

SHORT PAPERS

ON

PROPHECY.

BY

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LONDON:

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AND 12, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

S. W. PARTRIDGE & Co., 9, PATERNOSTER ROW.

GLASGOW: G. TURNER & Co., 40, SAUCHIEHALL STREET.

INTRODUCTION.

THESE "Short Papers on Prophecy" are written with a desire of helping in some little measure to a better understanding of the word of God, and of stimulating the hearts of God's people to a deeper longing for the fulfilment of "the blessed hope."

The importance of the subject cannot well be overrated. The greater part of the word of God is more or less prophetic, and a very large proportion remains yet to be fulfilled. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that one special feature of the Spirit's work should be to "shew unto them *things to come*;" and the Spirit, writing by Peter, speaks of "the sure word of prophecy" as a light that shineth in a dark place, to which we do well to take heed. Also a special blessing is promised in the opening of the Book of the Revelation to those that *read*, and *hear*, and *keep* the "words of this prophecy: for the time is at hand."

Surely then it is the privilege of the children of God to seek to know His mind as to the things coming on the earth, the place and position of the

Church, and the bright and glorious future of Israel. A knowledge of God's dispensational dealings, and of His purposes unfolded in the prophetic word, are indispensable to a right understanding of God's word as a whole; and without it no one can rightly divide the word of truth, according to the exhortation of Paul to Timothy.

Yet there are many Christians who say that the subject is unpractical, and that it diverts the mind from active service for the Lord. Such make a grave mistake; for surely our God would never have given us so much in His word about the future, if the study of it had been unpractical, and calculated to hinder His servants in their work for Him. The contrary to this is emphatically the case; for when the Lord Jesus is giving charge to His servants, in the parable in Luke xix., to work and labour for Him, the word is, "*Occupy till I come.*" The coming of Christ as the Master to reward His faithful servants is set before them as a great motive power to stimulate them to labour for Him; and when the apostle would seek to arouse the saints in his day to their privilege of serving Christ, it is by the light of the coming day of glory that he thus exhorts them. (See Rom. xiii. 11, 12; 1 Thess. v. 6-8; 2 Tim. iv. 1-3; Titus ii. 12-14.)

Do believers need patience? In Heb. x. 36 the apostle reminds the suffering Hebrews that "*in a little while*" the Lord would return, and they would then receive the promise. Do tried and sorrowing saints need comfort? The Spirit gives it pre-

eminently in connection with the fulfilment of the hope. (See 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.) Is the sanctification of the saints the subject? Then we find the power for it in connection with the coming of Christ. "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John iii. 3.)

Surely then a theme so intimately connected with our service, walk, joy, and sanctification, cannot be otherwise than of the deepest importance to us; and the more the hearts of God's people are really drawn to the person of Christ, and are living in the hope of His coming, they will be more separate from the world and more useful in the vineyard of the Lord.

And if the subject of prophecy be thus important, it is doubly so in these days when so many marks of the last days are visible on every hand. In the religious world there is a rapid development of a specious infidelity, that begins with denying some of the revealed truths of God's word, and will culminate presently in the casting aside of religion altogether, and in the acceptance of the openly-infidel antichrist. In the social circle there is a loosening of the bonds that hold men together; the influence of parents over children, of masters over servants, of duly-appointed authorities over those who should be subject to them, is fast giving place to a lawlessness that will finally overthrow all restraint, and lead men headlong after "the lawless one." And in the political world there is a shaking and upheaving everywhere. The nations of the

earth are, as it were, on the edge of a volcano that may at any time burst forth into a deluge of war, bloodshed, and widespread desolation.

The place of the believer is upon the watch-tower, that these things may not come unawares upon him, as they surely will upon the world, just at the moment when they are dwelling in their fancied security, and crying, "Peace and safety," for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth. Like Abraham, we should be on the mount in communion with God, learning of Him His secrets regarding this world fast ripening for judgment, and interceding with Him on behalf of those in danger of being overtaken by the billows of wrath.

In the following pages we have sought to give an outline of some of the wonderful events both in blessing and judgment that are yet to transpire in connection with this world; and in doing so we have largely referred to the Scriptures of truth, as the only light whereby we can be guided into a right understanding of this momentous subject.



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“A LITTLE while,” our Lord shall come,
And we shall wander here no more;
He'll take us to our Father's home,
Where He for us hath gone before—
To dwell with Him, to see His face,
And sing the glories of His grace.

“A little while”—He'll come again!
Let us the precious hours redeem;
Our only grief to give Him pain,
Our joy to serve and follow Him.
Watching and ready may we be,
As those who long their Lord to see.

“A little while”—'twill soon be past;
Why should we shun the shame and cross?
Oh, let us in His footsteps haste,
Counting for Him all else but loss!
Oh, how will recompense His smile,
The sufferings of this “little while!”

“A little while”—come, Saviour, come!
For Thee Thy Bride has tarried long;
Take Thy poor wearied pilgrims home,
To sing the new eternal song,
To see Thy glory, and to be
In everything conformed to Thee.



SHORT PAPERS ON PROPHECY.



I.

THE LORD'S PROMISE.

“I will come again, and receive you unto myself.”

JOHN xiv. 3.

THIS promise of the Lord to His disciples on the night previous to His departure from them was a direct and positive assertion, that as surely as *He* was going away from them, so surely would He return to receive them unto Himself; and from many passages in the epistles we find that the early disciples were constantly living in the expectation of this promise being fulfilled in their lifetime. The Thessalonian saints especially were waiting for (expecting) the Son from heaven; and the exhortation is constantly pressed by the Spirit, that believers should live in anticipation of the early return of the Lord.

The Old Testament Scriptures deal very largely with *the day of the Lord*, or the coming of Christ

in His glory, as the Messiah of Israel, to be King over all the earth; but only incidentally do we find any allusion to His coming *for His saints*. They are silent as to this special promise of the Lord to come and receive His own blood-bought people unto Himself. The New Testament alone brings out this subject clearly. The reason of this is obvious. The church—the body of Christ—was a hidden mystery until after His rejection by Israel; and as the Old Testament does not unfold this mystery, neither does it reveal His coming, as the Head of the Church, to gather the members of His body unto Himself.

I will come again. It is the promise of a *personal* return. The disciples had known His personal love and friendship during His ministry of more than three years, and now their hearts were filled with sorrow because He was going to leave them; and, to comfort and cheer them, He told them that He would come again, and receive them unto Himself.

No language could have been used to convey more definitely the thought that He would not send His angels for them, but that He would come in person and fetch them. This is the plain and unmistakeable meaning of the passage. And yet how soon the church forgot this “blessed hope,” and taught instead that the Lord intended that He would come for His people at their death. This view has more or less prevailed to the present day; but during the last half century God has

been pleased to awaken His people to the reality of the personal return of the Lord Jesus. At death the believer *goes* to the Lord, but at the advent the Lord comes *for* His people.

The second coming of Christ will be as real and as personal as His first coming; and just as surely as His feet trod the land of Canaan in the days of His humiliation, so surely will His feet stand on the mount of Olives when He comes again to take His kingdom and reign before His ancients gloriously.

Again, the disciples saw the Lord ascend bodily into the air from mount Olivet; and while they stood gazing up into heaven, as He ascended, they were told by angels that He would return in like manner as they had seen Him go; that is, personally and bodily. It is highly important that believers should not let go the truth of the personal return of Christ; where this is not held there is often a vagueness and indefiniteness as to the personal appearing of Jesus *now*, as our great High Priest, in the presence of God for us.

The reason why this "blessed hope" was so early lost sight of was, that the love of saints cooled down, and forgetting their heavenly character as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, they fraternized and made friends with the world; and so the desire for the return of Christ was lost, and at the same time the very knowledge of the hope itself. It is just the same now. Unless our hearts are true to Christ, and filled with His love, there

will not be the ardent desire and longing to see Him which should characterise us.

This promise was especially given to comfort the disciples, and it is always used by the Spirit to cheer and solace the hearts of God's people. When the Thessalonian saints were mourning the loss of departed ones, Paul, by special revelation from the Lord Himself, told them that at His coming those who had fallen asleep would first be raised, and then the living changed, and so together arise to meet the Lord in the air. Just as this hope was then the bright star of coming resurrection and glory to bereaved saints, so should it be to God's people now; and surely nothing can so speak comfort and joy to the heart as the divine assurance of the fulfilment of this blessed promise. It binds up the broken heart, and dries the flowing tear, and hushes all murmuring thoughts. It points upward from the grave to the glory, and tells of soon-coming reunions "in *His* presence, where there is fulness of joy."

The apostle writes to the tried and persecuted Hebrews, who had endured a great fight of afflictions, and taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and reminds them of *the promise*, that in a *little, little* while, *the coming One* should come and not tarry; and as *we* thus look onwards, and wait for His appearing, we are able to count the sufferings of this present time as not worthy to be compared with the glory soon to be revealed. Thus the coming of the Lord is set before us as that

which above everything else cheers the sorrowing and bereaved heart, and sustains the persecuted one in the hour of trial.

No time is specified in the word of God for the fulfilment of this promise, and no sign given by which we might know when He will come. The Lord would have us constantly watching and living in the attitude of expectancy of His return; and therefore has left the time uncertain, and has told us of no events which must *necessarily* intervene between the present moment, and the shout which will awaken His sleeping saints, and change the living into His own glorious likeness.

Many signs are given and many events foretold which will happen before *the day of the Lord* sets in, and *Christ* appears as *the Son of man* to set up His kingdom upon the earth; but to the church there is no sign given except the general declension and apostacy spoken of in the epistles to Timothy, as marks of the last days. The Lord would have us on the watch, that whenever He may come we may be found with loins girded and lights burning, ready to open to Him immediately. The church's posture is that of waiting for the Lord, and not of looking out for signs either in the material or political world.

No one can deny that around us on every hand there are many signs which clearly prove that the world is ripening fast for the judgment in store for it; and these things have a loud voice for us, bidding us lift up our heads, because our redemption

draweth nigh ; for *before* the Lord will interfere in the affairs of this world, and take His place as its rightful King and Ruler, He will come with a shout of triumphant joy and gather His redeemed ones home.

Oh, blessed promise ! It is the return of the Bridegroom for His bride, of the Master for His disciples, of the Lord for His servants. There is no terror or wrath connected with it ; for us who believe in Him it is the consummation of our hope, the eternal satisfying of all our hearts ; for we shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness. Every tear will then be wiped away, and the sorrow-tossed saint will for ever rest in the presence of the Lord. Well may we long for the fulfilment of *the promise*, and breathe the Spirit-taught prayer :
“ COME, LORD JESUS ; COME QUICKLY ! ”

In our next we shall seek to give from Scripture some proofs that the coming of Christ *for* His saints precedes His coming in judgment to the world.



II.

SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY

That the Translation of the Church precedes Christ's coming in Judgment.

THE two epistles to the Thessalonians deal very largely with the second coming of Christ, and present the two aspects of that coming very plainly. In the first we have more particularly the fulfilment of His promise to gather His saints into His presence ; and in the second we have His advent in flaming fire in judgment on an ungodly world.

From the second chapter of the second epistle we find that the Thessalonians were under the impression that because they were passing through suffering and tribulation for Christ's sake, the day of the Lord *had set in*, and therefore that the coming of the Lord for His saints had already taken place. This filled them with trouble and sorrow ; and to correct this false impression the apostle writes, exhorting them not to be shaken in mind, nor troubled, as that the day of Christ *is present* (not, is at hand) ; and then in the clearest possible manner points out that *that day* could not come until the man of sin—the lawless one—be revealed ; and

in verses 6, 7, he further says that this lawless one cannot be manifested until one who hinders has been removed, and that when this hindering power is taken away the development of the wicked one immediately follows. The question then arises, Who is this one who hinders? We believe that it is the Holy Ghost now dwelling in the Church. He it is who by His presence is arresting and holding back the tide of iniquity; and until He is removed by the taking up of the Church, the final apostacy cannot be headed up in the person of the antichrist. The Church, as indwelt by the Spirit, is the salt of the earth, preventing the leaven of evil spreading into utter corruption; but when the salt is removed, the whole mass will soon be leavened, and the full development of evil be consummated.

In Revelation xii. we have a confirmation of this. In verse 5 we have the rapture of the mystical Christ—Christ and the Church—under the symbol of a man child. Then follows immediately war in heaven, and Satan is cast down to the earth by the final victory of Christ and His saints. That it is the saints who are represented here as the overcoming ones is clear from the fact that it said, *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.*" The redeemed only overcome by virtue of the blood. When Satan is thus cast down to the earth, having great wrath, knowing his time is short, he speedily energises the man of sin, the antichrist, as we read in chap.

xiii. The manifestation of this wicked one is thus seen to follow upon the casting down of Satan, which takes place after the rapture of the Church.

These Scriptures alone, we think, clearly prove that the saints are taken up to be with the Lord before His return in judgment; and between the two events there is the development of antichrist and the consequent great tribulation.

But we have further evidence. In Rev. iv. v. we see the redeemed and risen Church under the symbol of four and twenty elders *seated* in the very presence of the throne in perfect calmness and security. The elders without doubt represent the redeemed Church; this is shown by the fact that they are clothed in *white* raiment—the righteousness of saints—and that they sing the song of redemption, ascribing their blessings to the blood of the slain Lamb.

Here then we see the Church at home, safe in the presence of God, before the Lamb takes the book out of the hand of the Ancient of days, the unloosing of the seals of which is the signal for the judgments to commence which intervene between His coming for His saints and His appearing with them. The Lamb does not take the book *until* He has His saints with Him; for it is distinctly stated that when He had taken the book, the four and twenty elders (the redeemed) fall down and worship Him, and sing His worthiness; and the judgments do not commence *until* He unlooses the seals. What then do we learn from this but the assurance

that the Church will be caught up before any of the Apocalyptic judgments commence ; that not one single drop of the impending wrath will descend on this earth *until* the Lord has gathered His own to His presence.

Again, in Rev. xix. we have the coming of Christ in judgment upon antichrist and his confederates. The Lord Jesus is there described as coming out of heaven as the mighty warrior, King of kings, and Lord of lords, followed by the armies of heaven upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Of whom do these armies consist? Are they angels? The previous part of the chapter supplies the answer. In verses 7-9 we have the marriage of the Lamb. The bride is said to have made herself ready, being clothed in fine linen, clean and white ; and this fine linen, the Spirit expressly states, is the righteousness of saints. The armies then that are seen coming out of heaven with the Lord are the redeemed church, His bride. They come *with the Lord* ; it follows therefore that they must of necessity have been taken up previously to this manifestation in glory with the Lord.

With this also agrees the prophecy of Enoch as recorded in the epistle of Jude. He foretold the coming of the Lord to execute judgment on the ungodly world, and that this coming was to be *with* the myriads of His saints. So also does Zechariah prophecy the same in chapter xiv. : " The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints *with* Thee," and that in connection with the same period

of time—the moment when Christ shall be revealed in judgment upon His foes, and as the deliverer of His oppressed people Israel.

From the above scriptures we see clearly that the coming of Christ for His people *precedes* His revelation in flaming fire. The former event may take place at any time ; while before the latter can happen, there must be the development of anti-christ and the fearful time of tribulation foretold by the prophets. The former is ever presented to us in the Word as that which should comfort and gladden the hearts of believers with its joyful prospect. It is unalloyed bliss. And, on the contrary, the latter is always spoken of in far different language, as “the great and terrible day of the Lord,” a “day of wrath,” a “day of trouble and distress,” a “day of clouds and thick darkness.” In words like these does God portray the day when Christ returns to take His kingdom ; while of His coming for the Church He says, “Comfort one another with these words.”

Oh, then, believer in Christ, if these things are so, how should His words, “Behold, I come quickly,” speak to our hearts and affections, drawing us in spirit out of a world so soon to be judged ! If this truth be held, not merely as part of a creed, but as a living, practical reality, it will cause us, like Abraham, to be looking, not for the well-watered plains of Sodom, but for the city of glory, whose builder and maker is God.

III.

INDIRECT TESTIMONY FROM SCRIPTURE

As to the Rapture of the Church preceding the Day
of the Lord.

IN our last paper we sought to give positive evidence from Scripture that the coming of the Lord for His saints precedes the great tribulation, and therefore also precedes the glorious appearing of Christ in judgment. In this paper we shall point out that though in Old Testament scripture the coming of Christ *for* His saints is not clearly revealed, yet that it is indirectly taught both in type and prophecy. While no amount of indirect testimony fully establishes a truth, yet when a fact has been proved by direct and positive testimony, indirect witness may be called in as confirmatory of the same.

In Enoch we have the first illustration of the taking up of the saints. He was the *seventh* from Adam. The number *seven* in Scripture denotes completion — fulness; and he stands out as a striking picture of the saints on the very verge of the dispensation. He walked with God, and

had the testimony of pleasing Him, and was ultimately caught up to heaven before the deluge of judgment fell upon the world. The counterpart to this we find in the Philadelphian church, where, in the midst of surrounding profession, fast degenerating into open apostacy, a few are found faithful to God, and walking with Him. As a consequence, they have the promise that, like Enoch, they should be kept from ($\epsilon\kappa$, *out of*) the hour of trial coming upon the earth.

Enoch then is a type of the true believer in Jesus, who in the midst of abounding evil is walking with God, and his translation a type of the taking up of the Church before the time of the great tribulation. While himself caught away before the judgment, he, taught of God, saw the final end of the ungodly, and prophesied of the time when the Lord would come *with* His saints to execute His fiery vengeance on the ungodly. So the Church now, while expecting to be caught away before the final heading up of evil, and the consequent judgment upon it, witnesses of the return of the King of kings to take His throne and purge out of His kingdom all things that offend and do iniquity.

In Noah we have the next witness. Viewed in connection with Enoch, Noah is a type of the remnant of Israel, preserved through the judgments for blessing on the millennial earth; but he is also a type of the Church, shut safe in the ark before the judgment. For this we have the authority of the Lord Himself. In Matthew xxiv.

36-41 He compares His *coming* to the days of Noah. In his day all things continued in their daily routine ; the world of that time went on with their building, planting, marrying, and ordinary business of life, with no other sign to forewarn them of the coming storm than the building of the ark, at which they scoffed and ridiculed. But one day God called Noah and his family into the ark, and shut him in ; and then in Gen. vii. 10 we read, "It came to pass *after seven days*, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." Thus Noah was shut in seven days previous to the descending of the waters. "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." All things will go on the same. The world will be occupied with its politics, its business, and its pleasures, when in a moment the Lord will call His people out of the midst, and shut them in. And we may infer, from the seven days that Noah was shut in before the flood, that the Church will be caught up, and shut in, safe in Christ the true Ark, for an interval, it may be, of seven years before the descent of the fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries ; and as in Noah's day there was no sign given but the building of the ark, so now there is no sign given of coming events as necessary to precede the gathering of the saints into the presence of the Lord. Noah laboured on, preaching *faithfully* concerning the coming flood and the ark of safety provided ; so the Church continues the preaching of Christ as the only refuge from the coming wrath ; but as in

Noah's day, so is it now, scoffers abound, and but few listen to the voice of mercy.

The same truth is also taught us in the deliverance of Lot from the destruction of Sodom, and which the Lord Jesus also refers to as typical of His coming. What do we find the special feature in this history? The Lord urged him out of the doomed city, and said, "Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither." And directly that Lot was entered into Zoar "the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." (Gen. xix. 24.)

From this we learn that the Lord could do nothing in judgment on Sodom until He had put Lot, unfaithful though he was, into a place of safety; and from the parallel drawn by the Lord Himself between His own coming and Lot's deliverance we learn too that He must have His own people in the place of security before He pours out His vials of wrath upon a guilty world.

In Lot's case this is all the more striking, inasmuch as it was not due to his faithfulness that he was delivered, but because he was God's child—he was a righteous man. So at the rapture. It will not be as the reward of faithfulness that saints will be gathered home, but because of their being justified by faith, and their consequent union with Christ in resurrection-life. Rewards for faithfulness will certainly be apportioned, but this follows subsequently at the judgment-seat of Christ.

In Joseph we have also a typical illustration.

After his humiliation and exaltation, and *before* his revelation to his brethren, he is united to a Gentile bride. In him we surely have a picture of the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection, and exaltation to the place of power at the right hand of God ; and who, during the period of His rejection by Israel, His brethren after the flesh, is calling out of all nations a people destined to form His bride, and to whom He will be united in eternal union, as we find in Revelation xix., *before* He manifests Himself as the true Joseph to His repentant brethren, Israel, gathered at Jerusalem. And from many scriptures we learn that the manifestation of Christ to Israel as their long-rejected Messiah is *at the same moment* as His appearing in judgment on their adversaries gathered in battle against them.

Further testimony is afforded us in the fourth of Balaam's parables—Numbers xxiv. 15–19. Here the money-loving prophet has his eyes opened by God to see the future glory of His people Israel, and he utters that sublime prophecy, which foretold also his own sad doom, “I shall see Him, but not now : I shall behold Him, but not nigh : there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.” Here note, the Star *precedes* the Sceptre. The Lord Jesus will appear as the bright and Morning Star to His Church *before* He takes the Sceptre of this world's dominion, and smites His enemies with the rod of His mouth. Again, in Psalm l., where we have the

day of glory foretold, when the Lord will no longer keep silence, but rise up to judge the world in righteousness, the first voice that breaks the long silence which God has sustained during the eighteen centuries since the cross is, "Gather my saints together unto me: those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Before the voice of wrath and judgment is heard, there will take place "our gathering together unto Him" into the air, to be "for ever with the Lord."

From this concurrent testimony of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments, we are clearly taught that the purpose of the Lord Jesus is to fulfil His promise of returning to gather His saints into His presence before He is manifested in His glory to the world; for when "Christ, who is our life, shall appear [be manifested], we shall appear *with Him* in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

As we have before remarked, the coming of the Lord is ever alluded to as that which should *comfort*, cheer, and rejoice the hearts of the saints of God; while the day of the Lord is always associated with wrath, terror, and judgment. We infer therefore that they cannot be the same event, and we think that the word of God, taken literally, fully bears out this assertion, and shows distinctly that there is a difference and an interval between these two parts of the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

IV.

*THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
ANTICHRIST.*

IMMEDIATELY after the taking up of the saints, and the consequent casting down of Satan to the earth (Rev. xii.), the long-gathering iniquity and apostacy of man will come to a head, and *the lawless one, the antichrist*, will arise, as recorded in prophecy both in the Old and New Testaments. The spirit of antichrist has been working for centuries, ever since the days of the apostles; but the manifestation of the *personal* antichrist is a yet future event, which cannot take place, as we have sought to show, until the hindering power, the Holy Ghost in the church, is removed. He now prevents the full development of Satanic evil; but when, on His removal with the church to meet the Lord in the air, Satan is cast down to the earth, apostacy is quickly ripened, and the whole mass of professing Christendom becomes leavened with infidelity. Antichrist appears, energized by Satan himself, who gives to him his power, his seat, and great authority.

In Dan. vii. we read of him as "the little horn," the last head of the fourth universal monarchy, the Roman empire. The last phase of the Roman empire is the ten-toe or ten-horn condition; and

this antiehrst or "little horn" rises up out of the ten, and before him three others fall (Dan. vii. 8), and the remainder yield their power and strength to him (Rev. xvii. 13); and, partly by flattery and partly by force, he acquires universal sovereignty, and the whole world wonders after the beast.

The devil also raises up a second beast, the false prophet (Rev. xiii.), who is able to work miracles and wonders, and causes fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men; and under this trinity of evil, Satan, antiehrst, and the false prophet, none will be allowed to buy or sell, or transact the ordinary business of life, except those who receive the mark of the beast. The few faithful ones who will refuse to receive his mark, and worship his image, will be slain. There will be no toleration then. As it was in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, the first head of Gentile supremacy, when the three Hebrew children were cast into a burning fiery furnace, because they would not fall down and worship the golden image, so in the days of the last head—the infidel antiehrst—persecution and death will be the sure result of not bowing down to his image.

This personal antiehrst will be the devil's counterfeit of the true Christ. The name antiehrst means not only "against Christ," but also "instead of Christ." He will pretend that he is the Christ, and he will be backed up by all the power of the devil, who, by the false prophet in league with him, will work miracles and do wonders to deceive them

that dwell on the earth, and all whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life will receive him. The strong delusion spoken of by Paul in 2 Thess. ii. will take hold of the minds of men, and casting off all pretence of religion and "form of godliness," they will worship the antichrist as the great intellectual and political head of apostate humanity. Those who will not receive *the truth* will believe *the lie*, and be led on by him in open blasphemy against Christ, until they are overtaken by the judgment of flaming fire at His glorious appearing.

At the time that antichrist thus assumes the world's sceptre, the Jews, God's ancient people, will be gathered back to their own land in unbelief; Jerusalem and her temple will be rebuilt, and rise up from her ruins in much of her former prosperity. The land of Israel will attract the ambition of this man of sin; and he will go there, and first of all make a covenant with the Jews for a week (seven years), and in the midst of this time he will break his covenant, and cause the daily sacrifice and oblation to cease, and set up his own image in the temple at Jerusalem. He will exalt himself above all that is called God, and cause himself to be worshipped as God. The majority of the nation will receive him as their Messiah, according to the word of the Lord: "If another shall come in his own name, *him ye will receive*;" but a remnant will be faithful to Jehovah, and against them the antichrist will be furious with rage, and a time of the most terrible

persecution will arise, when the little horn will make war with the saints and overcome them. This will be the time of Jacob's trouble, foretold by Jeremiah; but he shall be saved out of it. While thousands are slain by the cruel persecutor, a third part will be preserved by God alive through this time of tribulation, and be delivered by the glorious advent of Christ when He returns for the destruction of the antichrist and his hosts.

Many have thought, and still think, that the antichrist will be a succession of kings—a dynasty—and not an individual, and therefore that he has existed for a long period of time. Many make the popes of Rome to be the antichrist of Scripture; but while there are many similarities between the two, we fail to see that the Papacy, or any other past succession of rulers, fulfils the inspired word of prophecy. Scripture seems clearly to indicate that he will be an individual. In the prophecy of Daniel and in the Revelation he is spoken of continually as “a person;” and in 2 Thess. he is called “that wicked one;” and finally, he and the false prophet are cast *alive* into the lake of fire. A dynasty, or succession of rulers, could not be said to be cast *alive* into the fire; but of an individual the language is quite appropriate.

At the opening of the first seal, in Rev. vi., where the first living creature cries “Come,”* a vision is

* The words “and see” are omitted in all the best manuscripts. The living creature, as the executor of God's purposes, cries “Come,” or, “Come forth.”

seen of a rider on a white horse, going forth conquering and to conquer. This vision has been variously interpreted. Many think that it refers to Christ Himself, either in His power through His gospel now, or to His coming again in glory. The vision implies that the rider attains universal sovereignty. It cannot be the gospel, as God's purpose now is not to convert the world, but to *gather out of it* a people for His name. We do not think it can refer to the Lord Himself, as at this time He is seen in heaven opening the seals. To whom, then, does it refer? To the antichrist, who will arise immediately after the church has been removed. The rider here seems to acquire his conquests without any struggle, but goes forth unhindered on his triumphal progress. So will the antichrist. He will first obtain the kingdom by flatteries, and by peace he will deceive many, and to him the kings of the earth will of their own will yield their authority. Thus he gains his imperial power. And just as the Lord Himself is later on seen riding on a white horse (emblem of victory), so Satan's counterfeit is represented as on a white horse too; and in imitation of the many crowns (diadems) on the head of the true Christ, so on the false one is seen a crown (stephanos); and as Christ will subdue all things unto Himself, so is antichrist seen going forth conquering and to conquer.

As a further proof that this vision is not of Christ, but of the antichrist, in Rev. xix., when Christ is seen riding on a white horse, He comes forth *out*

of heaven; but here the rider is plainly on the earth. Again, here this vision is followed by the other seals, unfolding the various providential judgments that succeed; but when Christ appears, His victory is followed immediately by the setting up of His kingdom of peace and millennial blessing. The contrast is apparent, and therefore they cannot refer to the same.



V.

ISRAEL.

THE purposes of God in connection with the nation of Israel occupy so much of the word of God, that we cannot possibly understand the prophetic part of that Word, unless we see the place which that wonderful nation has in the counsels of God. In fact we may say that Israel is the centre around which the divine purposes of earthly blessing revolve; and all the dates and times and seasons of prophecy, both of the Old and New Testaments, have direct reference to God's ancient people.

In proof of this let us notice first the promises made to Abraham. The God of glory appeared to him, and calling him out from his kindred and idolatrous associations, He gave him the promise, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and *in thee* shall all families of the earth be blessed." Again, in Gen. xiii. 15, 16, after telling Abraham to lift up his eyes northward, southward, eastward, and westward, God says to him, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed

for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." Again, in Gen. xv. 18, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates;" and in chap. xvii. 8, after confirming the promise of the multitude of his seed, God further promises the land in perpetuity of possession, "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an *everlasting possession.*"

The definite promise of blessing through the *seed* points pre-eminently to the Lord Jesus Himself; for it is through Him alone that believers now are brought into spiritual and heavenly blessing, or the nations of the earth by-and-by be brought into earthly blessing. But this by no means exhausts the promise; for it remains also true that in the literal and multitudinous seed of Abraham will the nations of the earth yet be blessed, when in their restored condition they become the messengers of His salvation to the ends of the earth.

The promise made by God to Abraham was entirely unconditional. It rested on God's infallible word, and the unchangeableness of His character. The Lord said to him, "Surely blessing I will bless thee;" no condition of obedience accompanied it. But the partial fulfilment of the promised blessing which Israel enjoyed for a time was conditional upon their obedience. On their

way from Egypt to Canaan, after proving God's almighty power and grace in bringing them out of Egypt, Israel put themselves under a covenant of works; and when God reminded them of *what He had done* for them, they answered by saying *what they would do*; and in order to show them the utter weakness and powerlessness of the flesh to merit anything on the ground of works, the law was allowed to come in, and their inheritance of the promised blessing was made to depend upon their obedience; so that Israel's partial inheritance of the promised blessing did not by any means fulfil the unconditional covenant made with Abraham.

The promise is definite, and unconditional also, as regards the land, both as to the extent and as to the perpetuity of its possession; and it is evident that in neither of these particulars has it been fulfilled. The land has never been occupied by Israel to the full limits assigned to it, except perhaps for a brief time in the reign of Solomon, in whose peaceful days the nation attained its greatest prosperity; while as to their holding the land for ever, it is plain that this promise remains in abeyance, for through their unbelief and sin they soon forfeited their inheritance; and their scattered condition, since the carrying into captivity under the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs, is an unanswerable proof that it waits until a future day for Israel to inherit the land of their possession, according to the terms promised to Abraham, and

renewed to Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. God is the unchangeable God, and though heaven and earth shall pass away, not one jot or tittle of His Word can fail to come to pass; therefore these promises, given to Abraham thousands of years ago, and only partially and conditionally enjoyed by Israel for a few hundreds of years, shall yet be fulfilled in the day when the Lord Jesus, as the true seed, takes His place as the King of Israel.

These promises of the blessing of Israel are further confirmed to David in 2 Sam. vii. God took him out from the sheepfold to be the anointed ruler of His people Israel; and from this time the prophecies of blessing to Israel are centred in the royal house of David, who was descended from Judah, about whose kingly rule Jacob in dying had given prophetic utterance. God gave David the promise of an enduring kingdom: "*Thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*" For about four hundred years the house of David continued to reign over Judah; but apostasy early manifested itself even in the reign of Solomon, and finally, in judgment, Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was carried away to Babylon, and from that day the promise has been in abeyance, and is still waiting for the Lord Jesus, as the true David, to take the kingdom, according to the word in Ezekiel xxxvii. 24.

The above and other promises made by God to

Israel are immutable, and can never be set aside. Many have thought and asserted, and still do so, that they are fulfilled in the church, and in the blessings of the gospel of God's grace. But this view does violence to the plainest and most emphatic statements of the Word of God, and has not a single passage of Scripture in its favour, if rightly understood. In Rom. iv. 16, 17, a passage often adduced in the attempt to prove this view, we have no mention of the land, or any earthly or national blessing; but the blessedness there spoken of is the righteousness of faith, which Abraham, through believing the testimony of God, obtained, and which can only be known in all ages on the same principle of faith; therefore Abraham is called the father of the faithful, or *believing ones*.

The literal and absolute fulfilment of these prophecies is clearly proved, if we accept the word of God in its simplicity, as will be seen by the following Scriptures :

“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” (Isa. liv. 10.)

“If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne.” (Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21.)

“My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.” (Ps. lxxxix. 34–37.)

“As touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Rom. xi. 28, 29.)

Nothing can be clearer than these positive statements of the word of God, and no human reasoning can alter their plain and unmistakeable meaning. God will yet have mercy upon Israel, and manifest them as His own people on the earth, according to the purposes of His heart, when He chose their father Abraham, and called him out from the land of his birth.



VI.

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL.

IN our last paper we sought to show that the promises made by God to Abraham and his descendants were unconditional; that they had never yet been fulfilled; and therefore that their final accomplishment was sure, and in no degree a matter of uncertainty. In this we shall give Scriptures that speak more especially of the future and literal restoration of Israel, with only a few connecting remarks, leaving the Word of God to speak for itself.

Both in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy God sets before Israel the blessings of obedience, and the consequence of disobedience and departure from Him. But while foretelling them of the fearful judgments that would ensue on their apostasy—that they would be scattered over the face of the earth—He sets before them the hope of final blessing: “Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.” (Lev. xxvi. 42.) “He will be merciful unto His land, and to His people.” (Deut. xxxii. 43.)

The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are occupied almost entirely with Israel’s history;

and as surely as their predictions of judgment have been fulfilled, so surely will their predictions of mercy and blessing. The scattering and judgments poured upon that nation have been literal, and not spiritual ; so will their restoration and blessing be literal likewise.

In Isa. xi. we have first the prophecy of the kingship of Christ, "the rod out of the stem of Jesse," and "the Branch out of his roots ;" then the re-gathering of the nation under His rule : "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 Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth," &c. And in chap. lxi. 20, "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."

Again in Jer. xxiii. we have first the prediction of the kingship of the Lord Jesus : "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper." Then we read : "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely."

Again, in chap. xxxi., we read : "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock ;" and in xxxii. 37-41, "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath ; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely : and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. . . . Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul." "I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first." (Chap. xxxiii. 7.)

The testimony of Ezekiel is still further confirmatory. In chap. xxxiv., "Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered ; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country."

"I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded, and the desolate land shall be tilled. . . . And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." (Chap. xxxvi. 33-35.)

“Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land : and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel ; and one king shall be king to them all : and they shall be no more two nations.” (Chap. xxxvii. 21, 22.)

We might multiply such passages indefinitely ; but enough has been adduced to prove clearly that the purposes of God regarding Israel have not been accomplished, and that He will yet show Himself faithful to His covenant, and gather the tribes of Israel again to their own land.

But some affirm that this was fulfilled when the little remnant returned under Ezra and Nehemiah, according to the decree of Cyrus ; but this is manifestly wrong, as only a small part of two tribes then returned, and these prophecies clearly point to the re-gathering of all the twelve tribes, both the nations of Judah and Israel. Again, these prophecies foretell a time of unparalleled national prosperity ; and no one can pretend that the remnant that remained in Jerusalem after the days of Nehemiah ever enjoyed this. On the contrary, they and their land were the prey of the different kings that reigned around them, until, after filling up their cup of iniquity by the rejection of Christ, their city was destroyed by Titus, and they themselves scattered all over the face of the earth, according to the Word of the Lord in Jer. xxix. 18, “I will deliver them to be removed to all the king-

doms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations whither I have driven them." This has been literally fulfilled ; and their present condition abundantly attests the fact that the predictions of future blessing and glory to Israel have never yet been realized by them.

But others say they are fulfilled spiritually in the Church. In answer to this we ask, Have the prophecies that speak of Israel's dispersion been fulfilled literally or spiritually ? Do those who hold these views apply the Scriptures that speak of Israel's judgments to the Church ? No ; they will readily accord all the judgments to Israel, and own they have been fulfilled literally ; but when the *very same* prophecies go on to speak of future blessing, they say, That is fulfilled in the spread of the gospel, and in the gathering out of the Church. Such dealing with the word of God is not only illogical, but most dishonouring to the character of God ; and we can scarcely understand how any one can, in the face of the clear, dogmatic statements of Him who cannot lie, affirm that these promises are to be spiritualized away.

But a further proof of the future fulfilment of these prophecies regarding Israel's restoration is their *permanence*. They will be restored again, and that FOR EVER—never again to be scattered, according to the following Scriptures : " I will make an *everlasting* covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good ;

but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. xxxii. 40.) "They shall inherit the land *for ever*." (Isa. lx. 21.) "They shall dwell in the *land* that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children *for ever*." (Ezek. xxxvii. 25.) "Neither will I hide my face *any more* from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." (xxxix. 29.) "Judah shall dwell *for ever*, and Jerusalem *from generation to generation*. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." (Joel iii. 20, 21.) "I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel . . . and I will plant them upon *their land*, and they shall *no more* be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." (Amos ix. 14, 15.) "The Lord shall reign over them [restored Israel] in mount Zion from henceforth, even *for ever*." (Micah iv. 7.) "The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil *any more*." (Zeph. iii. 15.) "There shall be *no more* utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited." (Zech. xiv. 11.) Jerusalem "shall not be plucked up or thrown down *any more FOR EVER*." (Jer. xxxi. 40.)

These are but a few of the passages which speak of the perpetuity of Israel's blessing in the land.

Their knowledge of the Lord, forgiveness as a nation, the reign of the Lord over them in mount Zion, the establishment of Jerusalem, their inheritance of the land, are said to be "FOR EVER." The only question then, as to whether these things be past or future, is this—Are these things *so now*? For if not, no such restoration can have taken place as is promised.

We have thus sought to show from the word of God that the LORD has yet mercy in store for Israel, and that though they are now set aside for a little while, it is only "until the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in;" and then, when the Church is complete and gathered up to be with the Lord, He will again take up the cause of His ancient people, and establish them in the earth.

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| BELOVED of God, for Abraham's sake, | Rom. xi. 28. |
| God's Israel shall possess | |
| <i>The promised blessing in their land,</i> | <i>Isa. lx. 21.</i> |
| In truth and righteousness. | Zech. viii. 8. |
| Though scattered now for all their sins, | Jer. xxix. 18. |
| Forsaken for a while, | Isa. liv. 7. |
| "Great mercies" yet shall crown their head, | Isa. liv. 7. |
| When cleansed and without guile. | Joel iii. 21;
Ezek. xxxvi. 33. |
| God's grace and everlasting love | |
| They yet shall gladly sing, | Isa. liv. 8. |
| <i>When on them shines the glorious Sun</i> | |
| With healing in His wing. | Mal. iv. 2. |
| "The stable mountains shall depart, | |
| The hills removèd be; | Isa. liv. 10. |
| But Mine own kindness no'er shall cease; | |
| My heart is set on thee." | Jer. xxxii. 41. |

VII.

THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE;

OR,

The Great Tribulation.

WE have sought to show from God's own testimony that His purpose is, that the nation of Israel shall return to their own land. We will now see what events will take place when they are thus gathered back.

Between the beginning of their return and that condition of lasting peace and blessing into which God will bring them, they will be called to pass through a period of unparalleled tribulation, called by Jeremiah "the time of Jacob's trouble;" and during this time the whole of those gathered to Jerusalem will be cut off, except the faithful remnant—the elect, for whose sakes those days shall be shortened. They will be the subjects of antichrist's fierce persecution, but will be preserved by the Lord through the tribulation, and be delivered from the oppressor by the appearing of the Lord Jesus in glory.

When the Jews (specially the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin) first return to their land, it will be

chiefly in unbelief. Political and other considerations will induce them to gather out of the various countries of their dispersion to Palestine, and they will attain a great measure of prosperity, will rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, and set up their daily sacrifice. The leaders of the nation will make a covenant for a week (seven years) with the anti-christ, and will receive him as their king. At the close of the first half of the week (three and a half years) he will break his covenant, cause the daily sacrifice to cease, and set up his own image in the temple, according to Daniel ix. 27. Then will commence the period called "the great tribulation," foretold by the Lord Himself in Matt. xxiv., when, "the abomination of desolation" being set up, all who will not worship are either martyred by the cruel oppressor, or flee to a place of safety outside Jerusalem, where they are preserved by the Lord.

During this time of fierce trial the faithful remnant are crying out to God out of the furnace of their affliction. We find their language in many of the Psalms, as for instance the seventy-ninth, where we have the pent-up anguish of their broken hearts going forth to Jehovah, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us. . . . Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee." Also in Isaiah lxiii., lxiv., "Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries

have trodden down thy sanctuary. . . . Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. . . . Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire."

At this time we find, from Zech. xii. 10-14, the spirit of grace and supplication is poured upon them, and they mourn in contrition for their sins, every family apart; and thus when the heart of the remnant is prepared to receive their long-rejected Messiah He appears for their deliverance. Just at the moment when their enemies are triumphing, and Jerusalem is taken, the Lord Jesus comes down in judgment upon them, and Israel, now looking on Him whom they had pierced, welcome Him with the words, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isa. xxv. 9.)

Thus does the Lord appear for the deliverance and joy of His people, according to the testimony of the prophets—

"It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but *he shall be saved* out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his (the antichrist's) yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds."

"At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such

as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people *shall be delivered*, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Daniel xii. 1.)

"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 (*place of refuge*) of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel." (Joel iii. 16.)

"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, *Jehovah is my God*." (Zech. xiii. 9.)

In Matt. xxiv. we have the same course of events foretold—the abomination of desolation set up, the great and sore tribulation, the time of trouble “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be,” the mourning of the tribes in the land, and “the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” There is a beautiful harmony between the testimony of the Old Testament prophets and the predictions of the Lord in the gospels, and of the Apostles in the epistles and the Revelation, that will be seen in greater perfection the more we prayerfully compare them together.

After the Lord appears for the comfort of His people already gathered in the land, there is a subsequent and fuller re-gathering of the elect of

all the tribes, as we shall see from the following Scriptures :

In Matt. xxiv. 31, immediately after the appearing of the Son of man in glory, we read : " 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." Some have thought that this passage refers to the gathering of the church to meet their Lord ; but it is never said that He sends His angels for His church, but that He will come *Himself* for her. Besides, this takes place after His appearing in glory, and, as we have shown in former papers, the church is with Him when He thus comes.

Again, in Isa. xxvii. 13, we read : " 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." This occurs after the Lord has appeared for the deliverance of His people. (See chaps. xxv., xxvi.) Notice also the connection between " the great trumpet " in Isaiah and " the great sound of a trumpet " in Matthew ; the similarity is manifest, and occurring as it were in parallel passages, they can but refer to the same event.

The Feast of Trumpets in Lev. xxiii. is undoubtedly typical of this time of the awakening of scattered Israel to their long-lost blessings, and they will answer its call, and return repentant and

forgiven (typified by the day of atonement), to enjoy the blessing to which the *Feast of Tabernacles* points, when they will dwell in peace and blessing under their own vine and fig-tree, and will remember with joy and gladness all the loving-kindness of the Lord to them through all their wanderings. In Zech. xiv. 16-19 we see clearly that the true keeping of this feast belongs to the coming day of glory. The eighth-day Sabbath at the end of the feast points on to the eternal state—the rest of God in the new heavens and the new earth.



VIII.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.

WE have seen what follows on the earth after the rapture of the saints to meet the Lord in the air; now let us turn our thoughts upward, and seek to learn what God has revealed concerning the risen and glorified saints.

When the Lord Jesus descends from heaven with a shout, then the dead saints are raised, and the living changed, and both together ascend to meet the Lord, and are both in a moment made like the *glorified* Lord Himself; for "when we shall see Him *we shall be like Him*, and we shall see Him as He is." This wondrous change will be wrought in the twinkling of an eye. This corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality, and this body of humiliation shall be fashioned like unto His own glorious body. Oh, wondrous change—every vestige of sin and mortality left behind for ever, and the redeemed transformed into His likeness eternally!

Previous to the advent of the Lord Jesus in glory, for the destruction of antichrist, and for the deliverance of His people Israel, there takes place in heaven that glorious consummation of the purposes

of His loving heart—His marriage with the Bride, whom He had redeemed out of the world unto Himself.

We have many types presented to us in the word of God of this most wondrous union of Christ and His Church, in the relationship of Bridegroom and Bride. In the very beginning of this world's history God Himself illustrates this truth in providing for the first Adam a helpmeet, taken out of himself. While Adam is asleep God takes out a rib and fashions a woman, and presents her to him, and he exclaims, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." This is unquestionably a type of the Lord Jesus—the second Adam, the Head of the new creation—going down into death, that in resurrection He might have a partner to share His kingdom and glory. The Church was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, but actually came into being out of His death. The corn of wheat went down into the grave *alone*, but in resurrection He has the cluster of precious fruit. So in Ephesians we are taught that the Church is quickened, raised up, seated together with Christ; and then, in chapter v. we have His purpose to present her to Himself, "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." This is the consummation of blessing for which we wait, and for which He waits. As Boaz could not rest until he had finished the matter concerning Ruth, and claimed her as his bride, so the Lord Jesus "will not be in rest" until, as the true Kinsman-Redeemer,

He has His own purchased Bride with Himself on His throne.

“Thou too shalt reign : He will not wear
His crown of joy *alone* ;
And earth His royal Bride shall see
Beside Him on the throne.”

“Thou art all fair, my love ; there is no spot in thee.” Such is the language of our heavenly Bridegroom to His Church even now. He found her, in her ruin and misery, a defiled outcast ; but His love was set upon her, and having washed her, He has made her perfect through His comeliness. This is our standing in the presence of God now—accepted in the Beloved, and without spot and blame before Him. But this, our complete and perfect position, is not manifest yet. We wait for the coming day of glory, when He, who is our life, shall be manifested, and we shall then be manifested too—the body of humiliation changed into the likeness of His glorious body. The beauty which the King hath put upon us is hidden now, but then the Bride will come forth decked in all the costly ornaments of grace which the Bridegroom hath put upon her. “All glorious within,” she will be brought to the King in raiment of needlework, and made ready for Him.

In Revelation xix. we have the description of this wonderful scene, for which God has been working in His wisdom all through this world’s history. What a contrast is presented to us—on earth, the consummation of evil, and the fearful judgments

of God upon the false ecclesiastical systems of the mystical Babylon; and in heaven the hallelujahs of triumphant joy are pealing forth. On earth there is war, terror, famines, earthquakes, convulsions, both in the literal and moral world; but in heaven, peace, calmness, joy, and gladness beyond expression, as the Lamb consummates the purposes of His heart, and presents to Himself His Church, all glorious, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

"*His Bride hath made herself ready.*" No longer the defiled and outcast one, but, washed from all trace of sin, the Bride is seen clothed in fine linen, clean and white. In spotless robe of purest white—emblematic of unsullied righteousness—the Lamb leads her to the marriage feast, and seated at the table with Him, she drinks in from His lips the oft-told yet ever new story of His everlasting love, and with rapture delights to learn more and more of the infinite depths of that eternal fount. Then is the Bride seen in her glory, as described in the Canticles, "Clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners," as, after the marriage is celebrated, the King comes forth to take His kingdom, accompanied by His Bride—the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen. Then the Church is in the place of power and judgment, but not till then. Now is the time that her calling and glory are hidden, and the reproach of Christ is her portion; then will be the time of her glorious manifestation, and of reigning with her Lord.

The work of grace is thus consummated in glory. All is of pure, matchless grace. The redeemed, as they appear, clothed in righteousness, in His presence, will ascribe all to His precious blood. Their new song will be of Him and of His work. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."



IX.

THE LORD JESUS TAKES THE KINGDOM.

THE time has now come when the Lord Jesus will fulfil the scriptures that speak of His kingly glory, and take unto Him His great power, and reign. He has literally fulfilled every prophetic utterance that spake of His humiliation. He was "the man of sorrows," and wore the crown of thorns, and He will yet be manifested as "the King reigning in righteousness," crowned with glory and honour. Then will He be welcomed by His earthly people with the glad "Hosanna! blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The scriptures that foretell His kingship and glory are very numerous, and it will be quite impossible in the space of our "Short Papers" to give more than a few. The whole Word of God testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow; and wherever we find a prophecy of the humiliation, we have also the exaltation and glory foretold; and that not only as the Son of God in resurrection, but as *the Son of man, the Son of David*, the long-promised heir to that throne which has for ages been trampled in the dust, but which shall yet shine forth in

more than its ancient splendour when the stone cut out without hands falls upon the kingdoms of earth, and breaks them in pieces.

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. 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.” (Dan. vii. 13, 14.)

“Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH . . . He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne.” (Zech. vi. 12, 13.)

In Rev. v. we see the Lord Jesus taking the book* out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne ; thus fulfilling Daniel’s prediction concerning Him as coming to the Ancient of days, and being invested with the sovereignty of the universe ; and in Rev. xix. we see Him, after His union in glory with His blood-bought bride, coming forth to claim the kingdoms of the world.

The first thing that the Lord Jesus does on thus coming as King is to destroy His enemies, and purge out of His kingdom all things that offend

* This book is probably “the book of the title-deeds of this world’s sovereignty;” for when the Lamb takes it, and breaks its seals, He at once begins to execute the judgments on the earth, which culminate in His taking the kingdom.

and them which do iniquity. Antichrist and all the confederate kings and their armies, with all the rejectors of Christ, are destroyed when He appears "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and Satan, the old serpent, is bound and cast into the bottomless pit, that he may no longer exercise his baneful influence over men. Before the reign of peace and righteousness can commence, all evil and rebellion has to be put down. The tares that have been growing up together with the wheat during the present age will then be uprooted and gathered in bundles for the burning, and the true wheat remain as the seed of the kingdom.

We see this complete subjugation of evil prior to the reign of peace illustrated in the typical reign of Solomon. David as the man of war so fully subdued and brought all the surrounding nations under tribute to him, that when Solomon ascended the throne he said, "Now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent." So of God's King. He first, like David, goes forth as the man of war to subdue His enemies, and then, as Solomon, ascends the throne in peace. He first executes His work of judgment, then the throne is set up, according to Psalm lxxxix. 14: "Justice and judgment are the habitation (establishment) of thy throne." The Lord Jesus cannot reign over a sin-blighted earth; so before He takes the sceptre

the marks of the curse must be obliterated, and sin and its effects banished out of His realm. In order to do this He girds His sword upon His thigh as the mighty conqueror, and goes forth as described in the following Scriptures :

“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.” (Zech. xiv. 3, 4.)

“The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war : He shall cry, yea, roar ; He shall prevail against His enemies.” (Isa. xlii. 13.)

“The Lord hath a controversy with the nations, He will plead with all flesh ; He shall give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. . . . The slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.” (Jer. xxv. 31-33.)

“Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner ; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matt. iii. 12.)

Thus we see the throne is established with judgment ; the wicked are gathered out from among the just, and the enemies, who will not have Christ as their King, are eternally banished from His presence.

How very different is all this to the prevalent idea that the preaching of the gospel will be the means of ushering in the long-looked-for kingdom

of peace and blessing. How contrary to the Word of God are the thoughts of men seen to be. Instead of the gospel converting the world, the world has so corrupted the church, and the leaven of evil is so insidiously working, that scripture, speaking of this time, says, "When the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?"* Evil will increase more and more, until it is finally headed up in the confederacy of the nations gathered against Christ at the battle of Armageddon, when He will suddenly appear, and consume them off the face of the earth by the brightness of His mouth.

Then will the long-promised kingdom be established, and the throne of David, so long prostrate in the dust, arise in everlasting glory; and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." This earth has long been the scene of evil and apostacy from God, and the whole creation has been groaning and travailing in pain; but it will then put on its garments of eternal spring; for the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings, and "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of

* This passage (Luke xviii. 8) does not refer to the coming of the Lord *for* the church, but to His coming as Son of man in judgment. It will not be true of the time preceding the taking up of the saints, as there will be countless thousands on the earth then waiting for the Lord; but when He comes in judgment faith will indeed be scarce—the devil and the antichrist will have done their utmost to stamp out those who are faithful to Christ.

the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isa. lv. 13); and "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." (Isa. xxxv. 1.)

"Oh, what a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours will be,
When from its throne the tempter hurled,
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to Thee!

"But brighter far that world above,
Where we as we are known shall know,
And in the sweet embrace of love
Reign o'er this ransomed earth below.

"O blessed Lord! with weeping eyes
That blissful hour we wait to see;
While every worm or leaf that dies
Tells of the curse, and calls for Thee.

"Come, Saviour, then, o'er all below
Shine brightly from Thy throne above;
Bid heaven and earth Thy glory know,
And all creation feel Thy love."



X.

*THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE
KINGDOM.*

IN our last paper we have seen that the Lord Jesus in the time appointed assumes the sovereignty of this earth, according to the voice of the seventh angel: "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.) We will now seek to learn what scripture reveals concerning the nature of His kingdom.

It has been abundantly shown that the prophecies relating to the future glorious reign of our Lord Jesus Christ are to be taken literally, and not to be spiritualized away; nor are they to be understood as being fulfilled in His reigning now in the hearts of those who believe on Him; for He is never called the King in relation to His saints now. The passage in Rev. xv. 3, where the expression "King of saints" appears, should read, as in the margin, and as confirmed by all the oldest MSS., "King of nations." And when He comes as King to reign over the earth, His saints of this dispensation will reign with Him. It will be a literal reign, and the Lord Jesus will in person sit upon

His throne as the Son of David, and "reign in mount Zion . . . and before His ancients gloriously." (Isa. xxiv. 23.)

The principles of the kingdom are given to us by the King Himself in the sermon on the mount. (Matt. v. to vii.) The promises and precepts there enunciated belong in their fulness to the future kingdom. Then the poor in spirit shall possess the kingdom; the mourner be eternally comforted; the meek shall inherit the earth; and the pure in heart shall see God. It cannot be said that under the gospel dispensation the meek ones are found inheriting the earth; on the contrary, the child of God is called to follow the Master in rejection, and to wait for his inheritance until the time when He is exalted. Now believers are called to suffer with Him, and by-and-by to be glorified together with Him as joint-heirs of this glorious kingdom. But it will be literally true when the kingdom is set up; all the beatitudes will have their full accomplishment, and the poor in spirit shall possess their inheritance on the earth, because "He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." The Lord Jesus came to Israel first preaching the kingdom of heaven, and this sermon on the mount contains its laws and principles; and they (the Jews) should have recognized His claims as the Messiah by the very utterances of His mouth; but they rejected Him, and the kingdom has been postponed for a

time, during which God has been gathering out of the Gentiles a people for His name ; but only for a time ; for God hath declared, "After this" (the gathering in of the Gentiles) "I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down ; and I will build again the ruins thereof." (Acts xv. 16.)

No kingdom that has ever existed has been marked by the principles of this wonderful discourse, nor has the history of the Church manifested its spirit ; but all will be seen in their full moral beauty and perfection in the coming day when the Lord Jesus takes His rightful place as God's King in His holy hill of Zion.

It will be a kingdom of *justice and righteousness*. We have an intimation of this in the last words of David. He had come to the end of his kingship, and looking back over it, he could but feel how much he had failed in carrying out God's thoughts of the kingdom ; but he rested his soul upon God's promise to him of One who should fulfil all His will, and gave utterance to the precious words of confidence and hope : "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God ; and HE shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds." (2 Sam. xxiii. 3.) In His day no clouds will darken the horizon and hinder the clear, bright shining of the Sun of righteousness ; and David, while deploring that "his house was not so with God," could rejoice in the unfailing fulfilment of God's promise of the

coming One, who should endure for ever, and His throne be established as the sun.

Many other scriptures foretell this righteous reign. In Psalm lxxii., which may justly be called *the Kingdom Psalm*, we read: "He shall judge thy people with *righteousness*, and thy poor with judgment. . . . In His days shall the *righteous* flourish." And in Isaiah xi.: "With *righteousness* shall He judge the poor, and reprove with *equity* for the meek of the earth . . . and *righteousness* shall be the girdle of His loins, and *faithfulness* the girdle of His reins." In Chap. xxxii.: "Behold, a king shall reign in *righteousness*, and princes shall rule in judgment . . . then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and *righteousness* remain in the fruitful field. And the work of *righteousness* shall be peace; and the effect of *righteousness* quietness and assurance for ever."

Such prophecies might be easily multiplied, but these will suffice to show that *righteousness* will be the basis of the kingly rule in the coming day; and "that *righteousness* exalteth a nation" will be fully manifested, when Israel, as the nation and people of the Lord, will be exalted, "and the Gentiles shall see thy *righteousness*, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." (Isa lxii. 2.)

Israel, themselves the immediate subjects of the kingdom, are described thus: "Thy people also shall be all *righteous*: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of

my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isa. lx. 21.) Further, they are called in Isa. xxvi. 2, "The righteous nation which keepeth the truth."

The kingdoms of this world have ever been characterized by the very opposite of this. The strong have oppressed the weak, the mighty have succeeded by force and craft to enslave and tyrannize over their fellows, and the dark places of the earth have been filled with the habitations of cruelty; and this poor, sin-stained earth has been long groaning under the unrighteous sway of those who have acquired the place of power. Man's day is fast drawing to its close, and the kingdoms of this world are tottering and crumbling; and the day of God is hastening rapidly on, when righteousness shall rule and equity flourish.

It will be a kingdom of *peace*. Ever since man was scattered, after the building of the tower of Babel, war has prevailed, and the fairest portions of the earth have been again and again deluged with blood. Mighty conquerors have in all ages spread fire and sword, as they sought to gratify their ambition and love of sovereignty; and within the past few months have we seen this dread scourge devastating whole provinces and countries, and millions slain or rendered homeless.

With the increase of education and civilization the minds of men are looking forward for a time of peace, when nations shall settle their differences by arbitration instead of the sword; but they have overlooked the solemn fact that this world is under

judgment, and that there can be no peace until He comes whose right it is, who will first “overturn, overturn, overturn.” (Ezek. xxi. 27.) Men have cried, “Peace, peace,” but behold war, not knowing that before the era of peace and blessedness dawns upon this world, and “the sword shall be beaten into a plowshare, and the spear into a pruninghook,” it is written, “Prepare war . . . Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.” (Joel iii. 9.) Ere the dawn of this reign of peace the Lord has a controversy with the nations; when this is settled, He will take the sceptre as the Prince of peace, and in His days there will be “abundance of peace, as long as the moon endureth,” and “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Isa. ii. 4.)

What a blessed day will this be! The sighing of the prisoner will be hushed, the wail of the desolate be changed into a song of gladness, the sword for ever sheathed, and each one able to dwell in safety under his own vine and fig-tree. Well may our hearts sing—

“Come, Prince of peace, and claim Thine own,
Set up Thy gracious sway;
O'er this poor world shed forth Thy beams,
And bring eternal day.”

It will be a time of *untold blessing*. All the promises of earthly good and plenty made to Israel,

and which they failed to enjoy through their disobedience, will then be fulfilled. Abundance and plenty will be in every house—no more famines and distresses, such as have ravaged all parts of the earth at various times; but “then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us.”

It will be a kingdom of *universal sovereignty*. There have been monarchs of this world who have claimed universal dominion, but have never fully attained it. The four great Gentile monarchies have each in turn exercised vast dominion, and assumed universal sovereignty; but it remains for the Lord Jesus to exercise the undivided dominion of this earth. According to Daniel's prophecy, the stone cut out without hands shall fall upon this world's kingdoms, “and the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, . . . it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. . . . Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him.” (Ps. lxxii. 8–11.)

The coming kingdom will be a wondrous contrast to all that has gone before it. Instead of iniquity rearing its head and triumphing, righteousness and equity shall reign; instead of war, turmoil, bloodshed, and famine, shall peace, happiness, and plenty

abound; and instead of the serpent's poisonous breath spreading death on every hand, the sweet and precious fragrance of the name of the glorious Emmanuel, "King of kings," shall be wafted forth upon the breezes throughout the wide earth. Then shall Heber's well-known hymn find its answer, and every clime and nation bask under the healing beams of the Sun of righteousness.

"Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
'Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole;
And o'er our ransomed nation,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign."



XI.

IMMANUEL'S LAND.

HAVING traced the kingdom in its setting up and in its moral characteristics, we will now seek to show what the word of God unfolds as to the land of Israel itself, called, in Isa. viii. 8, "Immanuel's land." We have been accustomed by early education and tradition to suppose that heaven is intended by this expression; but a very slight study of the passage where it occurs will clearly show that it does not refer to heaven, inasmuch as the king of Assyria is spoken of as overrunning it with his hosts. It clearly refers to the land promised to Abraham, the land of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its metropolis. It was distinctly foretold, that not only should the people of Israel be blessed, but that the land itself should be made partaker of the fertility and blessing resulting from the benignant reign of the Prince of peace; and that Jerusalem, "the city of the great king," should be the centre from which should radiate to all parts of the earth the manifold blessings that will then be poured out upon the land.

That land has now been for centuries trodden

under the foot of the infidel; it has long lain under the dire judgment of God; but it will yet arise in glory such as it has never yet seen. And there are many indications of this wondrous change to be discerned by the watchful eye of the child of God; recent events in the East have greatly tended to revive the interest in the land of Palestine among the nations of the earth, and doubtless momentous issues hang upon the events that have recently transpired; and my firm conviction is, that this country of England will yet be used of God as the means in His hand of bringing about His wondrous purposes in connection with His ancient people; and He has allowed this country to acquire the protectorate of Syria and Asia Minor, that, under the security which obtains everywhere under the rule of England, the Jews may return and settle gradually in the land.*

For some time past an ever-deepening interest has been felt in Jerusalem and the land of Israel, and a most accurate survey of the whole land has been made under English supervision on the scale of the Ordnance Survey of our own country; and recent travellers tell us that Jerusalem itself is in-

* I gather this from the following among other scriptures: "Surely *the isles* shall wait for me, and *the ships of Tarshish* first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God." In common with many students of the prophetic word, I believe that Great Britain is alluded to in this and similar scriptures.

creasing rapidly in the number of its inhabitants, and that building to a considerable extent is being carried on.

These things speak for themselves, and surely point forward to the great event of prophecy—the setting up of the throne of David, and the restoration of Israel; and as a consequence, the land that is now desolate and bare bringing forth in abundance. The sterility and barrenness that has existed for so many hundreds of years, on account of Israel's sin, will all vanish and give place to fruitfulness and plenty when the promised "latter rain" is given again according to Hosea vi. 3: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

In Deut. xi. we have God's promise of the fruitfulness of the land, which, though forfeited for a time, waits to be literally realized. He says it is "a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it . . . I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil." This fertility was for a time enjoyed, and it will yet be known again, never more to be forfeited.

Again, in Joel ii., we have this foretold: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. . . . He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in

the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. . . . And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God." Again, in iii. 18: "It shall come to pass in that day, the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim."

This healing fountain from the house of the Lord is further described in Ezekiel xlvii., where we see it issuing forth from the threshold of the house, from the south side of the altar. The stream flows on, deepening and widening in its course, and spreads healing and life as it goes, until, falling into the Dead Sea, which covers the site of the doomed cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, it heals the waters of that salt and death-imparting sea, as described in verses 8, 9: "These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea" (the Dead Sea, which lies east of Jerusalem): "which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed; and it shall come to pass that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live."

The counterpart to this we have in Rev. xxii., where, from beneath the throne of God and of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem, the pure river of the water of life runs forth, clear as crystal; on the

banks of which, as in Ezekiel also, we see the tree of life growing, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. We should particularly notice in passing the connection between the altar and the healing and life-giving river, as recorded both by Ezekiel and the apostle John. All life and health are inseparably connected with the altar, where the blood of atonement was poured out. There can be no blessing to believers now, to Israel by-and-by, or to the nations at large, except through the cross and blood-shedding of Christ. In Ezekiel the river comes from beneath the altar, because the scene is earthly—it is the earthly Jerusalem; in the Revelation it flows from out of the throne, because there the scene is heavenly—and no altar is needed in the heavenly Jerusalem—but the stream is seen proceeding out of the throne, which itself rests on the same foundation of the blood of atonement.

Again, in Amos ix. 13 : “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the trader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”

Enough has been advanced to show the fertility of the land, and of the plenty that shall abound when, as prophesied long ages ago by Moses, Israel will realize and enjoy “the days of heaven upon the earth.” We will now see some of the moral glory and blessing that will centre around Jerusalem, and radiate out from her to the nations of the earth.

The scriptures are very numerous that depict

its latter-day glory. Jerusalem! what memories cluster around her walls! If we look at the past, when God dwelt amidst His people in visible glory in the temple of Solomon; or if we think of her dismantled of her glory by those that despoiled her and carried her children captive; or as the place where the blessed Lord Jesus in the days of His humiliation walked her streets, and suffered outside *her gate*; or, lastly, as *the restored dwelling-place of Jehovah*, the city of the great King, what tender associations are clustered around her. She stands out a wondrous example of God's righteous anger and judgment, but will yet be the glorious monument of His faithfulness to His unchangeable covenant.

“Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” (Ps. xlviii. 2, 3.)

“The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. . . . Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isa. ii. 2, 3.)

“Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.” (Isa. xii. 6.)

“In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees. . . . And in that day shall this song

be sung in the land of Judah ; We have a strong city ; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." (Isa. xxv. 6, to xxvi. 1.)

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken ; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate : but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah : for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." (Isa. lxii. 4.)

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." (Isa. lx. 19.)

"This is the name whereby she (Jerusalem) shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." (Jer. xxxiii. 16.)

"The name of the city from that day shall be, (Jehovah-Shammah) The Lord is there." (Ezekiel xlviii. 35.)

From these and very many other scriptures we are clearly taught the position of exceeding glory and blessing Jerusalem and the land will occupy in the coming day. Around that centre will gather the various nations, saying, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths ;" and from year to year will they go up to worship the King at Jerusalem, and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. In that day the very bells of the horses will bear the inscription, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD ;" and every

pot and vessel in Judah and Jerusalem shall be holy unto the Lord.

Well may our hearts long for that day, when the holiness of God shall be seen shining out in unsullied brightness, and everything reflect His glory and tell forth His beauty; when earth itself shall no longer groan under the curse, but shall rejoice in the fulness of the redemption wrought out by the Lord Jesus. And when earth thus rests in perfect blessing and peace, we who believe in Christ, and are linked to Him in resurrection life, shall be with Him in the heavenly Jerusalem, overshadowing the earthly city, rejoicing eternally in that ineffable joy and glory which He will make us to partake of in His presence for ever.



XII.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”—Rev. xx. 6.

THE truth of the resurrection of the body is part of the revealed counsel of God, and has been held firmly by the saints of God in all ages. It is not our purpose now to prove the truth of the doctrine, but rather to show the difference that exists between the resurrection of the saints of God and of those who die in their sins.

It has been widely accepted by the professing church, as an established doctrine, that there will be a general and simultaneous resurrection, at the end of the world, of all who have ever lived on this earth—the good to stand at the right hand of the Judge of all, and the wicked at His left, and that then the great separation will take place, and the eternal destiny of each be fixed; and, as a natural result of this, it has been taught that until that day no one could know for certain whether they would be saved or lost.

Clearer light has through God's grace been shed on the blessed pages of God's word, and the Spirit

has guided into a fuller understanding of many truths that were long forgotten by the church; and as the hope of the coming of the Lord has been afresh kindled in the hearts of God's saints, the truth of the first resurrection has also been opened out and widely taught.

This idea of a general resurrection at the end of the world is without any warrant from Scripture, as we shall seek to show. In this 20th chapter of Revelation we have certain ones mentioned who are seen seated with Christ on His throne and reigning with Him, "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." And immediately afterwards we read, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." This is a clear and dogmatic statement of the inspired Word, that between the resurrection of those who love Christ, and of "the rest of the dead," those who die in their sins, there is an interval of a thousand years; that the former are seen upon the throne reigning in glory with Christ, while the latter are still in their graves waiting for their dread doom until the thousand years are finished.

If we had only this one Scripture it would suffice to establish this truth; but we are not left to only one passage, as it is confirmed by the whole teaching of the New Testament. In 1 Cor. xv., where we have the doctrine of the resurrection enforced and proved, there is no mention of the unbelieving dead. Resurrection is there viewed as

relating, first to Christ Himself, then to the believer; the Apostle wrote to sustain and build up the saints at Corinth who were troubled by false teachers, who said that the resurrection was past already. In verse 23 we read, "Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they *that are Christ's* at His coming;" and that only those that are Christ's are then raised, is seen from the close of the chapter, where the apostle, in language of triumph, contrasts the resurrection body with the earthly tabernacle. The latter is sown in corruption, and weakness, and dishonour, but is raised in incorruption, and glory, and power. This is only true of those who believe on the Lord Jesus, and are passed from death unto life now; it is not true of the wicked dead, and therefore the resurrection which accomplishes such glorious results has nothing to do with them; they remain in their graves until brought forth to stand before the great white throne at the close of the thousand years. Only the believer can take up the language of exultation, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" To the unbeliever the sting remains eternally.

In Philippians iii. the apostle expresses the yearning of his heart to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection. He says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection *from among* the dead." He did not mean the resurrection of the dead, for he knew well that every one who ever lived would be raised again; but his hope and expectation was to be raised up from among the dead.

The expression "from among" clearly implies that some are left behind ; and that it is so is abundantly proved by the fuller unfolding of His purposes, which God has given us in the Revelation. In nearly all the passages in the New Testament where resurrection is spoken of, it is a resurrection *from*, not *of*, the dead—a raising of some from among others who are still left in their graves. The first resurrection is only of those who are Christ's, and takes place at His coming, when those who have fallen asleep in Jesus are aroused from their graves, and the living believers are changed, and so they are for ever with the Lord in their glorified resurrection-bodies. The Lord Jesus is the first-born from among the dead ; and when He returns, His saints, all who have in all ages up to that time trusted in Him, will also rise *from among* the dead ; and thus risen, they reign for a thousand years with Christ before the end of the world. It is therefore evident that there cannot be a simultaneous resurrection of all at the end of the world, since the redeemed are seen reigning with Christ a thousand years previously.

In this scene on the throne we see also those who were martyred during the great tribulation, who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, nor had received his mark in their forehead ; they are the dead to whom the Spirit refers in Rev. xiv. 13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them." It is

quite true, in all dispensations, that those who die in the Lord are *blessed*; but in this scripture the Spirit expressly refers to those who die during this time of persecution, for He specially marks the time as "from henceforth." But it may be asked, What is the special blessing that is the portion of those who die at this time? The answer is, That all such will be partakers of the first resurrection, and will reign in heavenly glory with Christ over the earth; whereas, those who live through the time of trouble, and are delivered out of it by the interposition of their coming Messiah, will be partakers of earthly blessing. The former reign *with* Christ on His throne, and the latter are the subjects of the kingdom. They are *blessed* above the others, inasmuch as heavenly glory exceeds earthly blessing.

The words of the Lord Jesus, in John v. 29, have been thought by some to teach a general resurrection; but there the Lord clearly refers to two different resurrections—the first, of life; the second, of damnation—without making any mention of the interval that would exist between them. It has been the way of God to develop His counsels progressively; He does not reveal His mind all at once, but step by step He unfolds His purposes; we *should therefore expect to find in the Revelation* fuller details as to future events, than in the gospels. And this is the case, as in the Revelation we have the full light of His counsels shining out regarding this glorious subject.

But it is by no means a singular fact to find, as

in this verse, a long interval intervening between events that at first sight appear coincident; for instance, in Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, we have the advent of the Messiah prophesied of. Part of this was fulfilled when He came in grace to a lost and dying world; He took up this very prophecy at the opening of His ministry on earth, and reading as far as "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," He closed the book, and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." In the passage in Isaiah the word runs on in immediate connection, "and the day of vengeance of our God." This day is yet future, as we have seen in previous papers; so that there is an interval of nearly two thousand years at least between the two clauses of this verse. In the prophets, the advent of Messiah, both in His humiliation and in His glory, is often spoken of as if it were one event; they saw the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow, as if nothing intervened between them; whereas we know that this present interval of His rejection, and the gathering out of the Church, supervenes; so it is with the resurrection. Looked at by the saints in the past, it may have appeared as one event; but the fuller light of the later revelation of God's mind clearly marks a distinction and interval between the resurrection of the just and that of the ungodly.

The parable of "the tares and the wheat" has been also thought by many to convey the idea of a general resurrection; but there it is a separation of

living persons *at the end of the age* or dispensation, not *at the end of the world*. The tares are the wicked gathered out of His kingdom at the beginning of His reign. The wheat are the righteous who live on upon the earth during the kingdom. There is no thought of resurrection here, neither is there in that often misunderstood parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt. xxv. There again the entire scene has to do with living persons, not dead ones raised. It is the judgment of the Gentile *nations* at the coming of Christ; and the judgment has special reference to their treatment of a third party, "these My brethren," the Jewish people. They are living nations, judged as such; and the sheep are those who have succoured His people, and they are rewarded accordingly; and the goats, those who have persecuted His people, meet with their reward. The same scene is described in Joel iii. 1, 2—"Behold, *in those days, and at 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." This scene is identical with the above parable, and fixes the time of its fulfilment at the period of the restoration of Israel, and not at the end of the world.

So then we see that the first resurrection has nothing to do with the lost, but includes only those

who are "blessed and holy"—first, all the redeemed from Abel onwards, until the coming of the Lord for His church; and then those who, during the time of the great tribulation, seal their testimony for God with their blood, and are martyred for their faithfulness. These all live and reign with Christ upon His throne during the thousand years of His millennial kingdom.



XIII.

THE MILLENNIUM.

“And they lived and reigned with Christ *a thousand years.*”

REV. XX. 4.

THE word “millennium” simply means a thousand years, and gives us the duration of the personal reign of our Lord Jesus on the throne of David. This era of universal peace and blessing is frequently foretold in the prophets, with many details as to the state and condition of the earth during that time; but it is only in the book of the Revelation that we have the precise limit mentioned of this glorious earthly reign. This is just what we would expect to find, that as we have the truth of the first resurrection more clearly defined in this the last unfolding of the mind of God, so in it we have precise information regarding the duration of the millennial reign of our Lord.

We have seen from the word of God that this time of blessing on the earth is ushered in by dire and fearful judgments on apostate Christendom. It is not brought about, as has been so long erroneously taught, by the preaching of the gospel, and the gradual conversion of all nations to the faith. Sufficient evidence has already been adduced in proof

of this solemn fact, that it is by God's strange work of judgment that He introduces and establishes the beneficent rule of the Prince of peace.

The millennium has an earthly and a heavenly aspect. It is the reign of the Lord Jesus in His glory, with His risen and glorified saints, over a redeemed earth. Heaven is His throne and earth His footstool literally in that day. He Himself with His redeemed ones will reign over the earth, and overshadow it in the New Jerusalem, while on the earth the literal Jerusalem will be the centre and metropolis, and the seat of the government, which will be exercised under the Lord Jesus by "the prince," doubtless a lineal descendant of the royal house of David; while the priestly temple service will be under the charge of the sons of Zadok, the descendant of Phinehas, to whom God gave, through Moses, the promise of an everlasting priesthood.

Let us look first at its heavenly aspect. The apostle John is carried by the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and is then shown in vision "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." This is the city that Abraham long ages ago looked forward to, "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is seen descending from heaven; but it never reaches the earth. This city of effulgent light and glory can have no contact with earth even in its redeemed state, but would seem from the vision to descend and remain sus-

pended over "Immanuel's land." It will be the abode of the risen saints with their glorified Head and Lord, and between it and the earthly city there will, no doubt, be continuous intercourse, as foreshadowed by Jacob's ladder, which he saw with its foot on the earth, "and the top of it reached to heaven : and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." This communion between heaven and earth is also foretold by the Lord Himself in John i. 51, where, speaking to Nathanael, "the Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," the representative of restored and regenerate Israel, He says, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the *Son of man.*"

In this glorious habitation, which needs not the light of the sun nor of the moon, will the Lamb and His Bride dwell, and from this exalted position He will rule over the earth, and apportion to each one the particular rewards and spheres of service according to their faithfulness. One may have rule over ten cities, another over five ; and some be sent on this errand of mercy, and some on that mission of authority and rule : all will be in most blessed, perfect harmony with the Head who directs all His members, and appoints to each their respective place in that scene of ineffable glory.

"There shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light." It is plain from this description of the heavenly city, which is twice re-

peated, that it does not descend to earth at all. It is altogether above the need of terrestrial light ; for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof ; but the earthly Jerusalem will be still dependent on the created lights ; sun and moon, and day and night, will not cease as long as the earth remaineth. We therefore infer that this city is suspended by the omnipotent power of God in the region of space over the land of His choice. The earthly city will itself be raised up to a great altitude ; for “the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills ; and people shall flow unto it.” And between the earthly and heavenly cities will doubtless be constant communication ; and the Lord and His risen saints will visit the earth from time to time. They will not dwell even on the millennial earth, but in the city of light above, and from thence exercise divine government, and rule in righteousness.

Then shall be fulfilled the promise that has long been waiting for its accomplishment, and which men have vainly expected would be brought about by the preaching of the gospel ; for when the Lord Jesus has taken the sceptre of the world, after subduing His enemies, “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” On every land and in every clime shall the Lord be known in His saving grace ; “for all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

At the commencement of this happy and blessed

period there will be a wondrous outpouring of the Holy Ghost, such as has never been witnessed before, and of which Pentecostal blessing was but an earnest. The prophecy of Joel will then find its full accomplishment: "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."

Israel, all that remain after the judgments that have ushered in the kingdom, will be converted nationally. The nation shall be born to God in a day, and will have a new heart and new spirit given to them, and thus will be regenerated and made all righteous; for God says of them: "Thy people shall be all righteous." The law of God will be written on their heart, "and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall *all know me*, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." The Lord will then make Israel His messengers to the uttermost parts of the earth, and all nations will hear and turn to the Lord; and they will gather to Jerusalem as the centre for worship once every year, according to Zech. xiv. 16: "It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." Thus we see that

universal blessing and the conversion of the world take place after the coming of the Lord Jesus, and under His glorious sway, and not during this present dispensation, which is fast ripening for its doom under the guidance and rule of Satan, the ruler of the darkness of this age.

Let us now look at the earthly aspect of the millennial reign. "The days of heaven upon earth," promised by God to Israel conditionally upon their obedience, are now made sure to them under their long-rejected, but now acknowledged and exalted, Messiah. Righteousness, peace, and joy abound on every side. The desert blossoms, and the barren field is luxuriant with fertility. Creation itself shares in the general blessing; and the song of the psalmist, prophetic of this happy time, is echoed from mountain to hill over the whole range of earth: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord." (Ps. xcvi. 11, 12.) The animal creation also will partake of the general blessing, and their natural instincts will be changed, according to the prophecy in Isaiah xi. 6: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."

Another mark of this happy period will be "*length of days.*" Death, except as the distinct and immediate judgment of God on those that sin, will not occur during the millennium. God's people Israel will be entirely regenerated, and will be all righteous; and many of them will doubtless live right through the kingdom. Of them it is written: "As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." (Isa. lxxv. 22.)

The devil, the old adversary of men, will no longer be going about as a roaring lion seeking to devour; for at the coming of Christ in glory, to the destruction of His foes, he will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit, or abyss, "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." (Rev. xx. 3.)

Although Satan is bound, and hindered from deceiving the nations, yet there is still sin and death during this time of universal blessing. The millennial dispensation is not perfect; God is still dealing with men in the flesh; and it will be manifest at the close of this, as of every preceding dispensation, that man at his best estate is altogether vanity. That during this time there will be sin, is evident from Isaiah lxxv. 20: "The child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." This passage proves two things: first, the longevity of man during this period, for one dying at a

hundred years old is accounted but a child, instead of as now being regarded as of a very great age; and second, that death is God's immediate judgment on sin. This will be seen more clearly by the following verse from Isaiah lxvi. 24: "They shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Now, sin and death are the rule—they reign; then, they will be the exception, though they will still exist until the close.

During this period there will be many nations who, while yielding outward homage to the Lord Jesus as King, remain still unregenerate. Their hearts are not subdued, and, as the psalmist prophesied (Ps. xviii. 44, margin), they will only yield *feigned obedience* to Him, so that when Satan is let loose at the close they are an easy prey to his deceptions, and are ready to follow him in his final but futile effort against Christ, of which we have the inspired record in Rev. xx. 7-9: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

How solemn an end to the history of rebellious

man! Under every possible circumstances God has tried him and he has proved the same, and every dispensation has ended in apostacy from God. The millennium is no exception to this, as we see, at the end of a period of unparalleled blessing under the visible glorious reign of Immanuel, the heart of man is the same, and he is ready at the first opportunity to throw off the profession of obedience to Christ, and to accept the service of the adversary Satan. But the end comes in one tremendous flash of fire from God out of heaven, and the ungodly are for ever swept away from the face of God's earth.



XIV.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne.”—*Rev.* xx. 11, 12.

HERE we have vividly depicted by the Spirit the scene of the last great judgment—that of *the dead*. It is the winding up of the history of earth, and the final settlement of God's controversy with fallen man. It has to do only with those who are lost—the dead of all ages, from Cain downwards to those who follow Satan at the end of the millennium, and are consumed by the fire from heaven. No saved ones are before that throne, not a single believer is among that vast unnumbered throng; for all the redeemed up to the moment of Christ's glorious advent have been reigning with Him for a thousand years when this throne of judgment is set up, and all the saved nations of the millennial day are made partakers of everlasting life, and inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.

But some may say, Does not Paul write in 2 Cor.

v. that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? and is not that judgment-seat identical with this great white throne? Surely he does speak of believers appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ! but this is by no means the same as the scene here described. The former is the *βῆμα*, or *tribunal* of Christ, where only believers appear; the latter is a judgment-throne, where only the lost are seen. There is no thought of condemnation connected with the tribunal of Christ. It is the place where Christ will reward all faithful service which His saints have rendered in their course down here, and where the brightness of His presence will consume as "wood, hay, stubble" all that has been done for self. The approved servant will be then rewarded, and even those who will see their works burnt up will themselves be saved, yet so as by fire. Still there is no judgment, in the sense of condemnation; that is for ever past to the soul that rests on the atoning blood of Christ; for he is passed from death unto life, and shall not come into judgment. (John v. 24.)

Another scene often confounded with this great white throne is the judgment of the nations in Matt. xxv.; but this, as we have shown in a previous paper, takes place at the beginning of the millennium, and has to do with living (not dead ones raised) nations in respect to their treatment of Christ's brethren, the Jewish remnant, whereas this scene of the great white throne is at the end of time, after the thousand years of millennial

blessing has passed away ; it is therefore evident that they cannot be the same.

This is emphatically a judgment *of the dead*—“I saw *the dead*, small and great.” Believers are never spoken of as dead, but they are partakers even now of everlasting life ; of them the Lord Jesus said, “He that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.” The throne is set, and He that now waits to be gracious will then take His place as the appointed Judge of all ; and those who now refuse to bow to Him as the Saviour, will then be compelled to own Him as Lord ; for God has declared, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. ii. 10, 11.) Happy are they who own Him as Lord to their eternal salvation ; and fearful will be their doom who refuse to do so now, but who will then have to bow to His awful sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Before that throne are gathered the myriads of the lost ; no word is spoken, but speechless they stand before the dazzling brightness of the throne, and of Him who sits upon it. The books are opened, and in a terrible array there shines out before their gaze all the sins they ever committed ; their guilt appears as written with the point of a diamond in letters of fire, and their names not being found in the Lamb’s book of life, they are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. What an awful

scene thus winds up and closes the history of this world! and what terrible results are here manifested as the fruit of the entrance of sin in the garden through the subtlety of the serpent!

There is *no blood* upon this throne. All is spotless purity and unsullied whiteness, and from the very presence of Him that sits upon it the earth and the heavens flee away, and no place is found for them. No blood, no grace, no mercy now; the day of God's long-suffering is for ever past, and the despisers and rejectors of His love are now gathered in one unnumbered host to hear their final doom, and to be cast into the blackness of darkness for ever, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

The Lord Jesus is now sitting upon the throne of grace, the mercy-seat, and His blood sprinkled is speaking there on behalf of the sinner before God; but then the day of grace is for ever past, and nothing remains for those who have turned their backs upon the mercy and love of God so abundantly manifested in the gift of His Son, but to be eternally cast out of His presence. All classes of sinners are there; various grades and characters of men; all the dead—great and small; but all are alike in their doom and condemnation, and together descend to the death that never dies. "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.)

XV.

THE ETERNAL STATE.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.”

Rev. xxi. 1.

THERE are but very few details given us in the word of God concerning the eternal state; we will however seek to gather up all that is revealed therein as to the purposes of God after time has ceased to be.

The glorious personal reign of the Lord Jesus on the earth will, as we have seen, continue for a thousand years; He will then deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Having fulfilled the purpose of God towards the earth, and glorified Him as the King upon the throne, He will then render back the government of all things into the hands of God, as we learn from 1 Cor. xv. 24–28: “Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . for He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that *God may be all in all.*”

The confirmation of this scripture we have in Rev. xx. The last confederation of His enemies under the leadership of Satan at the close of His reign is consumed with fire; then the resurrection of judgment takes place, and death, the last enemy, is cast into the lake of fire; then, in chap. xxi., follows the new heavens and new earth, and *God is all in all*.

In 2 Peter iii. we have also the passing away of the old creation, and the bringing forth of the new prophesied of. He writes: "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. . . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This harmonises exactly with the account in Revelation xx., where we see, that at the close of the day of the Lord (the thousand years' reign of Christ) the heavens and the earth flee away, and no place is found for them, and afterwards the new creation "lasting as eternity" is brought upon the scene.

In Rev. xxi. 1-8* we have the Spirit's description

* The remainder of this chapter and beginning of the following clearly belong to the millennial day. A careful reading and comparison with Ezekiel xlvii. and xlviii. will show that it has to do with time and not eternity. "The leaves of the tree" which are "for the healing of the nations" is of itself sufficient evidence, seeing that in the eternal state there can be no need of healing, while in the millennial there is.

of this new creation. The old has for ever passed away ; and now we have that for which God has been counselling and working presented to us in its glorious eternal perfection. God is here seen tabernacling with men. That on which His heart has been set, His purpose to have a habitation for Himself among redeemed and glorified men, is now realized. Here we seem to have no distinction of Jew and Gentile, but God dwelling with His redeemed as one undivided family, God Himself the Sun and Centre. How beautiful is the picture here unfolded to our gaze ! and how full of ecstatic joy should those be for whom such untold bliss is prepared ! With what longing of heart should they pant for that day of unclouded brightness, of that morn of joy that has no evening, that eternal day without a night !

The holy city, the New Jerusalem, which we have noticed in connection with the millennial day, is here again seen "coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." From this we learn that this glorious city is an *eternal emblem of the church, the bride, and in this city God Himself dwells with all the saved gathered around it. God Himself, the Triune, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the centre ; the church and all the glorified saints that shared in the first resurrection, the nearest circle to God Himself ; and then, in an outer circle, the saved nations of millennial earth, all forming one grand assembly of blessed ones around the Triune God. "Behold, the tabernacle of God*

is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." All tears are wiped away, and every trace of the curse is obliterated; all pain, sickness, sorrow, and death are for ever passed away. "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." The new creation in all its eternal beauty and glory is thus brought forth by the same voice as of old called the old creation into existence with His mighty omnipotent voice, saying, "Let there be," and there was. But blessed is the contrast between the old and the new; the new creation never shall lose its brightness or be tarnished by the entrance of sin.

The answer comes from Him who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end—"IT IS DONE." Surely these words are the echo of the cry of the same Blessed One, which He uttered on Calvary—"IT IS FINISHED." In death He then laid the sure and solid foundation on which God's glorious purposes in the new creation could rest securely. The "It is finished" of Calvary is the basis on which all the glorious superstructure of the counsels and purposes are eternally built; and the "It is done" (of Rev. xxi.) is the divine answer echoing through countless ages to the stability and value of that work. Thus is the Lord Jesus and His work seen to be all in all; He is foundation and top-stone; He is the key-stone of the divine arch of the eternal counsels of God, and the pillar on which all is divinely upheld. Blessed

LORD JESUS, thou art indeed "THE ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END."

How solemn is the last verse of this description of eternity. The curtain is also drawn aside as to the condition of the lost, and they are seen in "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." The same Spirit who has given us a glimpse of the eternal bliss of the redeemed in the new heavens and the new earth, draws aside the curtain as to the *then* condition of the lost; and as the one is a picture of the eternal state of the blest, so is the other equally true as to the eternal state of the lost. Conclusive answer to those who teach the short punishment theory, and terrible prospect for the rejectors of Christ.

Thus we close our "Short Papers." May the Lord grant to both writer and readers to know more of the power of the "blessed hope" in the heart, and thus may we be found occupying for Him during the little while, and with loins girded and lamps burning, waiting for His return.

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