

THE SECOND COMING

With special reference to

MR. ALEXANDER REESE'S BOOK

"The Approaching Advent of Christ."



A Criticism by

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FOREWORD

THE subject dealt with in the following pages concerns the question, often discussed during the last hundred years, namely, Will the Church be on earth in the time of Antichrist and pass through the period known as *The Great Tribulation*? The Book discussed herein—*The Approaching Advent of Christ*—is, perhaps, the most lengthy ever published in the affirmative. The opposite view is propounded in these pages; and the arguments and teaching of the book shown to be defective, and contrary both to the teaching of Scripture and the true nature and calling of the Church.

The Second Coming

With special reference to

MR. ALEXANDER REESE'S BOOK

"THE APPROACHING ADVENT OF CHRIST."

WHEN first the above book was brought to our notice (which attacks the views held by many of the most saintly and intelligent Christians during the last hundred years), the thought arose: is it possible that students of the Word to, whom God granted so much light, and who were so used to impart light to others, should have completely missed their way with regard to matters which were their special study, and which formed an essential part of their testimony?

It was with no little surprise we discovered, on turning to Appendix IV, p. 313, of the above book, that the same question had arisen in the mind of Mr. Reese. He thus states it, as he imagines it would be expressed by others:

"It is impossible to believe that Brethren would be allowed to go wrong on the subject of the Second Coming, when they were used to revive so much truth concerning it and other doctrines."

The way he tries to meet this difficulty does not remove it, nor does it tend to inspire much confidence. He attempts to show that other great leaders in the Church fell into serious errors or mistakes, in spite of the fact that God greatly used them. But some of the cases he cites are not parallel to the one before us.

Luther, he tells us, "preached a glorious gospel . . . but committed errors as in the Peasants War." But the Peasants War was quite outside Luther's special work, namely, the recovery of the truth of Justification by faith. Could it have been shown that Luther missed his way in regard to this particular truth he was raised up to propagate, there would have been some point in the comparison. As it is, there is none. Prophecy was one of the most prominent features in the teaching of so-called Brethren, and from earliest days lay at the very centre of their testimony. Yet Mr. Reese wishes us to believe that it was just here they made their greatest blunders!

That such errors and slips are *possible* wherever *man* is concerned, is true. But one must not forget Who it was raised up such a testimony, nor the grace bestowed upon those to whom it was committed. And, in view of this, it is not at all *probable*—though it may have been possible—that, in regard to a theme that was part and parcel of their testimony, there should have been—as Mr. Reese would have us believe—a disastrous departure from the truth.

We feel bound, therefore, to approach the study of the above book with this fact in mind. And one would confess at the outset, that we are not helped in doing so by the superabundant use of adjectives and epithets employed by the writer, not only to discredit certain teaching, but to bring the authors of it into contempt. In one brief paragraph on p. 97, we have such expressions as "lame justification;" "coolly assumes;" "glaring contradiction." These, and such like, are found in almost every page. He characterises the arguments of those who differ from him as a "jumble;" they are reduced to "irretrievable ruin;" he speaks of the "Rapture *craze*;" that it is, "fathered by theorists;" a "fundamental blunder," and in one place he goes so far as to call it a "crowning disaster."

These epithets are repeated *ad nauseam*.* We shall see presently whether they are deserved. Anyway, we may

* Here are a few more: "Supreme rubbish"; "As miserable as it is inexact"; "As inaccurate as it is audacious"; "A mockery of consistency—I had almost said of honesty."

remind the reader of the oft-told story—though never told too often—of the advice of a lawyer: “When you have no case, bully the plaintiff.” Mr. Reese does plenty of bullying. The reader must judge, after reading what is here written, the reason for it.

One more remark before coming to closer grips. The book we are proposing to criticise contains such an imposing array of quotations from commentators that, unless we were sure of our ground, we might feel somewhat dismayed. But of what use are any number of quotations if the argument they are supposed to support is weak, and the edifice reared upon them is without foundation? As we hope to show, Mr. Reese’s methods are unsound, and all his props, in the shape of commentators, are not sufficient to sustain his conclusions. He begins at the wrong end. Commentators are useful at times, but they frequently contradict one another, and they are often proved to be wrong. We are reminded of a well-known story with reference to the late Mr. Mackintosh (C.H.M.). On one occasion, when speaking in Ireland, he referred to the commentators, possibly in not very eulogistic terms. In any case, an Irishman appeared at his door the next morning, with a sack on his back, and asked to see him. When he appeared, his visitor thus addressed him: “You were speaking last night, sir, about ‘*common taters*,’ I have brought you a sack of real good ‘uns.”

We have already remarked that the author of the book we are to consider begins his argument at the wrong end. The *fundamental* point in dispute is whether the *Church* will pass through “the great Tribulation.” Not, will Israel or certain believers be present on earth during that unexampled period of suffering, but will the Church—the true Church, not a false one—be here in the time of Anti-christ?

Now this question cannot be rightly answered unless the true nature and calling of the Church is known. Our first enquiry ought to be, what is the special truth in regard to the Church? Yet, strange to say, this is the last thing those who think with Mr. Reese concern themselves about. We have read pamphlet after pamphlet in which it is affirmed

the Church will pass through the Tribulation, but the method is always the same. Generally speaking, it is soon evident that the writer knows very little respecting the unique character and calling of the Church. Some even bring Old Testament saints into it ! And they generally begin their argument by a reference to our Lord's discourse in Matthew xxiv. How is it possible to reach a right conclusion as to whether the Church will pass through the great Tribulation unless God's purpose in regard to the Church, and its true character, are understood ?

Mr. Reese falls into the same error. Throughout the whole of his book of over 300 pages, there are scarcely half a dozen lines devoted to the unfolding of the truth of the present dispensation. He grounds everything to begin with upon certain statements in the Old Testament in regard to resurrection, and then upon our Lord's discourse in Matt. xxiv.

Let it be said here, and with all the emphasis one can lay upon it, the disciples understood *nothing* about the present dispensation (we use this word as commonly understood) or the truth of the Church, when our Lord spoke to them as recorded in Matthew xxiv. Their minds were still occupied with Jewish interests and the reign of Jesus as their Messiah. Their question, "When shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age ;" related to the end of the age then present. How could it mean anything else to them ? There are only two ages as Scripture speaks of them (though a good many more, as we often speak). In Hebrews ix, we read : "Now once in the end of the age hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (v. 26). That is one age. The other is the Millennial age, referred to in Hebrews II as the "World (age) to come" (v. 5). Mr. Darby, in his translation, has a note on this, to the effect : "A known division among the Jews. This age, and what was to be introduced by the Messiah." The "age to come" referred to in Hebrews vi, 5, is the Millennial age. And again, with regard to Titus ii, 12, "this present world" meant for the Jews "the present state of things in contrast with that to be introduced by Messiah."

There is no such "age" as the "Church age," though sometimes spoken of as such. The Church is an interval or inter-regnum between two dispensations or ages.* Time does not relate to it, nor does prophecy, strictly speaking. The prophetic clock, so to speak, has stopped, and the Church period comes in between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel. Our Lord, in the synagogue at Nazareth, quoted from Isaiah lxi, and ended with the words: "The acceptable year of the Lord." And there He closed the book. The words which follow, and which He did not read, are: "The day of vengeance of our God." When the book is opened in Rev. v, it is opened precisely where He closed it. The day of vengeance has come. The Church period is between these two points. The "acceptable year of the Lord" characterises the present Church period. The Church, as such, has nothing to do with the "day of vengeance." That introduces the next age. Though, of course, saints who compose the Church will be with Christ when He returns to take vengeance.

The Disciples' Question

This being so, it is clear that, as far as the disciples themselves were concerned, the question asked, did not relate to the present interval. Their point of view related to the end of the age which then existed and the introduction of the Millennial age. Our Lord, of course, understood all, for He foresaw all, and His reply is twofold. He takes account of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, which happened about forty years from the time when He was speaking; and, while briefly taking account of the interval, passes on to the time of His appearing.

From the accounts given by Matthew and Mark, we should hardly know there was to be an interval, except it be for the one reference to the gospel being preached. What will happen at the end is so similar in character to what did happen at the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D., that, as far as the accounts in Matthew and Mark are concerned, it is scarcely possible to tell where the Lord passes from one to the other.

* Though, in one sense, the age prior to the Millennium has not yet fully run its course and will not until the 70th week of Daniel is fulfilled.

And this is a further proof that the Church period does not count, from the point of view of time. From Luke xxi, we learn (for in his account the reference to the destruction of Jerusalem is more detailed) that the Jewish people would fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations, and then we are told, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Matthew xxiv does not help those who insist that the Church will pass through the Great Tribulation. It simply answers the question "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" The question referred to what our Lord had just been telling His disciples and had no reference whatever to the Church, but to the end of the age and His return in manifest power and glory.

The question asked by the disciples themselves, subsequent to the discourse in Matthew xxiv, leave us in no doubt as to these matters. Their minds were solely occupied with the restoration of Israel and the Kingdom. The astonished question of one of them in the Upper Room when our Lord spoke of manifesting Himself to His disciples was, "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the World?" (John xiv, 22.) He meant, of course, the public manifestation as Messiah. And even at the very last, on the day the Lord ascended to heaven, the uppermost thought in their minds is expressed in the question they put to Him: "Lord, wilt Thou at *this time* restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" And our Lord's answer indicates that "times and seasons" do not concern the Church, nor indeed can they be known, for the Father has kept these from us.

"He Will Show You Things to Come"

It is remarkable that though the Lord could say, speaking of the presence of the Holy Spirit, "He will shew you things to come," yet the Holy Spirit has not revealed the day or the hour, and so Paul can write to the Thessalonians: "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the

Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." That is, there will be no certain indication of the day or the hour.

But the words just quoted with reference to the Holy Spirit—"He will shew you things to come"—need to be remembered; for they seem to be entirely overlooked by those who would have us believe that 1 Thess. iv, 13-17 does not reveal anything beyond what we are told in Matt. xxiv, 24. We think we are right in saying that Mr. Reese does not even quote the words with reference to the Spirit. If he does, he certainly does not attach any significance to them. Yet our Lord's utterance is as clear as it is emphatic, and has a most important bearing upon the question at issue. After speaking of what the coming of the Holy Spirit would mean to the world, He goes on to tell His disciples what it would mean to them. "He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of (from) Himself; but *whatsoever He shall hear*, that shall He speak; and *He will shew you things to come.*" (John xvi.) Are we to suppose then that this has never been fulfilled, and that after Pentecost nothing was added to what the Lord had already said? This is what those who teach the Church will go through the Tribulation would have us believe. Yet our Lord's words, "Whatsoever He shall hear," can bear only one construction. What can that mean but that there would be a further revelation? "He will shew you things to come." What can that mean but that this further revelation would concern, in part, "things related to His coming?"

There are two statements (at least) of the Apostle Paul's which leave us in no doubt that our Lord's words were actually fulfilled. First, as to the truth of the Church. We read in Eph. iii, 5, "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets *by the Spirit.*" Second, as to the Rapture of the Church—the catching away out of this world—the same apostle prefaces his remarks with the words: "This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord." (The Word of the Lord, of course, was communicated by the Spirit. It is what He had heard, according to John xvi.) Lastly, another apostle confirms what is here said, by the repeated declaration in

Rev. ii and iii ; " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." One more statement of Paul's comes to mind as we write : " The Spirit speaketh expressly," he says, writing to Timothy, " that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith." Yet in the face of all this, we are asked to believe that Matt. xxiv contains a final and complete revelation to which nothing has ever been added. The additional revelation does not in any way contradict what our Lord there says, for the simple reason that He does not refer to the Rapture of the Church,* or to the Church at all, as such.

The Resurrection of the Dead

We now have to consider one of the main arguments employed by Mr. Reese to prove that there is no distinction between the Rapture of 1 Thess. iv and the Appearing or Day of the Lord, and that the Church will be on earth in the time of Anti-christ.

His argument is something like this. Those who believe in the Rapture of the Church say it takes place prior to the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. But they admit that, according to 1 Thess. iv, the resurrection of the dead takes place at the time the Church is caught away. Now as Resurrection in various passages in both Old and New Testament, he argues, is connected with the Day of the Lord, therefore the Rapture and the Day of the Lord must be one and the same event.

How does he proceed to prove his point? *He actually refers to the Old Testament.* But he feels a little apprehensive as to the ground he is treading upon, for he turns aside to assure his readers " that, in going to the Old Testament, we do so with no misapprehension concerning the nature and calling of the Church of the New Testament." And he adds : " We shall not look for New Testament revelations there." Then why turn to the Old Testament? If the Church is not

* In speaking of Rapture and Appearing throughout, we use the terms in their common acceptance. The one referring to the Church being caught away before the Tribulation and the destruction of Antichrist, the other to our Lord's manifestation in power.

to be found there, how can Old Testament texts describe *when* the Lord is coming for His Church and what will happen when He does come? He is beginning at the wrong end, and looking for evidence in the wrong place.

We cannot learn anything approaching the full truth of Resurrection from the Old Testament. It is quite within the truth to say that Resurrection is not even the *subject* of the Old Testament. That there is a suggestion of this great and glorious fact, no one denies, but there cannot be said to be a *doctrine* of Resurrection. If there had been, the Sadducees would have found it very difficult to maintain their position.

It is an interesting fact as bearing upon this subject, that, when our Lord was confronted by the Sadducees and faced with this problem, and had to meet their arguments. He does not allude to one of the passages quoted by Mr. Reese. Why is this? He was, of course, perfectly familiar with Isa. xxv, 7-8; xxvi, 19 and Dan. xii, 2, yet he does not so much as mention one of them. Instead of that, he reminds the Sadducees of some words spoken by God, and recorded in the Pentateuch. He bases the truth of resurrection upon the very nature of God and the relationship existing between God and men. He rests the doctrine upon the broadest foundation possible. Not merely a text, but upon the fact of God himself.

Well would it be for us if we would imitate Him. The answer to the question, will the Church pass through the Tribulation? is really found in the fact of the Church itself—its nature and calling. It is entirely distinct from God's purpose for Israel. It has nothing to do with the time of Jacob's trouble. The Church is connected with the eternal counsels of God, and belongs to heaven. It is a parenthesis in God's ways and comes in between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel, and will be removed before the last week begins. It will leave the world as Christ left it, as recorded in Acts I. How then can we go to the Old Testament for any proof of the Church passing through the Tribulation, when no doctrine, either of the Church or of the Resurrection, is found there?

But someone may object. Does not the Apostle Paul, in his great resurrection chapter, actually quote a passage from the Old Testament . . . "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." But does he wish us to understand by such a quotation that he has nothing more to tell us than what had already been revealed in the Old Testament? If so, why does he say, "Behold I shew you a *mystery*?" A mystery in Scripture is something known only to the initiated. He is initiating them into some new truth. The quotation from the Old Testament does not indicate there is nothing beyond what was revealed in the Old Testament or that there is no difference. When Paul tells us in Galatians the gospel was preached before unto Abraham; does he mean us to understand it was the same gospel in every respect? When he further declares Christ hath redeemed us "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles," are we to conclude that Abraham had in all particulars the blessings which Christians to-day have? or that Christians receive nothing beyond what Abraham knew? Had Abraham the indwelling Spirit? Did he cry, "Abba, Father?" How absurd it would be to make such deductions. Yet these are precisely the kind of conclusions some are disposed to draw from the fact that there is a reference to the Old Testament in 1 Cor. xv. There *are* words from the Old Testament, but they appear in an entirely different setting.

In this connection, we do well to remember the Apostle Peter's reference to Joel's prophecy in Acts ii. He can declare "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," and certain words are quoted. But we should be greatly mistaken if we concluded that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled; or supposed that what happened on the day of Pentecost differed in no wise from his prediction. Joel is speaking of "the great and the terrible day of the Lord." The day of Pentecost was of another character altogether. Peter does not say the prophecy was *fulfilled*, but "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Not, "this is the fulfilment of it;" for he quotes only part of it. So Paul, in 1 Cor. xv, quotes merely a few words of Isaiah's prophecy with the comment,

"Then shall be brought to pass the *saying* that is written," but he leaves the remainder of the prophecy entirely alone.

Let us try to avoid a mechanical way of dealing with Scripture, and not treat it as if it were a sort of puzzle in which all the parts fit one another so as to form a kind of uniform pattern. Scripture is not written according to that plan; though there are some who treat it as if it were, and this particularly applies to the advocates of the tribulation theory. Their treatment of the expression "the last trump" is an example. They turn to the book of Revelation and find there seven trumpets. And they discover that at the seventh trumpet (which, by the way, is not called the "last"), the mystery of God is to be finished, and amongst other things that shall happen is the judgment. "The time of the dead, that they should be judged." And there is an attempt to make this fit in exactly with 1 Thess. iv and Matt. xxiv, 31, and an effort to show that a variety of events take place at one and the same moment when Christ appears, because forsooth the "last trump" is mentioned in 1 Cor. xv, and what appears to be the last trump is referred to in Rev. xi, 15. The four Scriptures where a trumpet is referred to are supposed to be identical * and therefore it is concluded that the coming of the Lord for His saints, the gathering of Israel, the destruction of Antichrist, and one knows not what besides, all take place at the same time.

But let us present to the reader certain facts which have the most intimate relation to the question we are considering, but which are often sadly overlooked (or some of them) by those who maintain the views we are combating; and naturally so, for they completely overthrow them.

1. *The Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness.* Neither in Mr. Reese's book, nor in a pamphlet which has lately come before us advocating the same views, is this distinction even

* Some may think it a little far-fetched to build a fundamental doctrine upon *trumpets*. We are not compelled to think that there are a stock of trumpets in heaven, **any** more than there are stables filled with white horses (see Rev. xix, 14).

noticed. It is easy to understand why. If the teaching of Scripture as to the Sun and the Star were understood and admitted, their theories would have to be abandoned. But not only Scripture, we might say in the words of an Apostle, "Doth not even nature itself teach you," that the Morning Star and the Sun do not appear at the same time?

Now the Morning Star and the Sun are in Scripture both connected with the coming of Christ, but in entirely different ways. The Sun twice in the Old Testament, and the Morning Star twice in the New. But where do we find this distinction accounted for by Tribulationists? Such a distinction shatters the whole framework of their teaching, and proves how unreliable it is. For the Morning Star appears in the heavens some time before the Sun.

But there is another distinction. The Sun has to do with Israel, the Morning Star with the Church.

We read of the Sun in 2 Sam. xxiii, where the last words of David are recorded, and which do not (and could not) contain any reference to the Church. His last utterance has reference to the everlasting covenant God had made with him, as the ruler of God's earthly people, and the one from whom, according to the flesh, Christ sprang. Then at the very close of the Old Testament, in words clearly addressed to Israel, the Sun of Righteousness is referred to. What a fitting close to the Old Testament!

But what about the New? At the very close of it, Jesus presents Himself indeed as the Root and Offspring of David. He will fulfil all the promises made to David and to his earthly people. But something is added. The same One who is David's Son and David's Lord is also "the bright the Morning Star." And what is the response? "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Showing conclusively that He is invited to come as the Morning Star.* But why the double character, if the Coming all takes place at one and the same time? How can the Morning Star and the Sun appear together? And notice it is the Bride, the Church, not Israel,

* It is quite true the two are found together in this passage, but that does not affect at the least what we are saying, except to emphasise the distinction we are making.

that responds. In the very same verse, the Churches are mentioned, which carries our minds back to Chapters i-iii of the same book. There are no such Churches in Israel. Nor is the Spirit ever identified with Israel as it is here with the Bride.

And another thing. The supposed difficulty as to intervening events is really no difficulty. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." There is no mention of Tribulation, either to come or present, or of Antichrist, or of any other events needing to be fulfilled. Jesus presents Himself; and the answer of affection, inspired by the Spirit, is, "Come." How infinitely blessed! the soul in the power of the Spirit led out to Christ, inviting Him to come, for His own sake, and also that He may reign. But first come as the Morning Star, and then as the Sun of Righteousness. The teaching contained in the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew xxv) confirms this. The possession of the oil is the supreme matter (typical of the Holy Spirit) and the virgins go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Here, again, there is not a suggestion as to any events. The one thought is the Bridegroom. And they go in to be with him.*

Some reference should also be made to the passage in 2 Peter i, where there is another allusion to the Morning Star. There again, we have the dawn—not the sunrise—and the star, the herald of the day. The scene on the Mount of Transfiguration had made the prophetic word surer. What a picture that scene presents to us of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! But, in one way, it goes beyond the prophetic word; for it shows a company in closest relationship with Christ in heavenly glory, listening to the expression of the Father's delight in His beloved Son. And what most of all left its impression upon Peter was not the majesty expressive of the glory of the Kingdom, but the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ received from God the Father honour and glory when there came such a voice to Him from

* Into the teaching which refers all this to the Jews, we have no space to enter. That there is some truth in speaking of Matthew's gospel as Jewish cannot be doubted. But that view may easily be carried too far. If the context is carefully considered, and other parts of Scripture taken into account, there can be no doubt that the parable as a whole refers to Christendom and the wise virgins represent the Bride, the Church.

the excellent glory . . . and he adds : “ *This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount.*” And it is in this connection he speaks of the day dawning and the day star arising. Intimating that before the day of *actual* manifestation in the Kingdom, we shall be in heaven with Him in the Father’s presence.

Alas ! the Morning Star and all connected with it has no place in the Tribulation theory.

2. *Enoch.* If the Morning Star finds no place in the book under review, neither is there any reference to Enoch. Noah and Lot are usually referred to by Tribulationists, but not their predecessor. Why this silence ? What is said of Enoch in Gen. v, marks him out from everybody else in the most distinct way ; and along with Abel he stands at the head of the list of men and women of faith in Heb. xi.

We read in Gen. v, 24, “ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” And in Heb. xi, 5, “ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death ; and *was not found* ; because God had translated him.” Surely we can say : It was not for Enoch’s sake alone that this was written. Could we have a more striking picture of the translation of the Church to glory before the Tribulation era dawns ?

Especially does this become clear when we consider the position of Enoch in addition to what is personal to himself. Jude tells us he was the seventh from Adam, and that he prophesied of the Lord coming *with* ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment. Now seven in Scripture is the number of spiritual perfection ; and this is marked by the fact that Enoch walked with God, and pleased God, and did not see death. It marks Enoch out in a very special way. Moreover, he precedes Noah (who passed through the judgment) by three generations. “ He was not found because God had translated him.”

In Enoch and Noah, then, we have representatives of two distinct companies. The first, representing saints who will be translated, and will not be found, before the Day of the

Lord comes upon the world ; the other, those saints who will be preserved during that fearful period and brought through it. Thus we could not have a more striking confirmation of the truth of the Rapture (our being caught away) than is furnished by Enoch. If we are not to learn this fact from his history, what are we to learn from it ? He does not see death ; he does not pass through the judgment ; he is translated ; he is not found. Four things that will be true of those who are alive at the coming of the Lord for His own.

Luke XVII

A brief consideration of Luke xvii will help to confirm what has been said. Our Lord is meeting the demand of the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God should come. This was a legitimate question.

Our Lord, in his reply, speaks of the Kingdom as it existed at that moment, and also as regards its future aspect. "The Kingdom of God is among you," He said (v. 21 margin). It was present in His own Person, and was manifest in the power He exercised on behalf of men. That was its present form. In the future, it would be different. It would be as manifest as the lightning. "So shall also the Son of Man be in His day."

Then the Lord goes on to speak of the character of that day. It would be a time of judgment. He refers to Noah and Lot. As in their case, so in that future day, the saved would be taken to a place of safety. Judgment would fall upon those left. We see an illustration of it in Rev. xii, where a place of safety is provided for the woman (Israel) when persecuted by the dragon.

But all this has absolutely nothing to do with the Church. The Church is not taken to a place of safety *on earth*. Noah and Lot are not in any sense types of the Church. Enoch, who does represent what will happen to the Church, is not mentioned. Moreover, it is the title Son of Man which is used all through, a title which is not once used in the epistles with any reference to the Church. It is a title which stands in connection with redemption, judgment, and universal dominion.

Mr. Reese endeavours to meet the objection that nowhere in the epistles is use made of this title by saying that it might have presented a difficulty to the Greeks. They would have supposed it connoted human fatherhood. But that explanation does not suffice, for the simple reason that in John's gospel, which was written after all Paul's epistles and Peter's, and addressed as much to Gentiles 'as to Jews—the title Son of Man occurs repeatedly. The same applies to Luke. No ; the reason for the omission is that Son of Man stands, as we have said, in relation to judgment (John v, 27) and to earthly dominion (John i, 51) and not to the Church, as such, at all.

3. The Church will not pass through the Tribulation and what is connected with it, because Scripture again and again speaks of the saints coming *with* Christ when He appears, and if they are to appear *with* Him, He must come *for* them first.

Zech. xiv, 5 : " The Lord my God shall come and all the saints *with* Thee."

Col. iii, 4 : " When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear *with* Him in glory."

1 Thess. iv, 14 : " Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring *with* Him."

Jude v, 14 : " Behold, the Lord cometh *with* ten thousands of His saints."

Rev. xix, 14 : " And the armies which were in heaven *followed Him* upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." (This last statement identifies them with those referred to in verse 8 of the same chapter.)

What further evidence do we need? The author of " The Approaching Advent of Christ " seeks either to evade the plain teaching of Scripture, or to set it aside by attempting to prove that our Lord comes for His saints on His way to the earth to destroy Antichrist and the ungodly, and that His coming for them and with them is practically at the same moment. To give his own words : " When He comes according

to 1 Thess. iv, 13-17, and Matt. xxiv, 31,* He is on His way to earth *to establish His Messianic Kingdom*. But before the blow falls upon the ungodly, the Elect are gathered from one end of heaven to the other to meet the approaching Lord. They meet the Lord in the air and follow in His train."

Yet he himself seems to feel the incongruity of this, and more than once suggests a slight pause or interval. On page 195, he says, "there is no attempt to crowd all the events of the Parousia 'into one event.'" But he does not tell us how long this interval is to be. He cannot. How does he know then that it will not be seven years? The only justification for denying the seven years' interval would be that Scripture definitely asserts the contrary. Where does Scripture do this? In admitting there will be some interval, Mr. Reese *gives his whole case away*. For neither he nor anyone else can determine the length of that interval, or what may transpire unless Scripture tells us. And, therefore, what right has he to say it will not be $3\frac{1}{2}$ years or 7 years or even longer? † And what an incongruous situation would be created without an interval. Our Lord, we are told, will be "revealed . . . 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, 8-9.) And all this at the moment He meets His Bride, restores Israel, and consumes Antichrist. Think of all these occurrences happening together, and the incongruity of the Bride seeing her Beloved for the first time under such circumstances; meeting Him in flaming fire, vengeance in His heart, and in a scene of slaughter! Will the reader ask himself whether that accords with his wishes, or whether it is likely to be an arrangement of which the Lord would approve!

* We do not admit the identity of these two passages.

† On page 212, he refers to his view as being "exactly in keeping with the analogy of the past," and cites the cases of Noah and Lot. Yet of Lot it says, "*the same day* that Lot went out of Sodom" the judgment came, whereas Noah entered into the ark *seven days* before the flood (Gen. vii, 4 and 10). Should not this fact warn us against being too precise? Mr. Reese fails to see this distinction, for he speaks of the judgment falling *on the same day* with regard to Noah. There was a longer interval in the case of Noah than in the case of Lot. Why should there not be a longer interval still in the case of the Church?

How much more suitable to think of the Lord coming for His Church first ; taking her to the Father's House ; where the marriage scene of Rev. xix is celebrated ; and then coming forth with her to take His Kingdom and reign !

4. *Such a thought is in perfect harmony with Scripture*, as witnessed by John xiv, 1-3 ; 1 Thess. iv, 13-17 ; Rev. xix, 6-9 ; 2 Thess. ii, 1-2. Let us consider these for a moment.

(a) In the Upper Room, our Lord begins his last discourse to His disciples with the words : " In My Father's House are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself : that where I am, there ye may be also."

Here our Lord speaks definitely of His coming again. And in what connection ? The Father's House ; a place prepared : " receive you unto Myself," are His words ; "*that where I am, there ye may be also.*" These are the facts. This is the promise. Not a word about flaming fire ; not a hint as to tribulation ; no mention of seeing Him when he comes to judge. One of the authorities quoted by Mr. Reese in support of his views even hints that it is to the *battlefield* the Lord will conduct His Church the moment He comes. If words have any meaning, the Lord asserts here that He will conduct us to the Father's House.

(b) The passage in 1 Thess. iv, 13-17, which is another key passage, supports the above view entirely. Mr. Reese tries to persuade us that the only point in view here is that the dead will be raised and the living changed at the same moment. But there is a most important fact stated antecedent to this. " Them *also* that sleep in Jesus will God bring *with* Him." That is, bring with Him when He comes back to earth. Then the Apostle shows how this will be accomplished. " The Lord Himself shall descend ;" the dead in Christ shall rise. But what for ? Not as Mr. Reese and others would have us believe, simply with the view of joining Christ on His way to destroy Antichrist. There is not a word in this passage about the Man of Sin or the

Tribulation or anything of that nature. And so distinct is this section from what follows in Chapter V that the apostle tells them to "Comfort one another with these words." Showing that what he has just been saying has a special reference to the Church. And what is the goal he sets before them? How are they to think of the Lord's Coming? The answer is in verse 17. "*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.*" Words which fit in entirely with our Lord's own words in John xiv, as we have seen. He will take us first to the Father's House. A consummation surely more in harmony with the calling of the Church, and with His own desires and ours, than slaying Antichrist and making His enemies His footstool.

Now it is of all importance to notice that the apostle refers to this special communication which he now makes as a new revelation, that is, as to the details. It might fittingly be regarded as an addendum to what our Lord says in John xiv. 1 Thess. iv tells us *how* He will come to receive us to Himself and take us to the Father's House. Consequently, the apostle prefaces his statement with the announcement: "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." It was something additional to all his previous communications.

In order to grasp the significance of this revelation and its special application to Christians—not to the world—it is well to notice that in the next section (Chapter V) where he does speak of the coming in relation to the world, there are some striking differences. He refers to it as "the Day of the Lord," whereas in verse 15 of Chapter IV, it is "the coming of the Lord." He speaks of "times and seasons." These are not mentioned in the previous section. He changes the pronoun from "you" to "they" and "them," and the coming is as "a thief in the night."

Further, the Thessalonians are exhorted to put on for a helmet "the hope of salvation." How can this mean salvation out of the Tribulation and Antichrist's power? They were not present. As a matter of fact, in their case, such dangers never arose, therefore, to refer to a helmet in such

a connection was superfluous. What *hope of salvation* is meant? Clearly it can only mean the expectation of Christ to deliver them before the Tribulation and Antichrist appeared. Otherwise it has no sense or application. And what follows confirms this thought. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, *we should live together with Him.*" This is the hope of the Christian, and times and seasons do not relate to it.

(c) Rev. xix, 6-9 is also in harmony with this view. Here we see that *before* the Lord comes to smite the nations and to rule them as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, a festive scene in heaven takes place. It is the marriage of the Lamb. Could anything be more appropriate? "The marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready."

But we may well ask, "How came she there?" The answer, and the only possible answer, is in accordance with what we have already seen to be true in John xiv and 1 Thess. iv and Matt. xxv. Where else can we locate this marriage scene? How can it be placed *after* verse 11 of Chapter xix and the subsequent scenes and transactions? Verse 14 of Chapter xix tells us that those referred to earlier in the chapter accompany the warrior upon the white horse. Moreover, "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is seen as the heavenly city, which is the Millennial aspect of the Church. How could she be described as the Lamb's wife unless the marriage had already taken place?

So that the marriage takes place *before* Christ appears to reign and before the Millennium. Consequently this heavenly company, called the wife of the Lamb—seen in heaven before the appearing—cannot be Israel, as Israel is not restored until after the appearing.

(d) Lastly, the reference in 2 Thess. ii, 1-2, furnishes further corroboration, if that is needed. The apostle is warning those to whom he writes against supposing "the Day of the Lord is at hand" (or "now present"). Before that day arrives, certain events must happen, but no events are referred to in the passage in 1 Thess. iv, which we have considered. And

so he refers back to that, and says, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (of which he had previously spoken) *and by our gathering together unto Him,*" according to 1 Thess. iv, as reasons why "the Day of the Lord" could not be present. As much as to say: "He is coming *for* us to take us out of this scene before He comes to judge, and therefore if we are still here, how can the Day of the Lord be present?"

Thus we see how overwhelming is the evidence that Christ will come *for* us; and then, after an interval with Him *where He is*, and certain events, both in heaven and on earth, have transpired, we shall come forth with Him to reign.

5. But one of the strongest reasons against the belief that the Church is to be on earth during the period known as the Day of the Lord is *to be found in the fact that this period is altogether different in character from the present Church period*, and those who advocate this view destroy the special feature of the Christian dispensation, which is one of *grace*. Let us see what light the Book of The Revelation throws upon this.

(a) The Holy Spirit is spoken of not as the Spirit of adoption, indwelling the believer; or, as now in connection with the Body of Christ and the House of God, but in relation to God's providential dealings and to His Government. At least, this is true after Chapter III. Thus there is a fundamental difference. What specially characterises the Christian era in this respect disappears entirely.

(b) From Chapter VI, we have up to Chapter XIX, a series of judgments, entirely foreign to the present "acceptable year of the Lord." The "Day of vengeance" has arrived. It is utterly impossible to imagine that both should be prominent at the same time. This is the day of God's long-suffering, when He "will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. ii). If the reader will refer to Chapter VI, 15-17, he will see how incompatible such a state of things as is there described is with the day of grace.

(c) Not only so, but the character of the *prayers* of God's people has changed. The souls under the altar cry for vengeance on their enemies (Chapter VI, 10). In Chapter VIII, we see the angel at the golden altar offering incense with the prayers of all saints, and what is the answer to these prayers : "Voices and thunderings and lightnings, and an earthquake" (Verse 5). It is the period to which the so-called imprecatory Psalms belong. These Psalms do not belong to this present era of grace ; and Christians need not be troubled about them. They will be perfectly in keeping when God is no longer acting in grace but in judgment.

(d) Instead of the Church being in evidence, we find the Nation of Israel prominent. It is impossible to understand the questions we are considering or reach a right conclusion, unless we recognise the fundamental distinction between Israel and the Church. God's purposes concerning the two are wholly distinct. Accordingly, Chapters I-III all refer to the Church, but thereafter, in Chapter VII, we have the sealing of the twelve tribes ; in Chapter XI the temple, and Jerusalem referred to symbolically in Verse 8 ; the woman in Chapter XII is Israel, and in Chapter XIV, 1, Mount Zion is mentioned.

(e) Further, in Chapter XIV, a different gospel is preached from the Gospel of the grace of God, now being proclaimed. It is called the "everlasting" gospel, it is true, but not because it is *identical* with the one we preach to-day, or because there has never been any other, but because its contents are everlasting in their character. It has always been incumbent upon men to "Fear God, and give glory to Him." But notice a difference. The reason is not because His Son has died, but because "the hour of His judgment is come ;" and those who listen to this message are called upon to worship God as Creator, not as the God of grace, or the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the same time, there will be God's people still on earth, as we see from Verse 12, "They that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." But all is in view of the Kingdom (Chapter XI, 15) ; and the Kingdom in power

and manifestation on earth. The Church is something absolutely different and distinct from all this that we have been speaking of. Moreover, it is impossible to imagine that, in the same dispensation, God gives His children two entirely different gospels to preach.

Judgment, judgment everywhere, is what characterises the period to which we have been referring. Whereas just the very opposite is true to-day. The most cruel, abominable actions are perpetrated now both by individuals and nations, and there is no immediate interference or punishment, though there may be at times some degree of restraint.

6. A right understanding of the book of the Revelation would deliver us completely from the erroneous thoughts we are here contesting.

The *historical* interpretation cannot be correct, for if the judgments under the seals, trumpets and vials were proceeding now, the whole character of the present dispensation of grace would be destroyed.

The interpretation that endeavours to find support for Tribulation theories cannot be correct, for the Church is not seen on earth after Chapter III.

Nor is that interpretation correct which confounds the Kingdom with the Church.

Let us take a brief glance at the book itself.

The first six verses, ending with Amen, form an introductory section. The moment Jesus Christ is presented, there is a response from a company on earth. "Unto Him that loved us," etc. This response is from a company in the enjoyment of Christ's love; conscious of what He has done for them; that they are freed from their sins, and assured, too, of their position as a Kingdom of priests. This can only be the Church.

Then, in Verse 7, we have something wholly different—not an address to Christ, but to the world. "Behold He cometh

with clouds," etc. It is the Church's testimony. Yet on page 132 of his book, Mr. Reese treats Verse 7 as though it were addressed *to* the Church, and was a proof that the Church would be here when our Lord comes as described in this verse. He has never realised the difference between what is said in Verses 5-6 and this declaration in Verse 7. How could the latter be addressed *to* the Church? It is the aspect of the Day of the Lord with which The Revelation is principally concerned, but with which the Church has nothing to do, except that it forms part of her testimony now.

Going on to Verse 19, we find the contents of the book presented under three heads: (1) "The things which thou hast seen." This refers to the vision of the Son of Man in the midst of the seven candlesticks. (2) "The things which are." That is, the seven stars and the seven candlesticks, or, in other words, the Church. (3) "The things which shall be hereafter," (or more correctly, "The things which are about to be after these.") That is, after the Church period is ended.

Then follows an outline of the whole Church period under the guise of seven Churches actually existing in John's day. This part of the The Revelation has been historically fulfilled, as anyone can see who reads Church history. We are now in the Laodicean period.*

Now what happens in Chapter IV? "After this (or rather "After these things") I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven," and John heard a voice saying, "Come

* This fact need present no difficulty as regards the immediate expectation of Christ's return. The ten virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom, but he tarries. But his immediate coming was their expectation. Peter, in addressing Israel (he says, "Ye men of Israel:" he is not addressing those who had been converted), promised that the Lord Jesus Christ would return if the nation repented. See verses 19 and 20. ("When the times," should be, "so that the times," or "in order that".) "And He shall send Jesus Christ." And he does this in spite of the fact that, according to His eternal counsels, God was calling out a people from Jews and Gentiles to form the Church with hopes entirely distinct from Israel, and the nucleus of that Church was already present. It is quite true he says, "Whom the heaven must receive" etc., but this does not do away with the fact that Israel's repentance and conversion is the only condition mentioned; and that throughout the address there is no allusion to the Church whatever, Christ would return, they were told, if as a nation they repented. In this matter, we have nothing to do with events which are in God's keeping. In the matter of our Lord's return, a parallel presents itself in the preaching of the Gospel. An evangelist does not preach only to the elect, nor does he ask himself whether those to whom he is preaching are elect. That he has to leave. He simply addresses all and makes his offers to all. Yet if he is intelligent, he knows that God's sovereignty is an important truth which has to be reckoned with.

up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter' " (or " after these things "). This is in exact agreement with what is said in Chapter I, Verse 19. The things which thou hast seen, and the things which are have passed, and we now come to the things which must be after these.

Why is John invited to come up hither, except that a great change is taking place? He has been on earth viewing the Church as to its responsibility as God's witness on earth, symbolised by seven golden candlesticks. All that is dealt with and finished with in Chapters II and III. There is not another mention of them as being on earth. In Chapters IV and V, we have two scenes in heaven. One in regard to God as Creator—Lord God Almighty—and His relation to creation: " Thou hast created all things and for Thy *pleasure* they are and were created." And the other in regard to redemption. In the first, the Lamb is not seen, in the second, He is the centre of the picture. And He is seen as " the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David." It is in this character He takes the book, which is a book of judgment.

The Four and Twenty Elders

But before the seals are opened, there is an interlude, during which the Lamb that was slain is extolled by the four living creatures, the four and twenty elders and myriads of angels. But who are they that sing the new song? The four and twenty elders. And the question needs to be asked, who or what do they represent?

Mr. Reese—and there are others who take the same view—will not admit that they represent the Church or, as some think, redeemed humanity. He bases his objection to such a view almost entirely upon an amended translation. The question is whether the " us " in Verses 9 and 10 should be there, and the " we " should be " they." But the MSS. vary and it is a disputed point. But, even if it is conceded that some modern translations are correct in their omission and alteration, it does not decide the point we are discussing. There is another factor which Mr. Reese seems entirely to overlook. It is this. The elders are said to " sing." When

we come to the angels in Verse 12, they "say" (not "sing") with a loud voice. Strange as it may seem to some, perhaps, the angels are never said to sing. At creation "all the sons of God shouted for joy." * At the birth of our Lord, we are told of "a multitude of the heavenly host *saying*." (Luke ii, 13.) The first song of the Bible is in celebration of redemption (Ex. xv). Of the four living creatures in Rev. iv, 8, the same is true. It does not say they sang, but "saying, Holy, holy, holy."

It is therefore fair to assume that as the four and twenty elders *sing*, they represent the redeemed. They sing of that which was true of themselves. To suppose the subject of this "new song" to be something in which they do not personally participate would empty it of some of its meaning and rob this heavenly scene of a measure of its interest. How much more in keeping with Scripture and our own spiritual desires to think of the Church in heaven, the scene to which she belongs, and in the presence of her Lord, and taking part in such a celebration, than to imagine her here on earth amid the horrors of the Great Tribulation and in the presence of Antichrist!

That the former is true, and not the latter, seems confirmed by the way in which Chapter XIX opens: "And after these things, I heard a great voice of much people *in heaven*, saying, Alleluia, Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore." Here we have much *people in heaven* praising and thanking God because of His judgments that are taking place on earth. What opportunity would there be for this if, as Mr. Reese believes, there is no resurrection until the Lord returns in judgment, and the saints are only raised to accompany him at once to earth? People cannot be on earth and in heaven at the same time. Moreover, the marriage of the Lamb follows, as we have already noticed, before Christ comes in judgment.

* "The Morning Stars *sang* together," but who they represent, we are not told.

7. *Which view does Col. III, 1-4 favour?* Christians are said to be risen with Christ. They are exhorted to seek the things which are above. Their life is hid with Christ in God. Then we are told: "When Christ Who is our Life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Is it in keeping with these facts to suppose that the Church is to participate in the "time of Jacob's trouble," and the first thing that happens to her when the Lord comes is to be occupied with things on earth and with judgment, although her "hope is laid up in heaven"? (Col. I, 5.) In this view, all that belongs to *her life being hid with Christ in God* has no place. Nor have the words, "Ye also shall appear *with* Him in glory" very much meaning.

On the other hand, if, as this passage states, "our life is hid with Christ in God," is it not much more in harmony with this to suppose that, first of all, when He comes we shall enter into all that is Christ's as sharing His life? He will be our joy, as we shall be His; and then, after a season of deepest intimacy and communion in the Father's House, we shall appear *with Him*? This alone can be the meaning of the words: "When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." The Church belongs to the place He comes from, not the place He comes to.

8. A proper understanding of *the 70 weeks of Daniel* is necessary, if any right conclusion is to be reached as to whether the Church will pass through the Great Tribulation, and be present on earth when the 70th week is being fulfilled.

There are, we all know, different interpretations of this passage (see Dan. ix). Some take the historical view, that Verse 27 refers to Messiah and that He made the covenant, and in the middle of the week—that is, at the end of his three and a half years' public ministry—He caused "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," by the fact of His own death which set aside all other sacrifices, while the remaining three and a half years are being fulfilled now during the Church period.

But there are very serious objections to this view. (1) In Verse 26, Messiah is said to be "cut off and have nothing" (margin). How can this be harmonised with Verse 27, if the above conclusions are right? (2) The remainder of Verse 26 evidently refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and therefore "people" refers to the Romans, and the "prince" cannot be Christ. His people certainly did not destroy the city and the sanctuary. (3) The "He," therefore, of Verse 27 cannot refer to Him either. For the following reasons: (a) "a (not "the") covenant with many" refers to Jews. (It should be "the many.") Did Christ make any covenant with Jews, as such, after He was risen? (b) If He made any covenant at all, it was with Gentiles and Jews. But the covenant spoken of here is certainly not with Gentiles. (c) This reference is to a covenant which is broken, and idolatry is substituted for the true worship of Jehovah. (d) The one who makes this covenant and breaks it is judged. "That determined shall be poured upon the desolator" (not "desolate"). Christ is certainly not the "desolator" and no judgment ever could fall upon Him.

This brings us to our fourth reason for rejecting the historical view. (4) It refers to Antichrist and is yet future. (5) Though the verses appear to be consecutive and without any break, there is a long interval of time between Verses 26 and 27. Nineteen centuries nearly have passed, and Verse 27 has not yet been fulfilled. This is where the Church period comes in. It fills an interval between the 69th and 70th weeks; and before the 70th week runs its course, the true Church will be removed from the scene altogether.

The 70th week is the subject of prophecy; the Church is not the subject of prophecy. During the whole Church period, the fulfilment of the 70th week has been in abeyance. If all this time has elapsed without any fulfilment, does it not show that the Church and the last week of Daniel have no relation to one another whatever, and that therefore the Church period ends before the other begins? *

* We are quite aware that some think our Lord's public ministry fulfilled the first half of the week, and that only three and one-half years remain to be fulfilled; but this does not affect the point. In The Revelation, the latter term seems to be definitely the period of the Tribulation.

In any case, the seventy weeks have nothing to do with the Church. This is how the subject is introduced: "Seventy weeks"—note, the *full* term—"are determined upon *Thy* people"—Jews—"and upon *Thy* holy city"—Jerusalem. *All* relates to the earthly people. The entire 70 weeks refer to them and to them only. Moreover, the division of the weeks into sections reveals the perfection and accuracy of Scripture—seven weeks; sixty-two weeks; and one week. And that last week still remains to be fulfilled.

Who would have thought that the Church—the subject of God's eternal Counsels—would come in between the last two weeks? That for nearly two thousand years, already, God's relations with His earthly people would be interrupted while He fulfilled His eternal purpose which "He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. iii, 11.) But so it is. And when this is seen, there is no difficulty in believing that the Church is removed to the heavenly scene to which she belongs, at the time when God begins to deal with His earthly people again, and their last apostacy is consummated in their alliance with Antichrist, before their final blessing. As our Lord said, "If another shall come in his own name, him *ye will receive.*"

Let us repeat again; The Church period comes in between "the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God." Also between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel. And it is removed before the day of vengeance arrives, or the 70th week is fulfilled.

According to Eph i, 19-23, the same *power* that placed Christ in the heavenlies, far above all principality and power, at God's right hand, is also toward us, and will presently place the Church there, to be "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." This is the plain meaning of this passage; and it becomes the death blow of all the arguments Mr. Reese advances; for how can we suppose that events which belong to earth, and will take place on earth, can either take precedence of the above or defer its accomplishment?

That the Church has a distinct place and is a distinct company is proved by the fact that through her the princi-

palities and powers in heavenly places are to learn the all-various wisdom of God (the many-coloured splendour) ; there will be glory to God *through the Church* unto the ages of the ages. (Eph. iii, 10 and 21.)

We are told on page 266 that " It is a sentimental delusion that a secret Rapture, or a pre-tribulation Rapture, is the hope of the Church." And on page 280, " We wait in vain for one strong argument that simply compels us to adopt their view of the End." And again, " They have not a single text of Scripture that is even remotely conclusive."

These are strong words, and certainly lack nothing as far as dogmatism is concerned. But the question is : Are they true? We have given a number of proofs to the contrary. Let us briefly repeat them.

1. " I Jesus . . . the bright and Morning Star." " And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." The Morning Star appears some time before the Sun. According to Mr. Reese, the Spirit and the Bride are inviting our Lord to do something quite out of harmony with what is actually to take place. Again and again he asserts that all is to take place together. On page 97, we read, " Messiah appears in His glory ; Israel repents ; the sleeping saints rise ; Antichrist is given to the burning flame, and the Kingdom is established." On page 133, this is repeated in almost identical language, with the additional assertion that " the coming for the saints and the coming *with* the saints take place at the same crisis."

2. *Enoch*. Enoch was translated that he should not see death ; and *was not found*, because God had translated him." And this was prior to the judgment on the ungodly.

3. Scripture again and again asserts that when the Lord appears, His saints *accompany* Him. Zech. xiv, 5 ; Col. iii, 4 ; 1 Thess. iv, 14 ; Jude v, 14 ; Rev. xix, 14.

4. The following passages speak of our Lord coming for His own, or of our being with Him, altogether apart from any events connected with the Appearing. John xiv, 1-3 ; 1 Thess. iv, 13-17, v, 9-10 ; Rev. xix, 6-9 ; 2 Thess. ii, 1-2.

5. The fifth reason, and one which inevitably leads to the conclusion that the Church will not be on earth during the Tribulation period, is that the character of that period is altogether opposed to this day of grace and to the truth of the Church. We have already dwelt at length upon this aspect of the case, but consider one fact more: during that unexampled era, God will, according to Zech. xiv, 2, "gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle." And as we have seen from The Revelation, Jerusalem becomes again the centre. Whatever has the earthly Jerusalem and armies gathered against it, to do with the Church or the Church with it? It shows conclusively that a new era has commenced. Mr. Reese's system creates absolute confusion.

6. The structure of the Book of The Revelation of itself furnishes ample proof of the view we maintain, even apart from definite statements. There is a three-fold division. (1) That which John had seen. (2) A foreshadowing of the history of the Church on earth. (3) The scene transferred to heaven, and the Church seen no longer on earth. Why does the Voice say to John, "Come up hither," unless to indicate a change of this nature? It was not necessary otherwise. The subsequent visions could have been given to John on earth.

7. Col. iii, 1-4, is conclusive. We remember one of the clearest exponents of Scripture we ever knew, Edward Dennett, formerly a Baptist minister, telling us these words had convinced him of the truth of the Rapture: "When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear *with Him in glory.*"

8. The 70th week of Daniel will be fulfilled in the time of Antichrist, and as this week contains no reference to the Church, and the events predicted have no relation to it, as we have shown, to suppose the Church to be on earth is entirely unwarranted.

The truth of the Rapture is bound up with the truth of the Church. The Church will share Christ's heavenly glory. She belongs to heaven. In the purpose of God, she is already

seated in Christ in heavenly places. The Bridegroom will present the Bride to Himself "a Church in glory." This is altogether apart from the earthly Kingdom of Messiah, and what belongs to earth. Yet Mr. Reese, again and again, as we have seen, fixes our attention exclusively upon happenings in connection with earth and with Israel; showing he has never grasped the true calling and character of the Church. And it is this fact, more than any other, which leads to all the blundering. According to him, instead of the joy Christ anticipates when He will present the Church to Himself, and instead of our company in the Father's House, it is to be a "day of battle" and of slaughter; and it is as a warrior taking vengeance that we are first to see Him!

These are the facts, then, and this is the teaching of Scripture. Yet in the face of all this evidence, a pre-tribulation Rapture is called "a sentimental delusion," and we are calmly told there is "not a single text of Scripture that is even remotely conclusive!"

Before closing, one or two further points need to be considered.

Mr. Reese has a good deal to say with reference to the fact that in the New Testament there are more allusions to the Appearing than to the Rapture; and he insists that the latter is in view of the former. So far, we are prepared to agree with him; and it may possibly be that Christ's appearing and Kingdom have sometimes been rather kept in the background. But when the attempt is made, as is done on pages 97 and 133, to bring the Coming of our Lord within one event and one precise moment, insisting also that when He comes for His Church, it is only to accompany Him at once to the earth, and that the Rapture of the saints and the restoration of Israel practically take place together—in one word, that when we see Him for the first time, He will be "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," and coming to "tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"; we join issue with him entirely.

Yet we *should* look for the day of His appearing and His Kingdom, and we *should* earnestly desire to be amongst those who *love* His appearing. (2 Tim. iv, 1 and 8.) Supposing an earthly monarch about to visit a certain town in his dominions, to give rewards to those who had been faithful to him, and to administer punishment to evil doers. Someone in the town is questioned as to what he is waiting for. He might very well reply: "I am waiting for the King to come to this town. But," he might add, "before he arrives, some of us are going out to meet him. We shall spend some time in his company, and then we shall escort him to the town." That is precisely how the matter stands with regard to the believer and the coming of his Lord. From one point of view, he waits for God's Son from heaven to come and reign. From another, he waits to be caught up to be with his Lord in the Father's House, and at the marriage of the Lamb, and then to come forth with Him.

It is argued that those who watch for events, and believe that Antichrist will be revealed before the Lord comes in any sense, are living in expectation of Christ's return, and waiting for Him just as truly as others who have a far different expectation. If they are waiting for Antichrist, we do not quite see how they can be waiting for the Lord Jesus. If this is the true attitude of the Christian, it would seem almost more appropriate to be saying "Come" to Antichrist; and then when he has come, we could say, "Come," to the Lord.

The illustration is sometimes used of a wife waiting for her husband to return from some far-off land, where he has been absent from her for a long time. And it is said she would be just as truly waiting for him, even though she knew that certain events would happen before he arrived. But those who use this illustration seem to lose sight of one thing. Everything would depend upon the *character* of such events. If the wife knew that some great tragedy was to happen to her and the children *before* her husband returned, would that make no difference? Surely it would. She would be occupied with that and how she was to pass through it. Mr. Reese uses the illustration of someone who was looking for the barber's pole as a sign, but what he was really looking for

was the barber. But the events that Tribulationists expect are something rather different from a "barber's pole," or some signal announcing the arrival of a train. It will be the most terrible ordeal that anyone ever passed through—it is *the great* Tribulation. Fancy anticipating this, and then saying they are looking for the Lord! Either one or the other cannot be true. A barber's pole, indeed! More like losing your *head* than your *hair* at that time!

Several Mistakes

There are several mistakes made by Mr. Reese upon which we might dwell. Such as his denial that there will be any revival of the Roman Empire. Why then does the stone—as recorded in Dan. ii—smite the image on its feet—the fourth Kingdom, which all admit represents the Roman Empire? This must be still future, for the stone is said to become a Kingdom which God will set up (Verse 44) that shall fill the whole earth. As this is still future, it follows, that some form of the Roman Empire must exist when this is fulfilled.

Again, he speaks of the first beast of Rev. xiii as the Antichrist. But no one, we believe, doubts that the Lawless One referred to in 2 Thess. ii, is the Antichrist, and it will be found that the description given of the second beast corresponds with the one whose coming is "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," far more than does the other. The Antichrist must have *some* resemblance to the true Christ; and this is apparent in the description given of the second beast in Rev. xiii, who had two horns *like a lamb*, and who "doeth great wonders." He has a distinctly religious character, while the first beast has not, neither is he said to do wonders. (See page 247.)

On page 284, he speaks of "the Israelitist Church of the End-time." Who ever heard of an Israelitist Church? If there is one, then it is clear proof that the Church of God of the present epoch is not on earth at the same time. Two churches of opposite characters cannot both be recognised by God at the same moment.

Such errors as we have mentioned suggest whether Mr. Reese is altogether reliable as an expositor. Evidently he has never grasped the truth of the Church as taught in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Yet the Church is the *key* to any right understanding of the questions we have been discussing.

Before leaving our criticism of the book, we would make a final reference to the extraordinary interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, given us on page 296. What is asserted, though not in these exact words, is that the Gospel is not found here. It simply teaches "neighbourly concern and loving service." The Good Samaritan does not represent the Saviour. Such truths are not taught or implied in this parable.

Mr. Reese overlooks two things. First, that two questions are asked by the lawyer: (a) "What shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?" (b) "Who is my neighbour?" And our Lord in the parable answers *both*. But second. The parable really fits into the whole of the chapter, and stands as an integral part of it. Luke x is one of the most illuminating portions of Scripture found anywhere in the New Testament. It marks the transition from law to grace. The lawyer says: "What must I *do*?" He is answered by the question: "What is written in the law?" He knows, but he knows also he has failed. He is too weak. This is precisely the picture of man which the Lord draws when He introduces His parable. It all relates to the conversation which has just taken place. The priest and Levite, representatives of the law, do nothing. The wounded man is a picture of absolute weakness—half-dead. What can he do? There comes along one who is ready to do everything, and whose ministry meets all the need. It is the ministry of grace in contrast with the demands of law. If this is not the Gospel, we know not where it can be found. If the parable only furnishes an answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" it leaves the sinner in a more helpless and hopeless position than ever. We must know how the Saviour has served us, before we can rightly minister to others or serve Him. And this shows the connection of the parable with what follows. Martha was *umbered with much serving*, just because she did not yet know

to its full extent the ministry of the Good Samaritan. The man rescued from the roadside and taken care of in the inn, never could have uttered Martha's complaint, "Dost thou not care?" If Mr. Reese is so utterly astray here, is he likely to be a safe guide in other respects?

And now, finally, may we draw attention to the fact, that, if the teaching of this book, "The Approaching Advent of Christ," is true, then some of our choicest hymns will have to be revised or scrapped altogether. This is no mere question of sentiment. It is a most serious consideration, which needs to be carefully pondered. Were those writers, who reached such a high spiritual elevation and were enabled to express their feelings and thoughts in the noblest language, mistaken sentimentalists?

If Mr. Reese and those who think with him are right, then we can no longer sing:

"In hope we lift our wishful longing eyes,
Waiting to see the MORNING STAR arise;
How bright, how gladsome will His advent be,
Before the SUN shines forth in majesty."

There is no Morning Star in any true sense in the theory of Tribulationists.

Or again, take these noble lines of the well-known Frances Bevan:

"Midst the darkness, storm and tempest,
One bright gleam I see;
Well I know the blessed morrow,
Christ will come for me.

Who is this Who comes to meet me
On the desert way;
As the MORNING STAR foretelling
God's unclouded day?

He and I together entering
Those bright courts above;
He and I together sharing
All the Father's love.

He and His in that bright glory
One deep joy shall share ;
Ours to be forever with Him,
His that we are there." *

And how one delights to remember these words of Cowper's :

" O Saviour ! Whom absent we love,
Whom not having seen we adore,
Whose Name is exalted above
All glory, dominion and power ;
O come, and display us as Thine,
And leave us no longer to roam ;
May we in Thy glory, Lord, shine,
Thy presence soon summon us *HOME*."

Yes, it is Home, not the battlefield we wait for ; the joy of the Bridegroom in His Bride, not a scene of judgment and slaughter ; the Father's House, not merely an earthly Kingdom ; to share His heavenly glory, and not be faced immediately with the last development of lawlessness.

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

* The plural has been substituted for the singular here.

NOTE. If anyone after reading the above should still be in doubt, will he or she carefully study the Epistle to the Ephesians; and observe:- (1) The Church is blessed with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly* places; and the prayer at the end of Chapter I is that we may not only know our heavenly calling, but the exceeding greatness of God's power to *us-ward* who believe, which is according to the power which He wrought in Christ, and will one day place the Church *where it placed Him*. Christ and His body are one. His place and portion are ours. (2) In Chapter II we are

seen in the purpose of God *already* seated in *heavenly places* in Christ. (3) In Chapter V. the consummation is; "That He might present it (the Church) to Himself a glorious church," (or, " a church in *glory.*")

Yet we are asked to believe that when our Lord comes something entirely different from the above will transpire. The putting down of Christ's enemies will be His first concern and the Kingdom will take precedence of everything. The fulfilment of the Church's proper hope will have to wait. In fact, according to the theory of Tribulationists, Israel will be brought into blessing before the eternal purpose of God regarding Christ and the Church is made good. The distinctive truth as to the Church is lost.