth."

2. Opening of the Fifth Seal.

Chapter vi. 9-11.

In this we see souls under the altar, slain for the word of God and the testimony they held, crying for vengeance. These will probably be some of the godly remnant of Jews, who will then be proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. xxiv. 14), and then be martyred for their faithful testimony, like their brethren of chapter xii. 17. They are told to wait until their brethren—the witnesses of chapter xi.—shall be killed as they were, when they with them shall be raised from the dead, and both companies be caught up together into heaven.

3. *Opening of the Sixth Seal.*

Chapter vi. 12-17.

The judgments of this seal will be ushered in by a great earthquake and terrifying signs in the heavens, followed by the overthrow of rulers and many persons in authority and the disruption and overthrow of the leading political, social and religious organisations of that day. And so alarming will all these tremendous convulsions be, that many will think, in their conscience-stricken fears, that the judgment of the last day, at the end of the world, has come, so that they will "cry upon the mountains and rocks to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Evidently that could not be the day of the Lord's coming to judge the nations. The thought is only the offspring of their fears.

4. *Sealing of the 144,000 Israelites and description of the Palm-bearers.*

Chapter vii.—A Parenthetical Chapter.

Before the opening of the seventh seal there is a remarkable pause, and the judgments are restrained for a while, until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, and the innumerable host of palm-bearers are presented to our view. These 144,000—twelve thousand out of each

tribe—are sealed to be preserved through the tribulation. In addition to these, we are led to behold a great multitude, whom no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands (not in heaven, but on earth in sight of the throne), who are also represented as having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These, doubtless, are Gentiles, converted through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of that time, and who, like their Jewish brethren, the 144,000, will be also preserved through all the troubles of the tribulation, to come out (not *came* out) at the end, so as then to enter into all the privileges and blessings of the millennial reign of Christ, both companies preserved on the earth for an earthly kingdom and not taken up to heaven at that time, as some seem to think.

5. Opening of the Seventh Seal.

Chapter viii. 1, 2.

A solemn and significant silence for half an hour occurs when this seal is opened, perhaps in view of the more severe judgments that were about to be delivered shortly. Then seven angels appear on the scene, having seven trumpets.

6. *The Angel at the Altar with the Golden Censer.*

Chapter viii. 3-5.

In this solemn yet very interesting scene in heaven, we doubtless see the Lord, the Angel, going up to the golden altar as High Priest, to exercise His priestly office in presenting the prayers of the saints to God.

And it is most instructive to observe that there was given Him much incense, that He should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne.

Thus the prayers ascend to God in the incense of the infinite merits and efficacy of Christ's perfect work of redemption, and are therefore immediately answered, as we see, by the judgments that directly followed, when the censer filled with fire from the altar was cast into the earth.

7. *The First Four Trumpets.*

Chapter viii. 7-12.

A remarkable uniformity appears in the implied division of each of the three series of the seven judgments, the seals, trumpets and vials, into *four and three* groups respectively, the first four being somewhat similar in character, though different in certain details of application and results, while the **three** last are altogether different in every respect,

without any connecting link with each other, as the first four have.

This group of the first four trumpets may be generally described as INDIRECT PROVIDENTIAL JUDGMENTS, brought about through the intermediate agency of certain circumstances or individual actors. They are also limited to a "third part," probably the prophetic earth, or chief regions of the old Roman world.

Though this series of four trumpets may be regarded as more severe judgments than the first four seals, yet they will not be so terrible as the *direct* judgments of the vials.

Middle of the Week.

"And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" (Chap. viii. 13.)

Second Half of the Week.

3½ years.

The events of this last half of the week will produce a much more terrible period of trouble

and distress than the first half, and be the most awful time the world will have ever known throughout its entire history. Hence it is called by our Lord the "GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. xxiv. 21.)

The three passages quoted at the beginning of this chapter from Daniel, Jeremiah and Matthew are therefore more directly and specially applicable to these last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years than to the first half.

1. *The Fifth Trumpet, or First Woe.*

Chapter ix. 1-11.

A star—Satan—falls from heaven unto the earth, and the key of the bottomless pit is given to him, and as he opens it immediately an innumerable host of demons—the "locusts"—come forth to torment men on the earth, who have not the seal of God in their foreheads, for five months. This torment will no doubt be excruciating—possibly some fearful mental agony—so that the tormented men "shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

2. *The Sixth Trumpet, or Second Woe.*

Chapter ix. 13-21.

In this second woe a most startling spectacle is presented to our view in the coming forth of the mysterious Euphratean horsemen on the scene.

The four angels bound in the river Euphrates (the far East) figuratively represent a vast multitude of evil spirits—good angels are never bound—who are loosed from some restraint, under which they may have been kept for ages, to come down into the localities referred to in prophecy to kill the third part of men. Their advance will be terrific and most destructive, and their number enormous, even as many as “two hundred thousand thousand” (ver. 16), a mighty army of terrible demons, who may take possession of human bodies, coming forth with fiendish fury to take part, with other demons, in the great Satanic struggle of that day. For it would seem that Satan at this time will be mustering all his forces: first, those cast out of heaven with him; secondly, the great contingent from the bottomless pit; and thirdly, these demoniacal horsemen from the East, all gathered to the prophetic centres for one more desperate effort before he is cast into the abyss. No wonder that the angel cries out in view of all these horrors, when the world will thus be, as it were, inundated with demons: “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time”! (Rev. xii. 12.) Yes, he knows full well that he will have but these few last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years in which to do his deadly work and accomplish his purpose of being worshipped by men. (Rev. xiii. 4.)

3. *The Angel Standing on the Sea
and on the Earth.*

Chapter x.

In this parenthetical chapter we hear the Lord—the Angel—solemnly swearing that there should be no longer delay in the conclusion of the judgments that were yet to descend upon the earth, “that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.”

4. *Measuring the Temple, the Altar and the
Worshippers.*

Chapter xi. 1, 2.

The Jews having returned in great numbers to Palestine some time before this under the covenant with the prince, build a temporary temple in Jerusalem and, in unbelief as regards Christianity, set up divine worship therein according to the ordinances given by God to Moses. This worship appears to be partially acknowledged and owned of God, as the godly remnant of Israel will be the leaders of it; so that the temple is to be measured, and them that worship therein. But the court is not to be measured, because it is given to the Gentiles: and the holy

city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

God begins at this time to deal again with Israel as of old, the church having been already translated to heaven. The general character of everything religious will then be mainly after the Jewish order of things.

5. *The Two Witnesses who Prophecy for 1260 Days.*

Chapter xi. 3-13.

These faithful witnesses (presumably a very large company, figuratively represented by the number "two," as the twenty-four elders represent millions of saints of the first resurrection in

* This period of time is mentioned *five* times in Revelation in the following connections.

1. The holy city trodden under foot forty-two months (xi. 2).
2. The witnesses prophesy 1260 days (xi. 3).
3. The woman is preserved in the wilderness for 1260 days (xii. 6).
4. The woman is nourished from the face of the serpent for a time, times, and a half-time (xii. 14).
5. The first beast's blasphemous and persecuting power continues for forty-two months (xiii. 5).

All these expressions of time (the fourth of which appears also in Dan. vii. 25 and xii. 7) are exactly equivalent to $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, the awfully eventful half-week of the last seven years. And we see from their connections that *all the events* of chapters xi., xii., xiii. and portions of xiv. will take place during these $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, *concurrently* with the three awful woes (ix. and xi. 15-19), thus altogether constituting the great tribulation.

heaven, iv. and v.), when they have finished their testimony, shall be killed by the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit. Then, after $3\frac{1}{2}$ days, the spirit of life from God enters them, and they ascend up to heaven in a cloud, together with the other martyred and risen saints of those days (vi. 10, 11), and their enemies behold them. Following this there is a great earthquake, by which 7000 are slain in the city of Jerusalem. Thus the "souls under the altar" (vi. 9-11) and these witnesses are avenged in answer to their prayer.

6. *The Seventh Trumpet, or Third Woe.*

Chapter xi. 14-18.

"And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

This will be a great crisis, and bring about stupendous changes in God's administration of the world; daring and high-handed wickedness and opposition to God will be no longer suffered to go on with impunity, but restrained and judged forthwith. The permission of evil unrestrained, the "mystery of God," shall then be finished, as the angel announced in chapter x.

The sceptre of earthly governmental power delegated to the Gentiles, after centuries of abuse and maladministration, will now be withdrawn,

and the "times of the Gentiles" come to an end. For God, at this time, will take to Himself His great power to reign. Moreover, the noted seventieth week, or last seven years of Daniel's prophecy, now finally closes at the end of the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.

The voices in heaven, in their prophetic strain of adoration, briefly announce the chief events and judgments that are to transpire from this time to the establishment of the millennial kingdom on the earth.

7. The Woman—Israel—and the Dragon.

Chapter xii.

The woman, the nation of Israel, who brought forth the man-child, the Lord Jesus, and is therefore hated by Satan, the dragon, who persecutes the woman and the remnant of her seed, Israelites, for 1260 days. But she is nourished and preserved of God in the wilderness during those $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, or "time, times, and a half-time." Obviously the introduction of the birth of the man-child (an event that had occurred centuries before) is to show the cause of the dragon's antagonism to the woman.

A further account is also given of the casting down of Satan from heaven (ix. 1), and the manner in which it was accomplished after the great battle with Michael and his angels. The dragon persecutes the Jews who have the "testimony of Jesus." (See page 9.)

8. *Career of the First Beast,* the Prince.*

Chapter xiii. 3-10.

This first beast, I have no doubt, is the same person as the little horn of Daniel vii. and the prince of chapter ix. (For identification compare Daniel vii. 8, 20, 21, 24, and ix. 26, 27, with Revelation xiii. 5-7.)

He will be the most notable personage of his day, and the whole world will wonder at his marvellous career and extraordinary exploits. As soon as he shall "subdue three kings," as the great conqueror, he will make the covenant with the Jews to give them Palestine, and for a few years will be their friend and protector in helping them to return to their own land. But in the "midst of the week," when Satan is cast out of heaven and gives power to or energises the beast, **or** most likely takes possession of him, he will become a totally different character. For then he

* In verses 1 and 2 of Revelation xiii. we see the "beast" with seven heads and ten horns, representing the Roman Empire, but in verse 3 the account turns from the empire to consider "ONE OF HIS HEADS," *i.e.*, one of its kings, while the word *beast* is still retained as the figure of the *one head* or king (as it had been used of the empire), and is so used throughout all the rest of the chapter. The same transition occurs in Revelation xvii.: in verse 7 "*beast*" is used as a figure of the empire, but in verses 8 to 11 the same word is employed to represent one head, an emperor or king. Not discerning the different applications of the word *beast*, by a careful study of the context, has led to much confusion and a wrong interpretation of these passages. For the king is not the empire, nor is the empire the king.

will "open his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." He will also aspire to be a god, and claim, in alliance with the dragon, to be worshipped as God! "And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast." (Ver. 4.)

At this time "he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Dan. ix. 27) in Jerusalem, through his vicegerent and high priest, the Antichrist, and make war with the saints, and persecute them who will refuse to worship him and his image, set up in the temple by the Antichrist, or false messiah. And all this he will continue to do for forty and two months, $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.

Two remarkable signs are given of him in this chapter, by which he will be identified when he comes on the scene. First, he is wounded to death, and his deadly wound is healed, and he did live. Three times this is mentioned in verses 3, 12, 14. Secondly, "the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, is 666." (Ver. 18.) Daniel says, "The wise shall understand."

9. *The Beast with two horns like a Lamb, and spake as a Dragon, the ANTICHRIST.*

Chapter xiii. 11-17.

He will be the Antichrist (and not the "prince"), evidently an apostate Jew and false

messiah (Matt. xxiv. 24), simulating the true Messiah by having two horns like a lamb: "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.) He will exercise all the power of the first beast, as he will also be energised by the same Satanic power, and perform the most astounding deeds of wickedness. "That wicked one, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." (2 Thess. ii. 8, 9.) "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles."

He will also cause an image of the first beast to be made and set up, probably in the court of the temple at Jerusalem, to be worshipped by the Jews, as his prototype, Antiochus Epiphanes (over 2100 years ago), set up the image of Jupiter Olympus in the temple and compelled the Jews to worship it on pain of death.

It is to this, no doubt, that our Lord refers in Matthew xxiv. 15, 16: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet [Dan. xii. 11], stand in the holy place . . . then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains." Thus this wicked apostate will act as the high priest of the equally wicked first beast in leading the Jews in Jerusalem to worship him and his image, while many will be slain for refusing to bow down to this

“*abomination*,” and for their faithful testimony against it.

10. *The sevenfold summary of further events and prospective announcements relating to the Great Tribulation and the end of the age.*

Chapter xiv.

(a) The 144,000 sealed Israelites are seen at the end with the Lamb on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, while the “harpers”—the martyrs of those last dark days, now in heaven—rejoice over the fact in a new song, which no man could learn but the 144,000. Both parties will have passed through the same tribulation, therefore they can sing the same song.

(b) The everlasting gospel is preached to all the world, while thousands will receive the truth and be saved. (See chap. vii. 9-17.)

(c) The doom of Babylon is announced.

(d) The judgments are pronounced on all who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands.

(e) Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth.

(f) The harvest of the world at the end of the age: discrimination and separation. (Matt. xxv. 31-46. See Matt. xiii. 30.)

(g) Treading the winepress of the wrath of God: the final execution of judgment on the nations. (See Rev. xix. 15.)

11. *Seven Angels having the Seven Last Plagues.*

Chapter xv.

A marvellous sign appears in heaven: these seven angels having the seven last plagues, full of the wrath of God. And there is also seen a sea of glass mingled with fire; and those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark and the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass having the harps of God, doubtless the same company of harpers and martyrs seen in xiv. 2, 3. "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations."

When the angels come out of the temple seven golden vials are given to them, full of the wrath of God; and the temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power.

12. *Pouring out of the Seven Last Vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.**

Chapter xvi.

These are direct judgments from the hand of God, expressive of His wrath on the leading

* As previously noted, the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of the seven are brought to a close at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when

agents and instruments of wickedness on the earth, and on their followers.

1. A grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon those which worshipped his image.

2. Upon the sea, or the nations in the midst of commotions, revolutions and wars—great bloodshed and immense mortality.

3. On false teachers and their institutions—rivers and fountains of water—and especially on apostate leaders, who have not only perverted the truth, but have “shed the blood of the saints and prophets.”

4. On some great ruler, the sun, by whose despotic and cruel government many will be tormented and led to blaspheme God for permitting it.

5. On the seat of the beast (of chap. xiii.),

the Lord comes forth to take His power to judge and reign. Then the wicked world's sentence of condemnation is pronounced, as the hour of God's wrath has come. But a further short space of time would be required for the *execution* of these judgments of wrath—*i.e.*, the seven last vials—and I think we have a clue to the length of this short time in Daniel xii. 7, 12. In verse 7 we see the “times of the Gentiles” (the scattering power of the holy people) finished at the end of 1260 days, or $3\frac{1}{2}$ years; and in verse 12 we read, “Blessed is he that cometh to the 1335 days.” The difference between these two periods is 75 days; thus, I take it, these 75 days more, from the close of the tribulation to the end, are added to the 1260 days ($1260 + 75 = 1335$) for the *execution* of the seven last vials of God's wrath. Then most blessed, indeed, to come out, not only of the Great Tribulation, but also out of the time of the terrible wrath judgments unto the 1335 days. “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (Matt. xxiv. 13.)

producing great darkness, sores and intense pain; and God is blasphemed in consequence of these torments.

6. On the nation that holds the East—the river Euphrates—now to be removed or destroyed that the way of the kings from the East—the Israelites, the ten tribes—might be prepared for them to return to their own land of Palestine.

7. Into the air, general or universal judgments, chiefly upon all the prophetic centres of the old Roman world. And as the last of the series, the most awful and overwhelming catastrophes and unprecedented earthquakes, lightnings and thunders, etc., will occur just before the Lord comes to the great battle which will be the concluding scene at the end of the age.

The two remarkable parentheses between the sixth and seventh vials are very significantly placed. The three unclean spirits, like frogs, are seen coming out of the mouth of the dragon (spiritism and demoniacal practices), out of the mouth of the beast (scepticism and infidelity), out of the mouth of the false prophet (false religious teaching). "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Then appropriately follows the announcement of the Lord's coming as a thief, etc., to the great battle then soon to take place, when He will judge and destroy the nations (xix.).

These unclean spirits have been long at work, preparing the deceived nations for that final battle and are now more active than ever as the time of the end draws near.

13. *The Woman—Babylon—and the Beast.*

Chapter xvii.

The woman is the mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abomination of the earth, that sits on the scarlet-coloured beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. She is evidently the apostate church or POKERY, that abominable system that has priest-ridden and tyrannised over the nations for centuries. "Drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," points at once to that cruel and persecuting system, so specially noted in history for its innumerable martyrdoms.

At this juncture the beast, or nations that have carried and supported her, turn against her and finally cast her off, with the determination no longer to submit to her false teaching and priestly authority, not because they have repented and accepted the true religion of Christ, but have accepted the lie of Satan set forth in the new religion of those evil days, which will consist in the worship of the beast—the coming prince—and the dragon himself, of which the Antichrist will be its chief priest. For the ten kings (heads of

the ten confederated kingdoms) shall make war with the Lamb and the Lamb shall overcome them. And they "shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." This will be the *first* stage of the fall of Babylon, the entire loss of her influence over the nations and the total destruction of her power and supremacy over them, brought about by the hatred of her own former dupes and followers. The second and final fall of this great Babylon will be direct from the hand of God Himself. (Chap. xviii.)

14. *Babylon the City.*

Chapter xviii.

Here we evidently have another view presented to us of the same Babylon the Great of the previous chapter under the figure of a great city.

The reason for the change of metaphor from that of a woman to a city becomes, it seems to me, apparent when we reflect on the prevalence of this vast system of apostasy described in these two chapters, its various aspects and its numerous bearings upon the religious, social and even political conditions of the world at large. Under the figure of a woman its idolatries ("fornications"), its priestly assumptions and deceptions, and its cruel persecutions of the saints of God are most appropriately set forth, of which we have typical instances in the Jezebel of Thyatira,

the patroness of idolatry and the woman in the ephah—which is “wickedness”—of Zechariah v. 7, 8, representing ancient Chaldean idolatry; while its political power over the kings and nations of the earth, its worldly greatness and wealth, its extensive connections and traffic with all the world, are more suitably portrayed under the metaphor of a city.

Apart, however, from all this, we have the most explicit statement that both chapters relate to identically the same subject under two different figures. In the last verse of xvii., which appears to be the connecting *link* between the two chapters, we read, “And the WOMAN WHICH THOU SAWEST IS THAT GREAT CITY, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” Nothing could be plainer or more emphatic—the woman is the city. As a further corroboration of this view, we find similar expressions used with regard to the woman Babylon and the city Babylon in both chapters. (See xvii. 2, 3 and xviii. 3, 6, 9.)

Surely a careful consideration of these statements ought to be sufficient to dispel at once the strange and sadly mistaken notion that chapter xviii. refers to a new and literal city of Babylon, yet to be built on the river Euphrates!

The only difference between these two aspects of this great system of false religion appears in the two different *phases* and in the *character* of the judgments with which Babylon is to be overthrown and finally destroyed. In the first phase, as described in chapter xvii., the religious in-

fluence and dominating power of the woman will be entirely overthrown and cast aside by the nations which had previously supported her some time during the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, while the second phase will be her complete and final destruction direct from the hand of God (xviii. 8) in some very awful and signal manner, which shall be witnessed by the kings of the earth, and the merchants, and others who had commercial dealings with her, "who shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning."

As chapters xvii. and xviii. are retrospective and thus go back to note these further events of the Great Tribulation and to those soon after its close, no doubt this final judgment of Babylon will occur at the pouring out of the seventh vial, as mentioned in the account of that vial thus: "And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." (Chap. xvi. 19.)

Certainly this is one of the most dreadful judgments recorded in the whole word of God.

"The Lord . . . cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." (Psa. xcvi. 13.)

CHAPTER IV.

THE THIRD SERIES OF GREAT EVENTS THAT ARE COMING.

The Coming of Christ with His Saints to the Earth and the Judgment of the Nations.

THIS will be the most prominent and momentous phase of "THE DAY OF THE LORD," so frequently referred to in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and described in the most solemn and impressive language as a stupendous crisis, which will bring to an end the present age and introduce a new era in the history of this world. It is often alluded to emphatically as "THAT DAY," thus marking the importance attached to it in the prophecies.

The words "day of the Lord" and "that day," distinctly point to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ either to execute judgment or to reign over the earth, while in many instances both these events are included in these expressions. This day is yet future, and will be so until the church is removed from the earth.

On examining all the passages in the prophecies, it will be found that the words "day of the Lord" apply to three distinct periods of time when the Lord will be judging and ruling over the earth, at first spiritually and invisibly and afterward personally and visibly.

The first period of "that day" will be when the Lord begins to judge the nations (though invisible to the world) during the day of tribulation, which will probably commence soon after the translation of the church to heaven and when the Lord Jesus rises to take the sealed book from Him that sat on the throne (the title-deed to His inheritance and His authority to judge and reign), containing the judgments of the seals, trumpets and vials.

The second period of the "day of the Lord" will be the great crisis, at the *end* of the tribulation, when the Lord will come personally and visibly to the earth to judge the nations and restore the Israelites to their own land.

The third period will comprehend the extension and continuation of His judging and ruling power, personally and visibly, throughout the whole of His millennial reign and even beyond that time, down to the very end and final destruction of this world, as recorded by the Apostle Peter: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Pet. iii. 10.)

It is the second phase of the day of the Lord that is exclusively referred to in this chapter, the short but momentously decisive crisis at the end of the age when the Lord comes forth in judgment to the earth, an event which stands out so

conspicuously in all the prophecies for its awfulness as to be designated the "terrible," "dreadful" and "notable" day of the Lord.

Out of the numerous passages in the word relating to this awful day, a few of the most striking may be cited to show its terrible character, as follows:—

"Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." (Joel i. 15.) "The day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness. . . . For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel ii. 1, 2, 11.) "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung." (Zeph. i. 14-17.) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Mal. iv. 5.) "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For

when they shall say Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.)

We will now consider the leading particulars of this unprecedented day of terrors and judgments, direct from the almighty hand of the Lord Himself, under five divisions, as they appear to comprise the main transactions of that coming day of the Lord:—

1. Signs preceding, and scenes witnessed at, the coming and appearing of Christ.
2. The restoration of Israel: gathering of the "elect."
3. "The battle of that great day of God Almighty."
4. The judgment of the nations: the harvest and treading the winepress of the wrath of God.
5. The setting up of Christ's kingdom on the earth and the commencement of His millennial reign.

FIRST.

The Signs Preceding, and the Scenes Witnessed at, the Coming and Appearing of Christ.

Unlike the first stage of the Lord's coming, with regard to which no signs were predicted in scripture to appear before it, many very wonderful and startling signs are given in the word

which are to precede and accompany this second stage of His coming, so that it will be entirely different from the first.

This appearing or revelation of the Lord will come very suddenly and unexpectedly to the world at large, although it is plainly recorded in the word that it will take place immediately after the short but terrible day of tribulation, a time that cannot fail to make a deep impression on all who pass through it. Yet total unbelief in God's word will so wholly possess the minds of the people of that day that they will not take the slightest heed to the warnings given, even if they take the trouble to read them. "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke xvii. 26, 27.)

The signs and scenes that will precede and accompany this tremendous event will be truly awful and such as will produce the utmost consternation on all the ungodly dwellers on the earth. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30; Mark xiii. 24, 26; Luke xxi. 25, 26.)

These signs will, I believe, be literally dis-

played, as no meaning could be drawn from a figurative interpretation. The sun and moon will thus be actually and miraculously darkened (they were made for *signs* as well as for seasons, Gen. i. 14), and the stars shall fall from heaven, not, of course, the *fixed* stars, as that would involve the total and instant destruction of this world and everything in it, but what are commonly called "falling stars" or meteors, which will then descend in enormous and alarming showers.

"And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come." (Acts ii. 19, 20; Joel ii. 30, 31.)

Although we cannot at present grasp the full significance of these miraculous signs which will then literally appear in the heavens, the appalling spectacle, together with the consequent terror, will doubtless be fearful, and such as has never been known before, no, not even at the time of the deluge. The flood was, indeed, an awfully destructive judgment, but this will be much more terrible, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus Himself will then come personally, with an innumerable host of saints and angels in His train, to execute direct judgment on the rebellious inhabitants of this world.

While millions will be gazing with intense anxiety and alarm on these awe-inspiring signs,

their "hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke xxi. 26), suddenly they shall behold the most amazing sight in the heavens, surpassing in awful splendour all that has ever been seen on this earth, even "the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." (Mark xiii. 26.) And so clearly visible, like a flash of lightning, will this be, that all shall see Him in an instant and know at once the dread import of this long-foretold coming of the Lord to judgment. "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." (Luke xvii. 24.)

Then the wicked and unbelieving inhabitants of the earth, when they fully realise the fact of being in the presence of their Judge, will give utterance to wailing and lamentations such as have never ascended from this earth, seeing that their day of judgment has truly come at last.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." (Rev. i. 7.) "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." (Matt. xxiv. 30.) "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels." (Matt. xvi. 27.) "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds

of heaven." (Matt. xxvi. 64.) "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." (2 Thess. i. 7.)

SECOND.

The Restoration of Israel: Gathering of the Elect.

Some few years before the great event of the Lord's coming to the earth, as already described, many thousands of Jews of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin will have returned to Palestine, under the covenant with the prince, and will have built a temple in Jerusalem, probably on the old site of the former temple, where the mosque of Omar now stands. In this temple they will have set up the worship of God according to the Jewish ritual, when the godly remnant among them will be acknowledged of God, as their forefathers were under similar circumstances (Rev. xi. 1, 2.)

It further appears from our Lord's great discourse in Matthew xxiv. that when He comes to the earth there will be a great and general gathering of all the tribes, including the long-lost ten tribes as well as the other two, who will be fully and finally restored to the land given to their father Abraham and his descendants for an everlasting possession. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they

shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. xxiv. 30, 31.)

Doubtless the "elect" mentioned here, whom the Lord shall send His angels to gather from all parts of the world, refer to the Israelites, and not to Christians or the church, as the latter, with all the saints of the first resurrection, will have been caught up to heaven some years before.

All the Old Testament prophecies abound with references to this final restoration of Israel, which will assuredly be accomplished at God's appointed time, though many have ventured to assert that it will never come to pass.

Out of a great number and variety of passages a few may be cited here to show how explicitly and circumstantially this return and restoration of Israel is announced in scripture, all of which unquestionably establish this fact to the satisfaction of all who really believe God's word:—

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Irsael, and gather together the dispersed of

Judah from the four corners of the earth. . . . And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river [Euphrates], and smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt." (Isa. xi. 11, 12, 15, 16.)

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." (Rev. xvi. 12.)

This will be the *preparation* for the return of Israel already noticed under the sixth vial, when the Asiatic powers, and more especially Turkey, symbolised by the Euphrates, that possesses Palestine and blocks the way of Israel's return, shall be removed or destroyed.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." (Isa. xxvii. 13.)

"In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers." (Jer. iii. 18.)

"And they shall bring all your brethren for an

offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord." (Isa. lxvi. 20.)

And they will not only be brought back to their own land at this time, but will also be restored to the favour of God and recognised again as the "people of God," for "it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." (Hos. i. 10.)

The remarkable vision of the "dry bones" also sets forth in a very striking manner this full restoration of the whole house of Israel and the divine awakening of a new spiritual life among them.

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. . . . Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. . . . Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will

open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." (Ezek. xxxvii. 1-3, 5, 11-14.)

When thus visited and restored in mercy by the Lord, the whole house of Israel will sincerely repent of all their iniquities, their unbelief, their disobedience and rebellion, and turn with full purpose of heart to the Lord.

Then the Lord will graciously heal, cleanse and purify them, and accomplish a marvellous work of spiritual regeneration among all the people.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart . . . and their wives apart. . . . In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. . . And I

will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. xii. 10-12 and xiii. 1, 9.)

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." (Joel ii. 28, 29.)

"Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezek. xi. 17-20.) "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. xxxi. 33.)

Thus will the long, dreary night of many

centuries of Israel's dispersion and their terrible persecutions happily come to an end. Then the bright day, so long looked forward to and longed for, shall dawn at last upon poor, down-trodden Israel, and all the gracious prophecies of God's word concerning them shall be fully accomplished.

It was to this blessed time that the watchman particularly referred when, in answer to the inquiry, "What of the night?" he said, "THE MORNING COMETH."

And it is at this time also, when they behold their Messiah coming in divine power to deliver them all from their enemies and to restore and bless them so wonderfully, that they will exclaim with perfect sincerity and the utmost enthusiasm, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," as our Lord foretold. (Luke xiii. 35.)

THIRD.

"The Battle of that Great Day of God Almighty."

Unlike the first stage of the Lord's coming, when He only descends into the air to meet and receive His risen saints, He will at this great crisis—the second stage—literally come to the earth. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east"; that is the very place where He was last seen on the earth, and from which He ascended into heaven. (Zech. xiv. 4.)

He will then appear as the mighty "Captain of the Lord's host," around whom the delighted Israelites will rally as they behold Him standing before them on the mount of Olives. This will be preparatory to the great battle:—

"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." (Zech. xiv. 1-5.)

The Israelites will be at this time passing through terrible persecutions under the tyranny of the Antichrist, as well as suffering great hardships from the invasions of surrounding nations. It will be the culminating point of the "time of

Jacob's trouble." Then at the last critical moment, when they are on the point of being destroyed or scattered abroad, the Lord, as their Messiah, will suddenly appear to deliver them from all their foes.

It is to this great and decisive battle that the three unclean spirits (previously considered in connection with the sixth vial) have been, and still are, assiduously gathering the nations, and thus preparing them for their utter destruction on that fearful day.

We often hear the expression used, while referring to Revelation xvi. 16, as the "battle of Armageddon," but this is obviously an error or misquotation, for the passage does *not* say that there will be a battle of, or at, Armageddon, but that they will be *gathered to a place* called Armageddon. That will be, I presume, the *camping-ground* of the vast armies that will then come down from the north and other quarters to invade Palestine and take Jerusalem, as we have seen in Zechariah xiv. 2. This camp of Armageddon (the hill or city of Megiddo) will be, I have no doubt, the hill or valley of Megiddo, a little to the south of Carmel, and about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, which was famous for two great victories of Barak over the Canaanites and of Gideon over the Midianites.

Now when we turn to the prophecy of Joel we learn at once the locality where this great battle will be fought:—

"For, behold, in those days, and in that time,

when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." (Joel iii. 1, 2.)

Thus we see that the battle will actually take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and, to be scripturally correct, it should be so called.

In this chapter we have also some further details of the battle: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. . . . Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. . . . Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." (Joel iii. 9-16.)

The valley of Jehoshaphat, mentioned only once in the Bible, in the verses just quoted, is generally considered to be the valley or gorge

that extends along the base of the mount of Olives and separates it from Jerusalem on the north-east side of the city, and commonly known as the valley of Kidron, on account of the brook of that name that flowed through it.

When the northern allied armies march down from their camp at Armageddon into this valley to invest and take Jerusalem, the Lord will descend from the mount of Olives to meet and entirely destroy them there.

This great battle will be fraught with immense consequences, and be a momentous epoch in the history of many countries, especially in the east and the north.

It is also alluded to in Daniel xi. 40-45: "At the time of the end shall the king of the south [Egypt] push at him"—that is, the wilful king (ver. 36), the Antichrist, then exercising great power in Jerusalem—"and the king of the north [Syria, with Russia and Persia, etc.] shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall also enter into the glorious land [Palestine], and many countries shall be overthrown. . . . And he shall plant the tabernacle of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

Turning to Ezekiel xxxviii. and xxxix., we have a fuller and more detailed account of the coming down of the king of the north and his numerous allies to the tremendous battle in the valley of

Jehoshaphat, and their total destruction on the mountains of Israel, these two whole chapters being devoted to this subject.

Here he is called "Rosh, the prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Russia), with his allies Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, and the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands and many people. (Ezek. xxxviii. 2-6.)

"Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. . . . I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and I will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. . . . Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken." (Ezek. xxxix. 1-8.)

And so great will be the destruction on that dreadful day that "seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land." (Ver. 12.) "And for seven years shall they be burning their weapons with fire." (Vers. 9, 10.) "Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God." (Ver. 13.)

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." (Zech. xii. 9.)

FOURTH.

The Judgment of the Nations, the Harvest, and Treading the Winepress of the Wrath of God.

Immediately following the destructive battle of that great day of God Almighty, the direct judgment of the nations by the Lord in person shall come to pass. It will be the judgment of living nations—the “quick”—and not the final judgment of the dead, which will take place after the thousand years of the millennium have expired.

This solemn and most momentous judgment that will determine the destinies of untold multitudes of the human race and which will close the present age or dispensation, is often represented in scripture under different aspects.

Some of the leading and most striking passages are as follows:—“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: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. xxv. 31-34, 41.)

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. . . . But the judgment shall sit." (Dan. vii. 13, 26.)

"He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts xvii. 31.)

In the first part we have the HARVEST aspect of this great judgment in the *discrimination* of the good from the bad, the sheep from the goats, and the eternal *separation* of these two classes; while the second part will be the vintage or *execution* of the sentence of judgment on the wicked.

"The harvest is the end of the world [or age]; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. xiii. 39-43.)

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came

out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." (Rev. xiv. 14-16.)

The second phase of this great judgment of the nations, as already remarked, will be the "treading of the winepress of the wrath of God" and the "day of vengeance."

This final execution of the wrath of God is described in scripture in the most solemn language:—

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel . . . and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. . . . And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth." (Isa. lxiii. 1-6.)

"And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes

are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." (Rev. xiv. 18-20.)

"The day of vengeance of our God." (Isa. lxi. 2.)

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. i. 7-9.)

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his displeasure. . . . Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psa. ii. 2-5, 9.)

"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 threshing-floors; 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." (Dan. ii. 34, 35.)

While contemplating these astounding revelations from God's holy word of the coming events of the day of vengeance, we now turn to the concluding scene of the whole series of these judgments of the dreadful day of the Lord, which will be the closing scene of the dreadful day of the Lord, which will be the closing scene of the present age, the entire breaking up of the existing nations, and marvellous changes and transformations all over the earth.

This great culminating scene, so inexpressibly awful as a display of the swift and decisive execution of God's wrath upon the wicked and rebellious nations, is most graphically depicted in Revelation xix. 11-21:—

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in

heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

The armies of heaven that are to follow the Lord on this great occasion will be all the saints

of the first resurrection, caught up to heaven at the rapture, and at the end of the tribulation some time previously.

This notable day will be one of immense and extreme contrasts: on the one hand, power, splendour, glory and unbounded joy; and on the other, dire distress, profound sorrow, agony and despair.

Directing our gaze heavenwards, what a scene of surpassing grandeur presents itself to our view, so unparalleled in its vastness and sublimity, as these innumerable hosts of saints and angels, in grand celestial array, come forth, with the Lord, their glorious King leading, they filling the whole heavens above, ere they descend to the judgment of that dreadful day! While, on the other hand, as we turn our eyes downward to the earth, what a terrible spectacle of unutterable dismay, consternation, woe and fearful anguish of soul appears among the terror-stricken enemies and opposers of Christ when they behold the omnipotent King and all His mighty armies coming down to utterly destroy them all in a moment of time, and give their bodies to be devoured by the wild vultures!

This will ever be a memorable day in the history of this fallen world as the closing scene of many dispensations of sin and rebellion against God and His Anointed and the introduction to a new and blessed order of things.

One special event stands out prominently as a most startling incident of this terrible day. It

is the fact that the two most notoriously wicked persons on the earth—that is, the blasphemous prince or first beast of Revelation xiii., who will set himself up to be worshipped as God, and the equally abominable second beast of that chapter—the Antichrist or false prophet—shall both be taken “*and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone,*” even before the devil and his fallen angels are cast therein, for whom it has been specially prepared!

The very thought of such overwhelming judgments direct from the hand of God should certainly make all unbelievers and rejecters of the gospel of God’s grace tremble, and induce them, with all speed, to “flee from the wrath to come.”

The voice of Jehovah has been going forth to the whole world for many centuries in words of the most solemn warning of coming judgments on the children of disobedience. But in His great mercy and gracious forbearance these judgments have been delayed all through these ages, because “he is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet. iii. 9.)

And because He has in His infinite love and mercy withheld these judgments for so long a time, the children of men have hardened their hearts more and more in unbelief, and in more daring and persistent opposition to His authority.

“God is love” most assuredly, but He is also the God of truth, of justice, of righteousness and of holiness.

And all these essential attributes of His Deity, the very foundations of His throne, must necessarily and absolutely be ever maintained by Him as the sole Ruler of the universe.

Sin and lawlessness are in direct opposition and antagonism to all that God is essentially in His holy and perfect nature. Consequently a state of rebellion against His righteous rule and authority (which is lawlessness and sin) cannot possibly be allowed to go on with impunity for ever, for His longsuffering and forbearance in mercy must at length come to an end; therefore He hath solemnly declared that "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained."

And all His solemn and awe-inspiring announcements with reference to coming judgments are mercifully recorded in His holy word, that generation after generation might read and know what Jehovah hath declared, and the warnings He has given, that peradventure they may repent and return to God before the storms of judgment descend on the earth.

But the significant question applied to Christ's work of redemption might also be aptly applied to these solemn announcements: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

And the answer to this, as in the first instance, must, alas! be, Very few. Even of all the millions in Christendom, not to speak of other

states, where Bibles abound, and are read in the churches and chapels, how few comparatively really listen to the voice of Jehovah, or take the slightest trouble to ascertain and consider what He has said on these all-important subjects.

Some puny man utters a few eloquent sentences (like Herod) relating to the trivial affairs of this transitory world, and his words are instantly caught up with great applause, then echoed from one community to another, and repeated in books and papers until they become household words to millions.

But when Jehovah, the infinite Creator and Preserver of this world and all the glorious orbs of heaven, utters His voice, in marvellous grace and condescension, concerning matters of the highest importance, affecting the eternal destinies of the whole human race, what is the result upon the great mass of mankind? Alas! these merciful words of warning fall on dull, listless ears and deadened hearts of unbelief, and are often set aside as not worthy of serious consideration.

Even the preachers in their pulpits are often afraid to call attention to these serious utterances of God regarding the coming day of righteous judgment, for fear of offending their hearers!

What an amazing sight this must be to the holy and ever-obedient angels of heaven as they look down upon such a scene of heedless unconcern and disregard of God's holy word!

How truly our Lord described this state of things as it was in His day, and as it still

continues: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt. xiii. 15.)

And this blindness and hardness of heart is all the more surprising as we have evident signs all around us that this great and notable day of the Lord is now drawing near. (See the forecasts in Paul's, Peter's and John's epistles.)

For this day must inevitably come and probably in the near future. Then what a fearful day of awakening that will be to millions of self-deluded souls when God shall arise and speak to the world in His wrath, when all scepticism with regard to these prophecies will vanish in an instant and when the unbelievers shall see "the Lord Jesus revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"!

May all who read these solemn declarations flee at once, in repentance and faith, to the Lord Jesus—if they have not done so already—the only refuge and place of safety from all these storms of judgment that are coming.

FIFTH.

The Setting up of Christ's Kingdom on the Earth and Commencement of the Millennium.

When the earth has been purged in the fires of judgment by the removal of the evildoers or all those in direct and flagrant rebellion against Christ, the Lord will set up and establish His glorious kingdom on the earth. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." (Matt. xiii. 41.)

Then will commence the grand Messianic kingdom, the consummation of all the hopes and desires of the Israelitish nation, when their true Messiah shall reign over the house of His father David, a subject so frequently and glowingly described in the scriptures, and especially in the Old Testament prophecies.

It will be the blessed millennial reign of righteousness, when the King of kings and Lord of lords shall rule over the whole earth with His saints. This will be the full answer to the first petition in the notable prayer the Lord taught His disciples, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. vi. 10.)

And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. ii. 44.)

"And there was given him dominion, and

glory, and a kingdom, that all people, 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. . . . And judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. . . . 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." (Dan. vii. 14, 22, 27.)

"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." (Isa. ix. 7.) "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." (Psa. cxlv. 11-13.)

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xi. 15.)

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and

which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. xx. 4.)

The prevalent thought of the great majority in Christendom that this world is to be morally improved and wholly reformed by human agencies, such as civilisation, education and evangelisation, etc., is utterly vain and contrary to scripture.

In Daniel xii. 10, we read, "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." The wise are those who look *solely* to the word of God for information on all these great questions and therefore know perfectly well, from the divine revelations of the inspired and sacred volume, that this world will never be truly and radically reformed until the Lord Jesus Christ, its Creator and rightful Sovereign, comes Himself to put all things right by His own almighty power.

All creation has been groaning for ages and is still groaning to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption." (Rom. viii. 21, 22.) Who then can deliver it and hush these sad groans? Certainly no one but the blessed Son of God, the Lord Jesus; and every true Christian can, and does, heartily rejoice that the time is now approaching when He will come to do it. "For he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.)

Nor will true and permanent peace ever prevail on this earth until the true "Prince of peace"

comes to establish it Himself. "For when they shall say, Peace, and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them . . . and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 3.)

This has often been partially verified in past history, and it is very possible that we may be just now on the eve of a more tremendous and universal verification of this significant statement than the world has known for many centuries.

The wise, who take their stand upon the watch-tower of scripture, can clearly discern, from many unmistakable signs, the dark shadows of the coming night approaching which is to follow immediately the morning of the rapture. For there will be, as we have already seen, a short interval of intense midnight gloom and darkness during the "great tribulation" and the judgments of the "day of the Lord," before the millennium dawns upon this sin-oppressed world; as the watchman has said, "The morning cometh, and *also the night.*"

But after the *last term* of darkness that bright millennial morning will certainly come at length, according to the fixed purpose of God from the beginning of the creation: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." (Mal. iv. 1, 2.)

Then shall those who are left on the earth greatly rejoice, not only in the bright *dawning* of the morning, but also in the *full sunshine* of the visible and glorious reign of the "Prince of peace." "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." (Isa. ix. 7.)

Then, too, the world shall enjoy a perfect Sabbath rest and peace for a thousand years. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 9.)

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

"See the Saviour, long expected,
Now in solemn pomp appear,
And His saints, by man rejected,
All His heavenly glory share;
Hallelujah!
See the Son of God appear.

"Israel's race shall now behold Him,
Full of grace and majesty,
Though they set at nought and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree;
Now in glory
Shall their great Messiah see.

"Yea, amen, let all adore Thee,
High on Thine exalted throne:
Saviour, take the power and glory;
Claim the kingdoms for Thine own:
Come, Lord Jesus!
Hallelujah! come, Lord, come!"