

WHO WILL GO WHEN THE LORD COMES?

*'SELECTIVE RAPTURE' THEORIES
TESTED BY HOLY SCRIPTURE*

By

W. R. LEWIS and E. W. ROGERS

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THIS book is written for the strengthening of the faith of those who are rejoicing in the knowledge of sins forgiven through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice. We dare not ask anyone to study prophecy till he knows a present redemption.

It is assumed, therefore, that the reader is ready for the Coming of the Lord because of the efficacy of the blood of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is the Divine pledge of all his future blessedness.

Those who have this "earnest" have the Divine certainty of all that to which God has called them. Their hope is connected with God's purpose in Christ which nothing can frustrate. They have the "earnest" now of that of which they will have the fulness in a little while.

The writers have sought to deal fairly with the views they are opposing and to avoid any expressions concerning their brethren which they would regret in the Day of Christ. Their only desire is to do what they urge their readers to do, namely, to test the theories referred to in the light of Holy Scripture and in dependence upon the Spirit of God.

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FOREWORD

THE Authors of this book have rendered a valuable and timely service to the people of God by refuting the misleading and unscriptural teaching known as the 'Selective Rapture theory'.

This teaching, we believe, dishonours Christ and robs His glorious work of its sole sufficiency. It tends also to disturb the peace and hope of those who give heed to it.

There has been a spate of writings containing this teaching in recent years and no one can charge the authors of this book with undue haste in seeking to refute it.

This clear restatement of the truth of Scripture will, we believe, bring comfort and joy to the hearts of the Lord's people who have been troubled by 'Selective Rapture' teaching.

We, the undersigned, are privileged to associate ourselves with the authors in contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We pray that through this book the efficacy of the atoning work of Christ may be seen in fresh lustre, and that the readers may be led to exclaim, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory".

R. WOODHOUSE BEALES, G. W. BELL, JOHN BOYD, ARTHUR BURR, W. G. HALES, A. HANTON, O. C. HARTRIDGE, J. H. LARGE, HENRY STEEDMAN, FREDERICK A. TATFORD.

December, 1952.

A COMMENDATION

AS one who has served the Lord in the assemblies of His saints for more than seventy years, I desire to join in this solemn protest against teachings which tend to deprive the saints of "the blessed hope", thus beclouding their souls; and even challenging the foundation truths of the gospel.

One of the precious things recovered for us by the Holy Spirit early in the last century was the heavenly hope as distinguished from the Lord's appearance in judgment with which it had become confounded. This hope Satan would again take from us, and it is our duty to resist his endeavours.

Being unable to read this book, and also unequal to having it read to me, I take this way of expressing my sympathy with the labours of our protesting brethren.

W. W. FEREDAY.

INTRODUCTION

THERE fell into the hands of one of the writers recently a book in which was the following: "The initial condition upon which man may aspire to this beatific vision is the atoning work of the Redeemer. . . . But the final condition for realizing in fact that which the atonement has made possible is set before us in the clause . . . , 'Pursue the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord'. Undoubtedly the desire in the mind of the writer of these words is to promote godly living and a wholesome fear of the Lord—a very laudable thing; but this quotation of Scripture, like many other phrases which are used by teachers of this particular school is, to say the least, most misleading. We do not doubt their godliness or sincerity; but of the incorrectness of their teaching we have not the slightest doubt. The eternal security of the believer depends solely on the sovereign grace of God. It is altogether independent of works. It is 'not of works lest any man should boast'.¹ Salvation is effected alone through the work of Christ on the Cross, and His resurrection, appropriated by faith, applied to the believer by the Holy Spirit. To this nothing can be added. The Scriptures know nothing whatever of an "initial" and a "final" condition. The work of Calvary is a 'finished' work. By it "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified".² Their future salvation is no contingency; it is the appointment of God in His foreknowledge and according to His own purpose and grace."³

It is derogatory to the Lord Jesus to assert that His work can only be fulfilled on the condition that there is the pursuit of something by man. Yet there are those who have taught that if the "final condition" is not fulfilled it is possible for a believer to lose his salvation; or lose his place in the Kingdom: experience even the 'outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth': fail to participate in the 'first resurrection': and that, unless he is an 'overcomer', he will not escape the 'second death'. Such teachers have,

¹ Eph. 2. 9.

² Heb. 10. 14.

³ 2 Tim. 1. 9.

INTRODUCTION—*continued*

unwittingly, turned God's warnings into threats; they have substituted fear for hope, and have taught salvation by the work of Calvary plus something of human endeavour, instead of teaching the old-fashioned and Scriptural gospel of being "saved by grace alone".

The object of these pages is to examine those passages of Scripture which, in the view of the present writers, have been misconstrued or distorted to fit the theories concerned. May God graciously grant that those who read this book will be delivered from the snare which has thus been laid, if they have already been caught in it.

CHAPTER I

PARALLEL LINES

MUCH of the error with which these pages deal emanates from an endeavour to reconcile that which to our finite minds seems to be unreconcilable. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are somewhat like parallel lines—they meet only in infinity. They are as the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the universe, which seem to be contrary to each other, although working harmoniously in an ordered creation. They are as the wheels of a clock, some of which operate clockwise and some anti-clockwise, yet each is necessary for timekeeping. Each doctrine is as a piece in an orchestra, necessary for the whole, although, taken separately, one may seem to be incongruous with the other. Who knows but that, in spheres outside of the creation which it is possible for man to investigate, there are laws quite contrary to those which apply to earth? It may well be. It is not surprising, then, that in spiritual matters there are laws which, to our natural minds, are difficult to grasp, yet they work harmoniously when judged by divine standards. Reason very often has to halt; faith goes on.

There are many examples in Scripture of the co-existence of these two principles. That 'God sent' Joseph into Egypt¹ did not in any wise relieve his brethren of their guilt in selling him to the Midianites. Again, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me" implies divine sovereignty, but "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" denotes human responsibility to come.² Again, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain".³ God's 'counsel and foreknowledge' determined what should be done long before man's guilt was incurred. The fact that God counselled it did not in any wise relieve man of his culpability. "But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled."⁴

¹ Genesis 45. 8. ² John 6. 37. ³ Acts 2. 23. ⁴ Acts 3. 18.

Rationalists may argue foolishly in attempting to relieve man of blame, asserting that the Christian doctrine teaches fatalism, or that man is an irresponsible machine. That argument will not serve in the Day of Judgment, nor does conscience approve it now.

The doctrine of a sovereign election pursuant to the purpose of God may seem to our minds incompatible with the doctrine of human freewill and responsibility. We must not attempt to accommodate the one to the other and thus have partial views of each. We must hold them both in their full implications. Man is fully responsible to God; God is absolutely sovereign. We must await the day when God will reveal even this to us, and we shall then understand how the two things could exist simultaneously.

It is failure to grasp this that has led some into a serious confusion of Scriptural doctrine. It has caused them to teach that if man, after he has been born again, fails in his responsibility to God, then God will fail in the fulfilment of His promises and purpose. It has led them to interpret the plainest utterances of the Lord with a reserve that nullifies them altogether. Emphasis has been placed upon the exhortations and warnings of Scripture in such a way that the absoluteness of the divine purpose and promises has been denied.

We cannot interpret Scripture as we do other books. Being a divine book it requires divine intelligence to understand it. For that reason 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God'—'they are foolishness to him'. He is not able to know them because 'they are spiritually discerned'.¹ Therefore, in interpreting Scripture we must have regard to the fact that it is of divine origin.

When God states one side of a matter we do not well to affirm the other. Because there are the 'elect' it is not proper to speak of the 'non-elect'. There are no such persons in view in Scripture. The contrast to positive election is not reprobation, but God's endurance 'with much long-suffering' the vessels fitted (i.e., by themselves) to destruction.² When God says that all the saints will be caught away, it is not proper to speak of 'translatable and untranslatable saints'. These are non-Scriptural terms and suggest notions

¹ 1 Cor. 2. 14.

² Rom. 9. 22.

foreign to the Bible. The interpretation of Scripture should be governed by what it says and must not be made to fit theories of our own. If a theory is contradicted by a plain scriptural statement, the theory must be abandoned. It is true that there are many deep passages of Scripture in respect of which honoured servants of God have differing views; but we should ever remember that what is clear should not be abandoned in seeking to interpret what is not altogether plain. The clear passage must govern the interpretation of the other. Thus, if one passage speaks of 'all' believers, and predicates something of them all, no other passage must be interpreted in such a way as to limit this. Admittedly, every passage should be interpreted consistently with the general bearing of Scripture, and passage should be compared with passage, but the clear must be regarded as the ruling passage.

There are passages of scripture which may be classified under the heading of Divine Sovereignty. Such are: John 5. 24 " . . . shall not come into judgment "; Acts 16. 31 " . . . thou shalt be saved "; Romans 5. 9 " . . . we shall be saved from wrath "; 1 Cor. 15. 51 " . . . we shall all be changed ". There are, on the other hand, passages which may be classified under the heading of Human Responsibility, such as Col. 1. 23 " . . . if ye continue in the faith "; Heb. 3. 6 " . . . if we hold fast the confidence "; Heb. 3. 14 " . . . if we hold the beginning "; Phil. 3. 11 " . . . if by any means I might attain ". It is the confusion of these two lines of teaching which results in the false doctrine with which we are herein concerned.

CHAPTER II

THINGS THAT DIFFER

THE teaching that is being refuted in these pages is due to the failure to discriminate between 'things that differ'¹, and it will help if we enumerate some of those things which are being confused by the teachers referred to.

There are *two main resurrections*, the first to life and blessing "*from among the dead*"², and the other the resurrection *of the dead* to judgment and gloom. They are respectively called the "resurrection of the just and the unjust"³, and each is separated from the other by at least a thousand years.⁴ The first resurrection is for all saints; the latter for all the lost. The reader should consult carefully John 5. 28-29. Other passages in the New Testament which touch upon resurrection may be classified under one or the other of these leading passages.

A second point in which there is confusion is the difference between *Kingdom teaching and the teaching concerning the Church*, the body of Christ. The 'kingdom of God', otherwise called the 'kingdom of the Heavens', is a very much wider thing than the Church, though entrance into each is on exactly the same terms.⁵ To enter into the Kingdom in its vital form and into the Church we must be born again. The Kingdom began before the Church began, and it includes the Church. It will continue after the Church has gone. At the Rapture, all the saints, including the Old Testament saints, will be raised and changed together. But there are things stated concerning the Church which are peculiar to it, and could not be said of the Kingdom. These things ought to be carefully distinguished.

Another thing which is confused is the *two stages* of the Lord's Coming. He will first come to the air⁶ and later to the earth.⁷ He is seen first as the Morning Star⁸ before He comes as the Sun of Righteousness.⁹ Just as those in the

¹ Phil. 1. 10, margin.

⁵ Matt. 18. 3. John 3. 5.

² Acts 4. 2.

⁶ 1 Thess. 4. 17.

⁸ Rev. 22. 16.

³ Luke 14. 14, Acts 24, 15.

⁹ Mal. 4. 2.

⁴ Rev. 20. 5-15.

⁷ Acts 1. 11.

days of Joash had a preview of the king ere he was publicly displayed to the people¹, so the risen saints will see the King before He is manifested with them on earth. These two lines of teaching must be kept clear and the pertinent passages touching each should be carefully distinguished. When the Lord Jesus was born He came to Bethlehem,² and later in His life He came to Jerusalem.³ Both comings had been spoken of in the Old Testament.⁴ His first advent consisted then of two great acts or parts, His Birth and His Death. Between these there was an interval of more than thirty years, although His first advent had been foretold by the prophets as one great event. Even so will His second advent, foretold in like manner as one event, consist, we believe, of two stages. His coming *for* His Church *to the air*, and His coming *with* His Church *to the earth*, the length of the interval being purposely unrevealed.

These teachers, moreover, confuse the *teaching of the Synoptic Gospels* (Matthew, Mark and Luke) with that of John's Gospel. In the former the Rapture is never mentioned, but in the latter it is, though admittedly it is but briefly touched upon. "He that believeth in Me, though he die, yet shall he live," relates to departed saints; "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," refers to living saints.⁵ Again "I will come again and receive you unto Myself"⁶ shows that He will come and the saints will go, and each will meet the other. This accords with 1 Thess. 4. 17.

Moreover, these teachers fail to take note of the *different Titles or Names* given to the Lord relative to His coming. As 'Son of Man' He will come to the earth. This is a title that has to do with earth, with world-government, with His rule of men, and His earthly Kingdom. It is a title that indicates judgment and is not found in any of the Epistles. But it is "the Lord Himself" who "shall descend from Heaven".⁷ We wait for "His Son";⁸ we "wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ".⁹ Here the titles are different, for the coming in the air is not for judgment, but for the fulfilment of His promise and the completion of the salvation He wrought for His people.

¹ 2 Chron. 23. 11.

² Matt. 2. 1.

³ Matt. 21. 10.

⁴ Micah 5. 2. Zech. 9. 9.

⁵ John 11. 25.

⁶ John 14. 3.

⁷ 1 Thess. 4. 16.

⁸ 1 Thess. 1. 10.

⁹ Phil. 3. 20.

Again, they fail to appreciate that the coming to the earth was no 'mystery', it was no secret. It had often been referred to in the Old Testament Scriptures. For it Israel hoped. The coming into the air, however, was a 'mystery' disclosed chiefly to the Apostle Paul, and officially communicated by him to the saints at Thessalonica and in his first letter to the Corinthians.¹ It was an additional item of truth not discoverable in the Old Testament, for it was not therein revealed. Even the words quoted from John's Gospel (which was written very much later than Paul's letters) could not have been fully appreciated or understood in the absence of Paul's exposition of this 'mystery'.

Further, they fail to understand that even the New Testament writers had their *special vantage ground* from which they considered things. Peter was converted by the Lord when He was here on earth, and his letters are, therefore, characterized by the Name 'Jesus Christ'; but Paul was converted by the sight of the Risen Christ in Glory, and hence he uses the title 'Christ Jesus'. This distinction is more clearly shown in the R.V. The emphasis in each case is on the first Name. It is this which, in the main, gives colour to their respective ministries, for Peter's has mostly to do with earth where he had accompanied the Lord Jesus, whilst Paul's ministry has mostly to do with Heaven where he saw the risen and glorified Christ. His special line of teaching was the Church whose origin, progress and destiny are heavenly. This must ever be borne in mind when comparing Paul's writings with the letters of Peter and John, and with the letter to the Hebrews. Neither Peter nor John in their epistles give us clear information with reference to the Rapture. Their references to the *Parousia** (presence) are couched in wide terms, and in most cases have to do with His return to earth.

Again, these teachers fail to appreciate that the *Rapture is not dated*. No disclosure has been made as to the time when it will occur. The Scriptures will be searched in vain to find any indication as to when the Lord will come into the air,

¹ 1 Cor. 15. 51.

* For a fuller interpretation of the period covered by the *Parousia* the reader is referred to, "Touching the Coming," by C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine.

but His coming to the earth, on the other hand, is indicated by signs, and is dated. That is to say, there is a signal given which denotes the commencement of the last week of Daniel's prophecy, i.e., the covenant with the Man of Sin.¹ The middle of that last week (a period of seven years) will be marked by war in Heaven² which in turn results in the Devil being cast out of Heaven down to earth, which itself in turn is followed by what is known as the Great Tribulation. This will last for 1,260 days, otherwise called 'a time and times and half a time', or otherwise three-and-a-half years, or otherwise forty-two months, all these phrases being used of that period. After this appears the sign—the Son of Man Himself—in Heaven, coming in power to the earth.³

Again, they fail to note that the Rapture is *for* the saints, and their blessing, but the coming to earth of the Son of Man is *with* the saints for judgment. If the Lord is to come with them⁴, clearly they must have gone to be with Him previously; and if they are to come in glorified bodies, obviously they must, in the case of those who had fallen asleep, have been raised.

These teachers also fail to distinguish the *various days of Scripture*. The 'day of the Lord' is not the same as the 'day of Jesus Christ'. Both speak of judgment and may be, to some extent, contemporaneous, but the day of Christ refers to a heavenly Judgment-seat, whereas the day of the Lord will bring in judgment and darkness and sorrow, for His enemies on earth. It was very prominent in Old Testament prophecy. It is the time when the Lord will visibly have His own way. It is a prolonged period commencing with the Lord's active interference from Heaven with the affairs of earth. Today He is silent;⁵ then it will not be so. It will be a time of irresistible destruction, of sadness and gloom, of deep heart-searching, and of the final settlement of things on earth for the glory of God. It will profoundly affect both Jews and Gentiles. The reader should refer to Joel 1. 15; 2. 1; 2. 11; 3. 14. But the 'day of Jesus Christ' affects Christ and His people only, and has nothing to do with the world. It will be a day when the results of faithful service will be harvested.⁶ It will involve the gathering together

¹ Dan. 9. 27.

² Rev. 12. 7.

³ Matt. 24. 29-30.

⁴ See 1 Thess. 4. 14.

⁵ Isa. 42. 14.

⁶ 1 Cor. 3. 13.

of the saints.¹ The Lord will then be present with His people, and they will be rewarded by Him.²

The teaching which is being reviewed here is also in confusion regarding the interpretation of the Olivet discourse recorded in Matthew 24. That discourse was given to His disciples who occupied a two-fold relation to Himself. They would *later* form part of the Church, but they *then* represented the godly remnant in Israel in a coming day, with Jewish associations. It has to do with the coming of the Son of Man and with earth. "Then two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left"; that is, the one will be taken away in judgment as the people were by the flood in the days of Noah, and the other will be left for the blessing of the millennial earth, as Noah and his company were left to enjoy the cleansed earth of his day. An endeavour has been made to support the teaching we are combating by saying that the Greek word for 'take away' in verse 39 is *aireo*, whilst that in verse 41 is *paralambano*, which means, they say, 'to take away for blessing'. But this latter word also occurs in Matt. iv. 5, 8, where it is used of the Devil taking the Lord Jesus; in ch. 12. 45, for 'taking seven other demons'; and in ch. 27. 27, of Jesus being taken into the common hall. One has but to consult a concordance to be assured of the fallacy of this argument.

¹ 2 Thess 2. 1.

² Rev. 22. 12.

CHAPTER III

SELECTIVE RAPTURE

SOME, from the highest motives and in all sincerity, teach that not all, but only some believers will be translated at the Rapture, whilst others will be left behind. It is taught that those left behind will be excluded from the Kingdom, and will go into "the outer darkness" to suffer a purgatorial discipline, and ultimately will be saved. Why this should relate only to the 'living saints' is not apparent for, plainly, they are but a small proportion of all saints. Many Scriptures are produced which, it is alleged, support this teaching. Some affirm that a 'selective rapture' relates to all believers, whether dead or living; that when the Lord comes into the air, they say, only those who are worthy to be translated (either by way of resurrection or bodily transformation) will be taken away. They tell us that the Judgment-seat takes place immediately on the death of the believer, and that its decision will become manifest at the Rapture, by whether or not they are raised.

If one who holds this theory is confident that he himself will be taken at the Rapture it would seem to indicate a very unwholesome self-complacency. If he is sure of being left behind, that would denote an awareness of living as he should not. If, however, he is uncertain of being translated he would seem to be in the very position envisaged by Peter, and to guard against which he wrote his second letter; he has "fallen from his own steadfastness".¹ Now, whilst a healthy introspection is to be encouraged, it should always be borne in mind that the eternal salvation of the believer depends, not on his conduct, but on the work of his Saviour. It is 'not of works' whether wrought before or after conversion. No-one will have any ground to boast of having effected his salvation in any degree whatsoever, for God intends that "no flesh should boast in His presence".² A believer's misbehaviour does not jeopardize his salvation or his sharing in the Rapture, though it may cause present governmental discipline and loss

¹ 2 Peter 3. 17.

² 1 Cor. 1. 29.

hereafter. Indeed this is necessary, for whilst the child of God is eternally immune from the judgment that awaits the world,¹ he is open to parental discipline in which the world has no part.² Whilst misbehaviour does not imperil the soul, it does imperil this earthly life. It is possible for one to be fit for heaven though unfit for Christian testimony on earth!

The Spirit of God through Paul is very definite on the matter. The worthless worker of 1 Cor. 3, is assured of salvation though warned of the danger of losing not only his life's work but its possible reward. 'He himself shall be saved' says Paul³—of that there is no doubt. 'Yet so as by fire' does not denote that his salvation will be assured after a time of fiery trial. The Judgment-seat (*Bema*) of Christ will be the fiery trial; there the work of the saints will be tested. Some will see the consumption of all they have wrought, and leave the *Bema* as one would leave a burning building; themselves saved, but all else lost.

To these same Corinthians Paul later said: "We shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed in a moment, etc."⁴ Now this cannot be construed as if the 'we' were apostolic, nor can it be restricted to a certain quality of saint. It is an all-inclusive 'we' applying to all those to whom Paul wrote.⁵ The Corinthians were far from exemplary in conduct and one would have supposed that all the evils in that assembly, which Paul exposed in his letter, would have constituted ample ground for his assuring them that, unless they changed, and thereafter lived consistently with their profession, they would be left behind when the Lord comes. There is, however, not a word to that effect in this letter; rather is there the opposite. Despite the fact that they had acted as they had, and although amendment was hoped for, the grace of Christ was such that He would not leave one behind: "We shall ALL be changed". But we are told that "all" does not always mean "all", and that "all" in 1 Cor. 15. 51 requires limitation since this verse comprises a smaller company than the "all" of ver. 22, which, they say, refers to all mankind. But the word "all" in ver. 22 is also unlimited in each category. All those "in Christ" will be "made alive", but, whilst all out of Christ will be raised, they will not be "made alive". They are

¹ John 5. 24.

² 1 Cor. 11. 32.

³ 1 Cor. 3. 15.

⁴ 1 Cor. 15. 51-58.

⁵ 1 Cor. 1. 1-2.

“the dead” that will appear at the Great White Throne. To teach that all men will be “made alive” is akin to Universalism.

Is it quite relevant to seek to limit the “all” in 1 Cor. 15. 51, just because in Heb. 2. 15 the word “all” occurs in a limited sense? Some admit that the word “all” does mean “all”, but maintain that all will not be changed at the same time. Some who are worthy, they tell us, will be raised immediately the Lord comes into the air, whilst others will have to await the termination of the Millennium. Now against this it should be pointed out that in 1 Cor. 15 Paul identifies the time when this change will occur. It will be “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump”. Surely a fair reading of the passage means that all believers will be raised and/or changed at that particular moment of time. It does not imply one time for some and another time for others. Nothing could be farther from the intention of this passage. *All* are involved. One moment of time is in view. “He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present *us* with *you*.”¹

Writing his earliest recorded letter, that to the Thessalonians, Paul gives no such suggestion as that, if behaviour is not as it should be, exclusion from the Rapture will ensue. He certainly never anywhere encourages carelessness of conduct, but he does emphasize, time and again, that we ourselves cannot undo the work of Christ for us and in us. “He died for us that whether we watch or sleep we should live together with Him.”² The word here used for ‘sleep’ (*katheudo*) is never used of ‘death’ in Paul’s epistles, another word (*koimaomai*) is used for that. He shows that failure in the believer’s conduct cannot affect adversely the effectiveness of the work of Christ in his soul. “He died for us that whether we watch or sleep we should live together with Him.” What could be plainer? The basis of eternal salvation is this; ‘He died for us’. It is not what we have done for Him but what He has done for us. ‘Living together with Him’ takes the mind back to Chapter 4, ‘and so shall we ever be with the Lord’ (ver. 17). ‘Living together’ commences at the Rapture. The ‘waking’ and ‘sleeping’, then, are not physical, that is, they do not relate to the fact of physically

¹ 2 Cor. 4, 14, R.V.

² 1 Thess. 5. 10.

living or dying, but they denote spiritual watchfulness and spiritual sleepiness. The whole context supports this interpretation for in verses 6 and 7 the sense of physical life or death is manifestly out of place. This puts no premium on indifference, but, amidst the varying degrees of vigilance, it does emphasize the sole ground on which the believer will be caught up, namely, the death of Christ. The R.V. margin may be consulted in confirmation. It is a most reassuring passage. Failure does occur—we all know it; ‘in many things we all offend’.¹ Even wise virgins, with their oil, too, can slumber and sleep.² But the death and resurrection of Christ and His present work as Intercessor in heaven meet not only all our need as sinners but all our errors as saints. If we turn this grace into lasciviousness³ it would reveal the absence of the grace of life. But our failure, unwatchfulness or lethargy, cannot diminish the effects of His death. There can be no escape from this: the pronouns ‘us’ and ‘we’ do not relate to a special class of believer. They allude to all the saints in contradistinction with ‘they’, ‘them’ and ‘others’ of verses 3 and 6 which refer to unbelievers. The word ‘all’ of verse 5 is conclusive. Added to which, the word *grēgoreō* is decisive. It is never used in the New Testament or the LXX with the meaning ‘to be alive’. Its meaning thus settles the significance of the opposite *katheudō* in 1 Thess. 5. 10.

With this agree the words of the Apostle that the Lord Jesus will have “all His saints” with Him in His *parousia*.⁴ “When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”⁵ Again, He will come to be “admired in all them that have believed”.⁶ Even those whom we have in mind would not consent to our concluding from this Colossian passage that Paul would be excluded from this manifestation of glory, but why not? He uses ‘ye’ not ‘we’! It is easy to draw false conclusions if theories are being maintained. But fairness is as great a desideratum in the interpretation of Scripture as in any other sphere. The fact is that not a ‘hoof will be left behind’. Not one saint will be missing. This assures all saints an entrance into

¹ James 3. 2.

² Jude 4.

³ Col. 3. 4.

⁴ Matt. 25. 5.

⁵ 1 Thess. 3. 13.

⁶ 2 Thess. 1. 10, R.V.

the Kingdom, although many may miss a place of honour there.

It accords with the fact that Christ will present to Himself a Church all-glorious.¹ The Church is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all",² and it is inconceivable that one member should be missing; a mutilated body lacking some of its parts there, is unthinkable. It would reflect adversely not only on the efficacy of the purpose of God, but also on the work of Christ, and the power of His Spirit.

The sovereign purpose of God can never fail. "For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. . . . Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified them He also glorified".³ Note the recurring pronoun 'them'. They are the objects of the purpose of God, a purpose that dates back before the foundation of the world and which will be consummated when the saints, all without exception, are raised, and their bodies are "conformed to the body of His glory". Thus the purpose of God cannot fail.

It is an unwarrantable addition to the Word of God to interpose "sanctification" between "justified" and "glorified" as some have done. The fact that Romans 6 and 7, which deal with practical sanctification, follow after Chapters 1-5 which deal with justification, constitutes no ground to intrude sanctification into Romans 8. 30. These teachers are driven to such shifts because they know the text as it stands destroys their theory. Is not this "handling the Word of God deceitfully"?⁴

Nor can the work of Christ fail. Those to whom it has been applied by the Spirit of God are eternally secure. This does not encourage antinomianism or lawlessness. God never undoes His work of justifying the one who believes in Jesus.⁵ He "commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him".⁶ There are no appended conditions. It is a passage which looks back to the death of Christ, and from it argues its eternal benefits. By it we are now 'justified' and 'recon-

¹ Eph. 5. 27.

² Eph. 1. 23.

³ Rom. 8. 29-30.

⁴ 2 Cor. 4. 2.

⁵ Rom. 3. 26.

⁶ Rom. 5. 8-9.

ciled'. The tenor of Rom. 8. 38, 39, is that the validity of this justification cannot be effectively challenged. It abides unalterable.

Nor can the work of the Spirit fail. Each believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His."¹ There is no neutral ground—we are either His, or we are not. The Spirit abides with us 'for ever'. He is 'in us' as well as 'with us'.² By Him we have been 'sealed' and 'anointed'. He is the 'earnest' of what we are yet to inherit.³ By Him we are united everlastingly to the risen Head in Heaven, and to all believers everywhere and at all times. A more secure position could not be conceived. The indwelling of the Spirit is the common possession of all saints;⁴ it is not a matter of attainment. But to be "filled with the Spirit"⁵ does depend on the believer and his being yielded up to God.

To talk of a 'selective' rapture or resurrection is, therefore, to throw aspersions on the purpose of God and the work of Christ, and the power of the Spirit.

It is well known that the first Epistle to the Thessalonians refers to the Coming (*parousia*) of the Lord Jesus in every chapter. His Coming to the air, and its subsequent happenings, are in view. But in the Synoptic Gospels His coming to the earth is in view, and it is important that this distinction should be borne in mind. Confusion will inevitably result if this is not carefully noted. Now it is remarkable that there is not a hint of any conditional translation. There is no suggestion of being 'translatable' or 'untranslatable', terms which, as we have seen, are of human invention and lack Scriptural authority. Who are the 'us' of 1 Thess 1. 10? or the 'our' and 'ye' of ch. 2. 19? What could be more clear than 'all His saints' of 3. 13, or the oft-repeated 'we' of 4. 13-18, or the 'you' of 5. 23? The word 'remain' in ch. 4. 15, 17, cannot mean 'left behind at the Rapture' as has actually been suggested. It is strange to what lengths some will go rather than abandon a theory or acknowledge that they have been taught wrongly. An interpretation which is both plain and seems to lie on the surface is usually the right one.

¹ Rom. 8. 9.

² John 14. 17.

³ 2 Cor. 1. 21, 22.

⁴ 1 Cor. 6. 19.

⁵ Eph. 5. 18.

It may be asked, Did not Paul, however, make the resurrection a matter of attainment when he said his aim was to 'attain unto the out-resurrection from the dead'¹? Whatever may be said about this passage, there is certainly no question of attainment in the two ruling passages touching the resurrection, viz., 1 Cor. 15, and 1 Thess. 4. In each of these passages the saints are shown to be the passive subjects of the quickening power of God. It is what God does in them. The Greek word Paul uses in Phil. 3. 11 (*exanastasis*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and refers, we believe, to the highest point of spiritual experience at which he aims to reach. Travelling the path in company with his Lord, he desires to go all the way, "to know Him, and the power of His resurrection". That risen Man, known and loved, created in Paul the further desires to "know the fellowship of His sufferings, to be made conformable unto His death, if so be that" he may go farther still and attain to that experience of living on earth the risen life of Christ. Like Ruth of old he would say 'Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried'.² Paul was here saying, in other words, what another said to David—"Whether in death or life, there even also will thy servant be".³ He wanted to be as Jonah, a risen man in a godless and spiritually dead surrounding, bearing witness for God.

But we need not go outside even this chapter to see the falsity of the suggestion that Paul doubted his bodily resurrection. Resurrection of the body is never made a matter of attainment for any. Else how shall the unsaved attain to it? For them, bodily resurrection will mean eternal judgment in Gehenna. We say again, not anywhere in the Scripture is bodily resurrection made a matter of attainment. Read verses 20 and 21 of Phil. 3. Note "we look": Who? Note "shall change" and ask, Is there uncertainty there? Paul never stood in doubt of bodily resurrection. Hear him before the Sanhedrin—"I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question".⁴ Naturally he did not discuss with that Council the different times at which saints and sinners will be raised, or the difference of a resurrection *out of*, and a resurrection *of* the dead, but he never doubted his part in it. Besides, what

¹ Phil. 3. 11.² Ruth 1. 17.³ 2 Sam. 15. 21.⁴ Acts 23. 6.

is the force of Paul's disclaimer: "Not that I have already attained"? If it were bodily resurrection, this phrase would be meaningless.

That he would share in the first resurrection he was sure. Of this he speaks in 1 Cor. 15. 23—"but every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming. Then cometh the end, etc.". So that the test whether one will have part in the resurrection when Christ comes is this: "Do I belong to Christ? Am I Christ's?" If so, I am certain to be in the first resurrection. "They that are Christ's" is the important thing. Attempts have been made to restrict this phrase within the limits of Gal. 5. 24, but this utterly ignores the words 'all' and 'every' of 1 Cor. 15. 22, 23, 51. 1 Cor. 15, is not occupied with exhortations to godly living, but with affirmations concerning future bliss. Whatever may be said of Gal. 5. 24, Gal. 3. 26 is quite clear. The grossest absurdities can find Scriptural support if two passages having no bearing on each other are brought together, and made to interpret each other.

The first resurrection is in stages. Christ Himself was the "firstfruits" of it.¹ The saints of this era will participate in it at the Rapture;² later, others will be raised, of whom the Apocalypse speaks; and it will have been completed before the Millennium. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power."³ It is not spoken of again. It will then have been fully accomplished.

Phil. 3. 11, is the personal experience of Paul alone, and therefore, it would hardly be fair or reasonable to apply it to all saints, although it is, of course, desirable that all should follow Paul in this. But a passage which relates only to one saint and describes his aspirations in life cannot rightly be employed to override and contradict the other passages cited, which plainly relate to divine and unconditional assurances given to all saints.

The 'overcomer' of Rev. 2 and 3 is made to do service in support of this strange teaching. Surely every true believer is, to some extent, necessarily an overcomer. The mind of the

¹ 1 Cor. 15. 23.

² 1 Thess. 4. 13-17.

³ Rev. 20. 5, 6.

flesh, a life-long enemy of the new life, is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. But with such a foe within us can there be a true saint who in some degree is not an overcomer? A constant yielding to the flesh would indicate the absence of spiritual life and habitual insubjection and refusal of Christ as Saviour and Lord. The seven Apocalyptic letters depict the history of Christendom, made up as it is of tares and wheat—true and false. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that all who were in those various churches were, in every case, truly born again. Note, for example, this statement: “Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam”.¹ “So hast thou them also that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.”² “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel.”³ Such passages could be multiplied. All these are “false brethren”.⁴ The overcomer shows himself to be wheat; to be true; to have been born again. He may, admittedly, suffer reverses as warriors do from time to time, but it is the final issue that counts. “Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at last.”⁵

John, in his Epistle, has much to say concerning overcoming and victory, showing it to be the hall-mark of all the children of God. See 1 John 2. 13 and 5. 4-5. Paul, in Romans 8, exults in victory, joining himself with all believers as being ‘more than conquerors’. Let the reader again peruse these Apocalyptic letters not with the view of supporting a Selective-Rapture theory, but of asking himself whether any, who are irrecoverably overcome by the evils detailed in the letters, can truly be bona fide believers. The test is this. “Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”⁶ Again, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”.⁷ The term ‘overcomer’ must be read in the light of John’s other writings. He is the penman both of the Epistles and the Apocalypse.

What is to be deduced from Rev. 2. 11, “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death”? If we put this side by side with 20. 6, it will be seen to be conclusive that all believers are overcomers. Certainly no true believer will be the victim of the second death. Or, take again ch. 3. 5,

¹ Rev. 2. 14.² Rev. 2. 20.³ Gen. 49. 19.⁷ 1 John 5. 4.² Rev. 2. 15.⁴ 2 Cor. 11. 26.⁶ 1 John 5. 5.

“ I will not blot out his name out of the book of life ”. Does this mean that in the event of defeat a true believer will have his name blotted out? No, it cannot mean this, for “ Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire ”.¹ Are we to believe that a defeated saint will suffer that doom? Rather it means that, whilst men may blot out their names from any records they are pleased to keep, God will never blot out the name of the one who trusts His Son.

These letters are phrased so as to exercise the conscience and to encourage endurance. The very word ‘ overcome ’ implies difficulties, enemies and the like, and calls for patience and courage. Rewards are held out as assurances that present losses will later be compensated by a righteous Judge. The Scriptures nowhere sanction an easy-going conscienceless sense of eternal safety, but it is improper for these letters to be interpreted in such a way as to make them contradict John’s earlier inspired unqualified statement of the Lord: “ He that believeth in Me, though he have died, yet shall he live: and whoso is living and believing in Me shall never die ”.² In the matter of salvation it is faith that counts, not faithfulness. Christ alone is the Saviour; no one ever saved himself.

We would here repeat what has earlier been stated: When the Spirit of God states one thing, we should not necessarily deduce the opposite if it is not stated. The opposite is not always true. Take, for instance, Rev. 2. 7, “ To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God ”, to which the dying robber had gone immediately he left the body. Are we to suppose the opposite is that the believer who is not living a victorious life will not eat of the tree of life? What opportunity had the dying robber to live such a life? If such were the case it would imply that some believers would not have eternal life, and this would contradict the plain statement of John 3. 16. Does Rev. 2. 11 mean that the defeated saint will be hurt of the second death? If so, we should be confronted with the difficulty of reconciling this with the fact that only those devoid of life will go to the lake of fire.³ Does Rev. 2. 26-27 imply that the non-victorious saint will be excluded from the Kingdom? If so, how is it that Paul tells the Corinthians

¹ Rev. 20. 15.

² John 11. 25-26.

³ Rev. 20. 15.

that the world will be judged by them (1 Cor. 6. 2)? And so we might go on. Let us not go 'beyond the things that are written'.¹ Rev. 21. 7-8, recognizes only two classes: verse 7 speaks of the 'overcomers' and verse 8 speaks of the 'unbelievers'.

Sometimes reigning with Christ is spoken of as though it depended on our suffering for Him and, in support, 2 Tim. 2. 12 is cited. But there is no mention of "suffering for" in this passage. There is an important difference between 'suffering with' Christ and 'suffering for' Christ. All believers know the former, and cannot escape it. Only a few know the latter; that is escapable. Believers of the present dispensation are as the followers of David who went with him into the wilderness; they are identified with a rejected King. As such, they suffer with Him, the taunts of the Shimeis of this world being witness. The very fact that the believer is on the side of God's rejected King classes him with those who 'suffer with' Him. As soon as the King is in power his followers will be linked with Him then as much as they have been linked with Him in rejection. Identification with the King now, ensures identification with Him then. Here again, this verse must not be made to nullify what Paul had written earlier to the Corinthians.² Its true interpretation is in accord therewith. Nor is the matter affected if we accept the R.V. reading 'endure' instead of 'suffer' in 2 Tim. 2. 12, whereas the words 'suffer with' remain unaltered in Rom. 8. 17. The words 'if so be' in this latter passage do not indicate a condition; they denote rather a presumption that it is so. "Suffering with Him must imply a pain due to our union" (Moule). The tenor of each verse is that present identification with Christ, entailing, as it does, suffering, and calling for endurance, will be followed by sharing with Him in His reign and glory. It is part of our co-heirship with Him. The words cast no doubt whatever over the issue. "Romans 8. 17," says Simcox, "gains in pathos when we see that the sharing of the disciples in the Master's sufferings was felt to be a fact of which there was no question".

It is interesting to note how consistent were Paul's earlier and later writings, for he never needed to amend or revise any of his inspired letters. His later writings, such as the second

¹ 1 Cor. 4. 6, R.V.

² 1 Cor. 6. 2.

letter to Timothy just cited, do not give his riper thoughts on matters concerning which he wrote earlier, as, for example, his letter to the Romans, also just cited. It is not as though, had he written on those topics again, he would have written differently. All was inspired of God, and all was unerring. Each writing was complementary to the other.

The "Man-child" of Rev. 12 has been called in to support a Selective-Rapture theory. Confessedly, this is not an easy passage to interpret. In a later chapter we give what we judge to be the true meaning of this vision, but even if this proves unacceptable, we should adhere to the rule that a passage, the meaning of which is doubtful, should never be allowed to disturb the meaning of one which is clear. Contradiction in Scripture does not exist, and whatever Rev. 12 may mean, it cannot abrogate 1 Cor. 15. 51. This is not evading a difficult passage in order not to allow the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer and his certainty of participating in the Rapture to be upset. We rather affirm that whatever construction this apocalyptic passage may legitimately bear, it in no wise affects adversely the truths set out in such passages as 1 Cor. 15. 51 and 1 Thess. 3. 13.

But what, it may be asked, of the unfaithful servant and the foolish virgins of Matt. 25? Does this not show that some kind of punishment awaits the unfaithful child of God? We answer, Not at all. Let it once be grasped that here we have the "Kingdom of the Heavens"—Christendom—in view, in which are both good and bad; that here is nominal Christianity in which professors are found as well as bona fide saints, then the meaning of the parable becomes plain. Men will be judged having regard to the position they have assumed. It is a mistake to suppose that, because the whole ten took the place of virgins, therefore the whole ten represent true believers. They take their place as virgins but the testing time proves whether they are ready to go into the marriage feast. The true status of virgins and servants will become plain when 'the Son of Man cometh',¹ and when the day of reckoning has arrived.² It is then that the 'good and bad' will be manifested.

We should not expect to find fuller distinctions in the Synoptic Gospels. Paul's later revelations in no way cut

¹ Matt. 24. 44.

² Matt. 25. 19.

across them but they throw light on them. The times of the Judgment-seat and the Great White Throne are, for example, not distinguished or even treated of in Matthew 25. The difference of the time when the unfaithful servant will be judged and the time when the faithfulness of the profitable servants will be assessed is not particularized in this chapter. The whole scene is treated in outline, and general principles are set out illustratively, such as those of preparedness, diligence, the Coming of Christ, the fact of judgment, and so on. Paul's writings cast their light on the synoptic writings, and each must be interpreted in accordance with the other. Neither must be allowed to contradict the other.

As before stated, the Lord deals with men on the ground of their profession. Judas, when he kissed the Lord, posed as a friend; hence, the Lord said "Friend, wherefore art thou come".¹ Judas was then no real 'friend' of His.² The words "in whom I trusted" are omitted in John 13. 18. The Lord did not trust Judas. He was not deceived. But posing as such by the kiss, the Lord took him on his own ground and called him 'friend'. So in Matt. 22. 12, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?"

The 'outer darkness' is not for the true child of God. It is an expression that occurs three times in Matthew's Gospel. In ch. 8. 12, it has to do with the Christ-rejecting Jews; in 22. 13, with the man who came in without a wedding garment, an outward title to be present; and in 25. 30, with the unprofitable servant. Matthew's Gospel is dealing with the 'kingdom of the heavens', which phrase designates, among other things, a sphere of Christian profession. The Lord holds a man responsible for what he claims to be and acts accordingly. It is only a subterfuge to assert that this 'outer darkness' is different from 'the blackness of darkness for ever'.³ The whole atmosphere of these three passages is one of finality. There is no hint that those outside are ultimately brought in: such an idea is dangerously akin to the heresy of "universalism", at any rate in principle.

Once more, Heb. 9. 28 has been called in to assist the theory. It is asserted that Christ will only appear to those that 'look for Him', and that if any believer is not looking he will be left behind. Surely the characteristic attitude of

¹ Matt. 26. 50.

² Ps. 41. 9.

³ Jude 13.

all believers is that they are looking in some way or other, however imperfectly, for the Lord. "Them that look for Him" is a phrase that describes a whole class, not a specially alert few. The atmosphere of the epistle to the Hebrews is the Day of Atonement, and plainly there is an allusion thereto in chapter 9. On that day the High Priest went into the Holiest of all, and all the redeemed people of God were without, expecting his reappearance. The surrounding nations had no interest in such a ritual—it did not concern them. They were not expecting him to come out. Nor is the world looking for the appearance of the Lord Jesus; that event does not interest them; but it is the true and proper hope of the household of faith, the redeemed of the Lord. All true believers expect Him to come back; for Him they wait, and they will not be disappointed. It may, moreover, be added that the same verb is used in Rom. 8. 19 relative to the unconscious creation whose liberation depends on the manifestation of the sons of God, without any intelligent awareness of it.

Those who teach the Selective-Rapture theory, in their eagerness to support it, do so by telling us that the 144,000 of Rev. 14 represent the 'translatable saints'. But, on referring to ch. 7, it is perfectly plain that they are Israel, chosen in equal numbers from the twelve tribes. We believe that the Church will have been taken away some time before these 144,000 are found on earth. The Rapture is symbolically referred to in Rev. 4. 1-2, but these appear for the first time in ch. 7. National and tribal distinctions do not exist in the Church. Therein there is no Jew nor Gentile, all are one in Christ Jesus.

The passage 1 Cor. 6. 9-10 has been made use of to support the theory that certain 'believers' will be excluded from the Rapture, and, therefore, from the Kingdom. We are told that, although certain things are not forfeitable, the 'inheritance' and the "Kingdom" may be forfeited. But such an interpretation not only fails to take account of some important things; it introduces the idea of "forfeiture" which is in itself foreign to the New Testament. The "Kingdom of God" is not always used of God's future economy, but often of a present condition. (See, for example, Luke 8. 10, ff.) Again, the genuineness or otherwise of a man's

profession is proved by his manner of life. There are true 'brothers' and there are those that are merely "called a brother".¹ In the latter case the nomenclature is determined by the inconsistency of his life. The erring person in the Corinthian church was put away as a 'wicked person'. He was thus regarded as having been proved spurious, false, untrue. His later sincere repentance revealed, however, that there had been a true work of God in his soul. It is 'by their fruits that ye shall know them'. "Whosoever is born of God does not practise sin . . . he cannot continue in sin."² Verses 9 and 10 of 1 Cor. 6, describe sinners characteristically, but in the case of the Corinthian saints it describes what they had been, not what they were by grace. "Such *were* some of you, but ye are washed. . . ." (See v. 11.)

Paul is not here writing to discourage the saints; he is solemnly warning them and reminding them that life is the index to the heart. We must ever bear in mind that saints may be 'overtaken in a fault', which is a very far different thing from practising sin. The distinction is carefully drawn by Paul in Galatians ch. 5. 21, and 6. 1. It is observed too by John, where in 1 John 2. 1 he uses the aorist tense, denoting an isolated act, but in 3. 9, above quoted, he speaks of the practice of sin habitually. It may be added that the Galatian letter was written to show that "justification" and the "inheritance" are both "*freely* given" (*charizomai*) to us by God, without regard to the addition of anything whatsoever (3. 18), and Paul twice pronounces an anathema on any who preach otherwise.

¹ 1 Cor. 5. 11.

² 1 John 3. 9.

CHAPTER IV

THE JUDGMENT-SEAT

IT has been taught by some that each believer will appear at the Judgment-seat (*Bema*) after death and before the first resurrection. Indeed, it is affirmed that the decision at this Judgment-seat will determine whether or not the individual will be raised at the Rapture or whether he will be left in the grave, excluded from the Kingdom, or sent to 'outer darkness' to suffer purgatorial fires, and later be raised. Now this is quite contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

The review of the service of those to whom the talents were given, and those to whom the pounds were given, took place at the return respectively of the Lord and the Nobleman (see Matt. 25. 19 and Luke 19. 15), not before it.

The critical Corinthian believers were told by Paul to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God".¹ He thus identifies the time when the examination will take place. This is stated following upon his warnings of chapter 3. "Each man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is."²

There is not a hint anywhere in Scripture that believers will undergo this examination in the intermediate state. Then they are 'with Christ' which is 'very far better': they are at rest. The day of rewards comes afterwards. For that they must wait. "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to give every man according as his work shall be."³ Paul did not expect to receive his victor's crown until 'that day'.⁴ Of course, it does not mean that the Lord has not even now formed His own assessment of the worth of the work of each and all of His servants, whether now living or asleep, but the declaration and manifestation of that judgment will

¹ 1 Cor. 4. 5, R.V. ² 1 Cor. 3. 13, R.V. ³ Rev. 22. 12.

⁴ 2 Tim. 4. 8.

not be made till 'that day'. A believer's work cannot be properly appraised before all the saints are at home.

It is not unusual for prize distributions to take place some days or weeks after the actual athletic contest, and it is not, therefore, sound exegesis to infer from 1 Cor. 9. 24-27 that Paul anticipated receiving his reward immediately on his decease. As a matter of fact he is not speaking of his death in that chapter at all. He is occupied with the manner in which the race is being run and the contest fought. It is at the Lord's coming and the setting up of His Kingdom that the rewards for faithful service in life are given and used. "Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power and hast reigned . . . that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets and to the saints. . . ." ¹ Whilst eternal issues are settled in life and cannot be altered after death, the review of life's work and the apportionment of reward is at the Lord's return, and not before.

No one will be judged at the *Bema* for his sins, since they were penally dealt with when Christ died. No one, indeed, will appear at the *Bema* save the true children of God. The question both of their sin and the punishment for their sins has once for all been settled. These can never again be raised against the believer. Whilst sins committed after a believer's new birth and unconfessed by him will incur loss, and rob the soul of joy, marring its communion with the Father, they cannot affect his eternal security. That stands inviolate. They cannot affect his having a share in the Rapture; he 'belongs to Christ', and that is the only qualification for his sharing in it. It being established, as clearly taught in the Scriptures, that all who belong to Christ will be raised and/or changed at His coming to the air, it follows that the believer will have his glorified body, when present at the Judgment-seat. He will then be like Christ,² and his salvation will then have been fully accomplished, for that depends on the work of Christ for him, but reward depends upon his work for Christ.

Mere professors will not appear at this Judgment-seat. Though they may have taken a place as 'servants of Christ', or posed as 'virgins' waiting for the return of the Bridegroom, or claimed to be 'sons of the Kingdom', their true state is

¹ Rev. 11. 17-18.

² 1 John 3. 2.

known to the Lord. They will not share in the first resurrection, but will be raised when 'the rest of the dead are raised' and will be sent to "the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth". No child of God will ever be consigned to such outer darkness; on the contrary, all will "shine forth as the sun",¹ for they have already been "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light".²

The matter is quite simple. At the present time the believer who is "absent from the body" is "at home with the Lord".³ When the Lord comes, all believers "shall be made alive"; "we shall all be changed". There is no room for an intermediate purgatorial state for some unfaithful believers. Thank God, mercy triumphs against judgment, and the work of grace will then be crowned with glory. The Judgment-seat will make manifest that the manner in which life has been lived and work for Christ has been done, has affected, not the believer's place in the family of God, but his position in the Kingdom of God. In the family, all the children are on an equal plane, but in the Kingdom there are different offices and ranks. Each will be given his own particular position according to his life's work.⁴

The purpose of our manifestation at the Judgment seat is not merely the disclosure to ourselves of what we really are, for we shall then see ourselves in our true colours and be made *manifest*,⁵ but in order that "each may receive the things done through the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad". The body is the instrument of action in life, and such actions have formed our character which, doubtless, we shall carry with us to eternity. Our deeds will have left their permanent mark. At the Judgment-seat we shall receive these things. Note, Paul does not say that we shall receive *for* them. It is not, in the Corinthian passage a matter of reward, but rather of the effect which actions have had on our character. The net result of good and bad will be a character revealed in its true light. In like manner Paul, writing to the Colossians says, "For he that doeth wrong shall receive again the wrong that he hath done".⁶ Actions are like boomerangs, they come back

¹ Matt. 13. 43.

³ 2 Cor. 5. 8.

⁵ 2 Cor. 5. 10, R.V.

² Col. 1. 12.

⁴ Matt. 25. 14-30.

⁶ Col. 3. 25, R.V.

again; or, to change the figure, they are like birds that come home to roost. There is not a hint of going from this Judgment-seat to darkness. That is an invention of the mind of men. It flows not from the heart of God.

Turning again to 1 Cor. 3, we should carefully observe that the salvation of the soul is not in view. It has to do with the testing of work. Verse 15, affirms distinctly that even if the whole of one's life-work is consumed, "he himself shall be saved though so as by fire". He will suffer loss in seeing no good thing left of life's activities. Nothing of a life so full of possibilities will be left for God's glory, but he himself. He will "suffer" the "loss" of the possible reward for a life spent to the glory of God. What he has built on the foundation will be consumed. That, and its reward, is all lost. Who can contemplate such a thing without fear? Paul is not teaching a purgatory, as though the child of God leaves this life, appears at the Judgment-seat, goes from thence to the "fire", and thereafter is saved. Neither here nor anywhere else in Scripture is such a thing hinted at. It could not be, seeing that those who appear at the Judgment-seat are clothed in their glorified bodies and are like Christ. "Saved so as by fire" means that, despite the fire which has consumed the life-work, the person is saved. It is the work that is proved by fire, not the believer. The "loss" relates not to those things which God in sovereign grace gives unconditionally to the believer, but to those things which he might otherwise have had as a reward for faithfulness.

CHAPTER V

TO COUNT WORTHY

A GREAT deal is made by these teachers of the words 'accounted worthy' in **Luke 20. 35**, and we should consider this passage. Its meaning altogether depends on who it is who 'accounts worthy' those that are in view. One thing is clear, it is not themselves; they are not their own judges. Nor is it apparent from the passage that it is their fellow-men. Nor is there any standard indicated by which the assessment can be made. It is a phrase the meaning of which must be sought elsewhere. The context of this passage is enlightening. The unbelieving rationalistic Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection were seeking to entangle the Lord and He, in reply, virtually tells them that they had no right to participate in the resurrection from among the dead (note that in verse 35 the preposition *from* is introduced by the Lord) nor in the "age" that would follow it. Both that resurrection and that age belonged to the sons of God. The worthiness here spoken of has to do with their fitness as judged by God; it has nothing to do with their merit. It is not a select resurrection of certain believers that the Lord is referring to. It is the "dead", not "the living", that are left behind and are reckoned unworthy.

In **Luke 21. 36** it would seem from the A.V. that "worthiness" should be made a subject-matter of prayer, but the R.V. reads the passage thus: "But watch ye at every season making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things". The R.V. has restored a reading in which the word has to do with personal strength to achieve or resist things; worthiness is not in this verse at all.

Another passage in which the word occurs is Acts 5. 41 which, for our present discussion, calls for no comment, save to re-emphasize that the word has here nothing to do with merit; it relates to the honour of suffering shame for Christ.

2 Thess. 1. 5. It is as important in reading this passage as elsewhere not to go beyond what is stated. There is no

hint of some being excluded from the Kingdom. There is no hint that some of the Thessalonian saints were evading the persecution. Paul was rather explaining to them God's ways in it. The contrast is not between believer and believer, but between persecutors and persecuted. The Lord Jesus had set out in the Sermon on the Mount the laws pertaining to His Kingdom and had described the "blessedness" of those who were being persecuted for His Name's sake. The Thessalonians certainly were showing themselves to be worthy subjects of His Kingdom seeing they were prepared to suffer on behalf of the Name of their King. This is the thought here. Persecutions and their patient 'endurance' of them, and 'faith' in the midst of them, are in view. Such persecution did not make them worthy, it made manifest that they were so; they could be 'counted' so.

2 Thess. 1. 11. Whatever construction is put upon this verse, it is plain that God is the One who counts them worthy or otherwise. It is not a person's estimate of himself, nor that of others concerning him. It is God's estimate. Clearly, from one point of view, no one is worthy to be called. Our individual merit or worth did not at all come into consideration with God, for we had none. But once we have become the subjects of His Kingdom, He allows us to be subjected to trials and opposition, and these tend to justify our being regarded as worthy subjects of that Kingdom, seeing that we become those "of whom the world is not worthy".¹ It is not an imparted worthiness that determines whether or not we shall have a place in the Kingdom, or that brings praise to ourselves. This would be totally contrary to the ways of God, for entrance into that Kingdom is "not of works lest any man should boast". But it is a moral worthiness, a fitness of character, showing us to have displayed, in the manner in which we have borne the trials, that we are worthy subjects of that Kingdom.

Matt. 22. 7-8 tends to confirm this view. The Jewish people are depicted in verse 7 as the persecutors of the King's messengers, who have rejected the gospel, and have slain its preachers. They have thus displayed themselves to be those of whom it is said "they that were bidden were not worthy".

¹ Heb. 11. 38.

Again, from one point of view they never were at any time worthy of such a glorious message. But their rejection of it, and persecution of its messengers, show them altogether 'unworthy' of the invitation. Conversely, those who received the message and suffered on account thereof are seen to be 'worthy'. It was so later at Antioch when Paul preached. The Jews were filled with jealousy, and contradicted those things which were spoken by him and blasphemed. "And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, it was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you and judge yourselves 'unworthy' of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles".¹ It is the attitude to the gospel which determines worthiness or unworthiness, just as in Matthew 10. 13 it is the attitude of the person to the messenger of the Lord which determines whether he is 'worthy' or not.

Rev. 3. 4. In the church at Sardis there were those who had a name to live and were dead, and there were the "few names" who were to walk with Him in white, for they were 'worthy'. As in Christendom (and these seven Apocalyptic letters review its history) there were in this church two kinds, good and bad, tares and wheat, the true and the false, the majority and the "few". They were all nominally Christian, but to the false the Lord would come as a thief. He does not so come, unexpected and unwanted, for the true believer. Ponder the difference between 1 Thess. 4. 15-18, and 5. 2-4. Chapter 4 has to do with the coming of the Lord to the air for His own, but chapter 5 has to do with the coming of the Son of Man as a thief in the night to the earth for judgment. Could it be said of this latter, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words"?

Like John the Baptist, we must say 'I am not worthy';² like the Prodigal son we say, 'I am no more worthy to be called thy son'.³ Any worthiness which He may ascribe is all the product of His grace. It is His worthiness that determines the security of our salvation, but we should seek to walk worthy of such a calling⁴ and thus prove our worthiness to be linked with Him in His glory and Kingdom.

¹ Acts 13. 46.

² Acts 13. 25.

³ Luke 15. 19-21.

⁴ Eph. 4. 1.

CHAPTER VI

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

THIS Epistle has been made the basis of much of the teaching under review. Let us look at it in the light of such doctrine. It clearly teaches the eternal security of the believer. The whole tenor of chapter 10. 1-18 is to show that the will of God was to 'perfect' believers in their standing before Him; to deal with them in such a way that they would have 'no more conscience of sins'; that they might be 'purged' and their sins might be 'taken away'. The writer proceeds to show that, whilst the Levitical system was insufficient to accomplish this, the work of Christ had done it. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The word 'sanctified' does not denote those who have attained a specially high condition of purity, but is a characteristic term used of all believers who are not merely saved but set apart, annexed, appropriated for God's own possession and holy use, and when this is realized by faith there will be practical "sanctification", holy, personal conformity to the will of God. 2 Thess. 2. 13, and 1 Pet. 1. 2 show that "sanctification" preceded belief of the truth; it was God's purpose in eternity to set apart His elect, through their ultimate obedience to the truth.

Whilst it has a message for us all, one object of this Epistle was to warn the Hebrew Christians who had professed faith in Jesus as their Messiah, against apostatizing by going back to Judaism. The writer points out that Levitical sacrifices had been demonstrated to be inadequate, seeing they were but shadows and that the death of Christ, the substance, had fulfilled their typical significance. It was useless to return to them. If they then "sinned wilfully" and abandoned Christ and the merits of His death as their only hope (an abandonment revealed by their "forsaking the assembling of themselves together") "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins". There was nothing else for them. Judgment could not be avoided. This was so even though they had

been regarded as God's people, as "sanctified" by the blood".¹ It is the tenor, not only of chapter 10. 26-30, but also of Heb. 2. 3.

Those addressed are Hebrews. Of this there can be no doubt. Ch. 1, v. 2 shows those addressed to be the successors of "the fathers". The gospel, first spoken by the Lord, was confirmed to the Jewish people (ch. 2. 3). It is their altar of which ch. 13. 10 speaks. Those addressed are spoken to on the ground of their profession. Observe the frequent occurrences of this word: 3. 1; 4. 14; 10. 23; 11. 13; 13. 15, R.V. The warnings should be read in the light of the hostile enemies amongst whom they were found. They were apt to apostatize in order to escape persecution. They were liable to argue themselves into a reversion to the rapidly decaying Levitical system, seeing it was of divine origin through Moses, and to consider it was better to have that and peace rather than to accept Christ and incur suffering.

They were being taunted for putting their faith and hope in a crucified criminal! for boasting in their invisible and intangible possessions, and their rejection of that which was earthly and which could be seen. This is not the place to go into a full exposition of this Epistle, but the background and occasion of its writing must be borne in mind if its warnings are to be properly understood. What does a person declare who fails to "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"? That he was never truly one of 'the people'. His going out from among them by apostatizing proves that he was not really of them.

John 10. 28 holds good for all time. Not one of the sheep in the Lord's flock will ever perish. Such sheep are known by their hearkening to the Shepherd's voice and following Him (v. 27). No one has the right to claim the security of verse 28 unless he is characterized by the features of verse 27. Paul's legal argument in his Roman letter holds good for all time: no effective charge can be laid against the believer. The electing purpose of God as defined in the Ephesian letter holds good for all time: nothing can upset or affect that. Whatever interpretation, therefore, is given to the letter to the Hebrews must be consistent with these truths.

The writer does not assume that all to whom he writes are

¹ Hebrews 10. 29.

genuine—they must test themselves. It is “by their fruits ye shall know them”.¹ He gives to them means whereby that test can be carried out. He states plainly what is true of the people of God, but gives warnings that are calculated to cause the reader to examine himself to be assured that he is ‘in the faith’. John does the same in his Epistle; he furnishes certain tests whereby one may know he has eternal life.² He who professes to have it must answer to such tests if he and others are to be assured that the profession is a true one.

So, too, Heb. 3. 14. “The beginning of the confidence” is Christ and His atoning work. It is this alone that gives hope. Our “confidence” springs from that beginning. To abandon it is apostasy. The “rest” of which chapters 3 and 4 speak is not exclusively the future rest in Heaven; it has to do not only with the believer entering upon his eternal Home, but what the believer can enjoy now. “We which believe do enter (present tense) into rest.” Rest is cessation from works, as God rests from His. Therefore, if the Jewish people to whom the letter is sent are to enjoy the rest which the Lord gives, they, too, must cease from their legal works as a ground of hope toward God, and rest in the work of Christ. The “rest” begun here on earth goes on eternally. It is not limited to the Millennium; it will go on to the eternal state; it will never cease. It requires considerable ingenuity to show that the teaching of Heb. 3 and 4 is that some believers will fail to enter the millennial rest, while they will enjoy the eternal rest.

Old Testament types must be interpreted in the light of New Testament doctrine. Canaan is nowhere likened to heaven, if for no other reason than that when the people entered into it they not only embarked upon stern warfare and had to fight for every inch of their ground, but sin was there also. Canaan denotes a present spiritual experience. So also does the wilderness denote a present spiritual experience from another point of view. Thus, “coming short” of “entering into His rest” is a present experience.

“Falling in the wilderness” should not be construed as though it meant that a true child of God could ultimately be lost. Like Israel, the believer has been redeemed, though

¹ See Hebrews 6. 7-8.

² 1 John 5. 13.

from a worse bondage than that of Egypt. It is sadly possible for him to fall in the wilderness, to become a cast-away, rejected by the Lord for further service on earth. History is strewn with such failures, as was the wilderness of old. But the Old Testament only incidentally touches upon eternal issues or matters affecting the destiny of the soul. It mostly focuses its attention on the earth and the conduct of God's people while passing through this scene. It is through the gospel that life and incorruption have been brought to light,¹ and this is a vitally important New Testament declaration, for these things were not known in Old Testament times.

It has been taught that whilst all believers are the children of God not all of them are 'first-born sons'. This teaching is based on Heb. 12. 16-17. Esau, they say, represents a true child of God, inasmuch as he was a true son of Isaac, a son as much as Jacob was, but only those who have attained a certain spiritual standard are, like Jacob, "first-born" sons. This theory is inconsistent with the teaching of Rom. 9. 10-11, where the two sons are again referred to. There it is emphasized that God, in the exercise of His sovereignty and acting upon a principle of election, chose Jacob, and said of the children before they were born, 'The elder shall serve the younger'. Their after-history confirmed the wisdom of God's purpose.² Clearly in Rom. 9 the Apostle Paul is showing that all true believers are the elect of God and correspond to Isaac and Jacob, whilst Ishmael and Esau denote the flesh and correspond to the unbeliever. There are, of course, deeper truths in the chapter but these lie on the surface. By no means can Ishmael and Esau in that chapter be made to represent believers who have failed to attain to a certain spiritual standard. The passage in Heb. 12 must, therefore, be governed by this passage in Rom. 9. The Epistle was sent to Hebrews who had professedly accepted Jesus as their true Messiah and Saviour and was intended to test the reality of their profession and to encourage them in the midst of persecution. The history of Esau shows how it is possible to possess outward privileges without any inward change. Esau, in the pursuit of carnal satisfaction, bartered away his birthright. He was a "profane person", a godless man. We never read of any religion or gods of Edom. He had

¹ 2 Tim. 1. 10.

² See Mal. 1. 2-3.

open contempt for spiritual things, and was ready to sacrifice the future for the present. He was shrewd enough in earthly matters (Obad. 8), but his eternal portion is with the enemies and not with the people of God (ver. 10). Yet he is held up by these teachers as an example of those who are secure for eternity though they have forfeited the Kingdom.

In the attempt to stir us up to more devotedness, such teaching really lowers the standard by lulling to sleep the false professor. So long as he says he believed once upon a time, his eternal future is secure, however long he might promulgate infidelity, or, in the case of others, lapse into worldliness. All that such will suffer, they say, is the loss of the Millennial Kingdom. But there is all the difference between a backslider, who is ill at ease, and an apostate who never had life at all. There may be tears at the consequences of his choice but they are tears not of repentance but of mortification.

It is well recognized that types, like parables, have to be interpreted very carefully and consistently with the rest of Scripture. Now it is plain that no child of God can be lost or forfeit his place which has been given him in the sovereign purpose of God. In spiritual things the birthright has not been given consequent on his natural birth but because of his new birth. The birthright belonged to Esau because of his natural birth, but God invariably sets aside the first man and takes up the second. So Ishmael was set aside and Isaac came in. So Esau was set aside and Jacob was taken up. So king Saul was set aside and David was taken up, "First that which is natural; then that which is spiritual".¹ "The first man Adam was of the earth, earthy: but the Second Man is the Lord from heaven".² Thus the first Adam has been set aside also. Now the true child of God is never set aside. He belongs to the Second Man. This must govern our interpretation of Hebrews 12. Esau's forfeiture of the birthright does not denote the believer's forfeiture of his inheritance, but it does teach this, that one may nominally take a place in the Household of God, and may profess to be a son. Mere profession, however, is not enough. Its genuineness and the reality of the possession of Divine life will be manifested by his continuance and ready relinquishing of

¹ 1 Cor. 15. 46.

² 1 Cor. 15. 47.

carnal pleasures in the pursuit of Divine things.

Much is made of the difference between "children" and "sons", and there is a difference, but not the difference these teachers draw, namely that the "children" are sure of eternity, whereas a "son", who is entitled to the inheritance and is an heir of God, may nevertheless not be a joint-heir with Christ and so may lose the inheritance if he walks unworthily of it. He has a title but may miss the enjoyment. They say that the warning "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" cannot apply to an unbeliever, for wherever "inheriting" is in question, the relationship of a child to a parent is taken for granted, "if children then heirs". But the word does not necessarily mean to receive by right of succession, but to "receive by lot", to "possess oneself of", to "receive as one's own", and can be clearly the equivalent of "entrance" into eternal life without any previous title.¹ It is the "children" who are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8. 17), and this, not by adoption but by regeneration, not by some mere legal arrangement, but by new birth, the heirship being by virtue of union in life and interest with Christ Jesus, a lawful portion because they are lawful children. The absolute statements of Gal. 3. 29 and 4. 7 are not conditional.

"The church of first-born ones"² is a phrase which embraces all believers, and is not designed to describe merely a special few. That this is so is surely plain (though some have darkened counsel with words) in that the pronoun "ye" of verse 22 is not restricted at all. It has no limitations. There is in the passage no hint whatever that spiritual attainment or spiritual superiority gives a title to those blessings spoken of in that passage. All believers are in view, not part of them. All of them have already come to the "church of first-born ones", all can exercise the rights of primogeniture, in the Kingdom and the priesthood, even while yet pilgrims here below. All can be in the enjoyment of these privileges through the mediation of Jesus and in virtue of His atoning blood. The "first-born" in Israel were ideally priests and were represented by the tribe of Levi. In the spiritual Israel of God all are first-born sons, all are hallowed, all are priests.³

¹ Mark 10. 17.

² Num. 3. 12. Ex. 19. 6; 1 Pet. 2. 5, 9.

³ Heb. 12. 23.

CHAPTER VII

SOME MISAPPLIED TEXTS

IT will perhaps be of assistance to the reader if we consider in this chapter certain texts of Scripture which, in our judgment, have been seriously misinterpreted with the view of supporting the theory that we are examining.

1 John 2. 28. Capital is made out of the Greek construction which is literally represented in the margin of the R.V. as "ashamed from Him at His coming". There is, however, here no suggestion whatsoever of the Lord banishing from His presence, either for a time or for eternity, anyone who then appears before Him. It has rather to do with the sense of shame which will be felt when in His presence, a sense of shame which might, like Adam, lead to the desire to hide oneself 'from before Him'. The verse has nothing to do with the passage "Depart from Me . . . I never knew you".¹ The "we" of our verse are known by the Lord; they are viewed as at the Judgment-seat, whereas the others of Matthew 7 will appear at the Great White Throne. It is most likely that the pronoun "we" in this verse refers to the Apostles, and if so, are we to believe that the Apostles will be banished from Him? They may, indeed, be put to shame by the behaviour of some over whom they have laboured.² It may be that by abiding in Christ these could secure for the Apostles a full reward. In any case, whether it is 'we' or 'ye', it is the loss of reward that is in view, not banishment from the presence of the Lord as in 2 Thess. 1. 9. The verse puts negatively what Paul puts positively in 1 Thess. 2. 19 where he speaks of a "victor's crown of boasting".

1 Cor. 15. 49. We are told that this verse should read, according to the margin of the R.V., "let us also bear" instead of, as in the text, "we shall also bear". It is therefore assumed that our possessing a glorified body is both a matter of uncertainty, and a subject for human endeavour. Evidently the revisers considered that the weight of evidence was in favour of the plain affirmation rather than of the exhor-

¹ Matt. 7. 23.

² 2 John 8.

tation "let us". Even if the latter is correct, the wearing of the image should be moral, here and now, as it will be physical once for all hereafter. But the hortatory rendering, though well-supported, seems to be unsuitable to the context of this passage and to be out of place, for no amount of exhortation will bring resurrection about. There is not the slightest doubt about the affirmation in the words "we shall all" in verse 51.

Rev. 3. 11, has been cited to support the theory of possible exclusion from the Kingdom. The 'crown' it is said, is a royal crown, and that this, obviously, has to do with the Kingdom. To lose that, they say, would entail the loss of place in the Kingdom. But is this so? Trench in his 'N.T. Synonyms' says: "I very much doubt whether anywhere in classical literature *stephanos* is used of the kingly, or imperial, crown. It is the crown of victory in the games. There can be no doubt that whenever Paul speaks of "crowning" and of "the crown" it is always the "crown of the conqueror" and not of the king, which he has in view. In Rev. 3. 11, it is more probable that a reference is not intended to these Greek games. . . . Yet there also the *stephanos* or the *stephanos of life*, is the emblem not of royalty, but of highest joy and gladness, of glory and immortality". It is, of course, possible for a believer to forfeit his victor's crown by allowing something to impede him in his contest for the mastery, but he cannot forfeit his life or salvation. Paul had good reason to be assured that the garland of victory awaited him.¹

1 Cor. 9. 27. This passage is cited to support the notion that Paul doubted whether he would succeed in participating in the first resurrection. But the passage has nothing whatever to do with Phil. 3. 11, which we have elsewhere considered. Paul is here referring to the well-known Grecian games and the awards that were then given to the winners. The *parallel* is that both God and they gave victor's crowns. The *contrast* is that they give 'corruptible' ones, whereas God gives those which are 'incorruptible', never to wither, and to be worn, not for a brief hour, but for eternity. It must not be concluded that, because the crowns given by God are incorruptible, they therefore, are not victor's crowns.

Paul is speaking of his own endeavours to see that nothing

¹ 2 Tim. 4. 8.

should be allowed so to overcome him that he is rendered unserviceable to the Lord on earth and, therefore, ineligible for the prize later. 'Castaway' has nothing to do with his eternal security, nor with his having a place in the manifested Kingdom. It has to do with the fact that he might so yield to the passions of the flesh that he became useless to the Lord for further testimony on earth, which in its turn might rob him of the prize he might otherwise have received at the Bema. It would take the wildest stretch of imagination to suppose that in this passage Paul was contemplating the possibility of his missing the first resurrection or losing entrance into the Kingdom. What he is concerned with is, as stated above, being set aside as "disapproved" by the Lord during his life on earth, dragged, as disqualified, from the arena now, and losing His approval at the Judgment-seat hereafter.

Col. 2. 18-19. These verses have been called in to do service for which they were never intended. "Not holding the head" has been used to show that some members of the body will be missing in His Kingdom. But the verse has nothing to do with the future; it relates rather to the need of avoiding any teaching that would rob us of our prize by interfering with the soul's grasp of Christ without human or angelic intermediaries. Each member of the body is in direct communication with the Head. It is, indeed, possible for some true members of the body to behave so independently of the Lord that they are "not holding fast the Head" and drawing all they need directly from Him. They are seeking to draw from other sources, to His grief and their loss. But failure on our part can never frustrate the divine purpose. If we are unfaithful, He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

It is affirmed that the 'prize' in 1 Cor. 9. 24, Phil. 3. 14, and Col. 2. 18 is one and the same thing; but in 1 Cor. 9. 24 the word is used as an illustration of the reward that is to be given to the runner. It is to this that Paul alludes in 2 Tim. 4. 8. In Col. 2. 18, it is regarded as something of which we may be robbed by giving heed to human philosophies. In Phil. 3. 14, it is something at which Paul aimed. Now rewards will differ in each individual case; they have to be won and are never in Scripture regarded as a certainty, for we may fail to obtain them. But to say that in each case the

prize is the first resurrection and a place in the Kingdom is to do violence to the sense, and introduces an interpretation into these passages which is unsupported by the tenor of Scripture.

Col. 1. 23. This passage is cited as one of several in which the word 'if' occurs. Now the force of the word 'if' must be determined by the context. The word used here is *eige*, and Grimm gives its meaning as "if indeed"; "seeing that"; of "a thing believed to be correctly assumed". Another says, "*Eige* with the indicative expresses the confidence that the condition will be fulfilled. . . . This is directed against the false teachers' assurance that the gospel they had heard needed to be supplemented if they wish to attain salvation. It needs no supplement and it is at the peril of salvation that they lose hold of it".

"The Lord knoweth them that are His," but the only way in which we may rightly regard anyone as belonging to Him is by his departure from iniquity, both in doctrine and in practice.¹ If at any time he continues not in the faith and abandons the position once taken up, we are no longer entitled to regard him as a child of God. Whether there ever was a divine work in his soul, the Lord alone knows. We can only judge by outward actions. His apostasy renders it necessary that we should regard such a person as not born again, and the fact that he has, in effect, repudiated his former profession declares that he does not wish it to be regarded as genuine. These 'ifs' are designed to show believers the gravity of yielding to the pressure of persecution and of apostatizing for any cause whatever.² It is a mistake to suppose that everyone who makes a profession of faith in Christ Jesus is *ipso facto* a truly born again soul. He may or may not be. So long as he continues to adhere to the faith, we are called upon to regard him as one of the children of God. If he ceases to continue therein we are no longer entitled thus to regard him nor, indeed, is he right in so regarding himself. The unconditional parts of God's Word are to be taken in all their absoluteness, and the conditional should be pressed in all their force. Grace justifies the ungodly unconditionally, but only those who continue in the faith grounded and settled can confidently be looked upon

¹ 2 Tim. 2. 19.

² See Acts 14. 22.

and treated as justified. No wonder Paul urged the believers "to continue in the grace of God", and to "continue in the faith".¹

1 Cor. 6. 9 and Gal. 5. 21. The word 'inherit', common to these two passages, has been used to indicate that not all believers are heirs, and therefore not all will inherit the Kingdom. But as we have shewn elsewhere, 1 Cor. 6. 11 assumes that the Corinthians were once among the class mentioned in verse 9, which proves clearly that those described in this latter verse are unbelievers, and are not a class of saints of low spirituality. Similar remarks may be made as to Gal. 5. 21. The writer is speaking of those who "practise" (that is, are characterized by) works of the flesh, that is unbelievers, and not of one who falls into any trespass, which may be true of a believer who is overtaken when off his guard. Such a lapse, however, does not put him in the category of vv. 19-21; although he is not 'spiritual' he is distinct from unbelievers.

Moreover, the believer is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ now.² If it be affirmed that this is conditional, Gal. 3. 29, and 4. 7 are, we repeat, not conditional.

The words 'if so be' or "if indeed" (*eiper*) do not of necessity imply doubt. See the other occurrences of the word, Rom. 8. 9; 1 Cor. 8. 5; 15. 15; 2 Thess. 1. 6; and 1 Pet. 2. 3. It rather supposes the thing to be so, for as we have seen, whilst all suffer with Christ not all are called to suffer for Him. Heirship, then, is a matter solely of God's grace. Lightfoot says of the occurrences of the word *eiper*, "They express a pure hypothesis in themselves, but the indicative mood following converts the hypothesis into a hope". Knowling says, "*Eiper* has its proper force: if, as is the fact" (*Expositors' Greek Testament*).

It has been proposed to translate Rom. 8. 17 thus: "heirs indeed (*men*) of God but (*de*) joint-heirs with Christ if so be that we suffer with Him". It is strange that neither the A.V. nor the R.V. translators, nor any other reliable translator thought of this. But if the reader will refer to Eph. 4. 11 he will find the same construction though it will not admit of this suggested reading: "And He gave some indeed (*men*) apostles, but (*de*) some prophets, but (*de*) some evangelists,

¹ Acts 13. 43; 14. 22.

² Romans 8. 17.

etc. " ! Joint-heirship with Christ entails that we are heirs both of His sufferings now and of His glory later.

2 Peter 1. 10-11. The subject of the Divine call and election is far too large to be adequately dealt with here. We are told to make our calling and election sure, but one thing is certain that, so far as God is concerned, it could not be made sure to Him. That He ever elected us at all guaranteed the certainty of its fulfilment. But we may sometimes doubt whether or not we have been elected, and of this how can we be sure? how is it to be *made sure to ourselves*? The rest of the verse shows how: 'If ye do these things'. In a word, one's manner of life makes clear to the conscience whether one has been elected by God. I have no right to assume that I am elect if my life is not being lived in the will of God. As to verse 11, the emphasis is on the words "richly supplied" (R.V.). It does not say "for thus shall be *given* you the entrance into the eternal Kingdom, etc.". Entrance is certain, but its being "richly supplied" or its being "ministered abundantly" (A.V.) is dependent on how we live. There is no proof of election like perseverance in the truth!

Rev. 20. 15. This verse must be read in the light of John 5. 24. The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ will never "come into judgment"; therefore he cannot stand in the dock at the Great White Throne judgment. That is the ruling statement. Rev. 20. 15 shows that those who are cast into the Lake of Fire are devoid of eternal life. Their names would have been inscribed in the Book of Life had they believed, but they are not found written there.

We have earlier seen that all the saints will have been raised, and changed before the commencement of the Millennial reign. The "first resurrection" will have been completed then. The Great White Throne judgment will take place after the end of the Millennium. This verse should not be read as if it were meant to indicate that, of all who would appear there, some would have their names in the Book of Life and others would not. Surely the verse is inserted as a warning for all to read *now*, not a method of discrimination *then*. It will be a thing true of all who appear at the Great White Throne, that the name of none of those is in the Book of Life; but the name can be written in it *now*;

if not now, it cannot be inscribed there later. The word 'if' in the R.V. of this verse indicates that their eternal destiny is not so much determined by their works as by their failure to avail themselves of the provision God has made in His grace.

1 Cor. 10. 1-13. These solemn verses are designed not to destroy the believer's assurance as to his eternal security, but to warn him against falling into sin during his earthly sojourn and falling under God's disciplinary judgment. Of such are those alluded to in ch. 11. 30. To be 'overthrown in the wilderness' in the case of the believer is to fall under God's discipline now. The 'fall' of verse 12 is to be understood in this way. It is true that those who fell in the wilderness did not enter into the land of Canaan, but this must not be regarded as failure to enter either Heaven or the Kingdom. Moses, for example, died in the wilderness, but he is seen later in the Kingdom.¹ Old Testament types must not be pressed too far; they must be strictly interpreted in the light of New Testament teaching. The point is that, though 'all' (repeated five times in the first four verses) who came out of Egypt had privileges in common, with most of them "God was not well pleased" and they fell in the wilderness. Paul says it can happen again. All the Corinthian saints had blessings in common with each other, but was it with most of them that God was not well pleased? Some had already fallen in the wilderness, and they had been removed by death, but neither their eternal security nor their place in the Kingdom is in view in this passage. We must discriminate between God's hand in government, and His eternal judgment of the wicked.

Acts 26. 17-18. These verses have been made to support the theory that the 'sanctified' denote a special class of believers. Now without embarking on a dissertation on sanctification this verse shows that the inheritance has been gained, not through faithfulness but "by faith that is in me". It is faith that sanctifies as well as justifies. Faith is consistently the one condition in the New Testament. It cannot be too clearly stated that obtaining the inheritance is not contingent on personal and practical sanctification in daily life. Forgiveness and the inheritance are now the possessions of the sanctified.² **Heb. 9. 15** has been made to

¹ Matt. 17. 3.

² Acts 20. 32.

do service to help the theory based on this passage in Acts. But that verse means plainly that the work of Christ has a negative and positive aspect; negatively it removed sins; positively it imparted an inheritance. Everything depends on Christ and His efficacious work. If forgiveness is unconditional why should the inheritance be made conditional? There is no thought of a condition in the verse, and undoubtedly these teachers confuse the Scriptural doctrine of sanctification and fail to understand that aspect of it which is positional and unalterable.

CHAPTER VIII

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

IT is not a pleasant task, undertaken at the request of others, to criticize the writings of brethren esteemed for their godliness and faith, and whose ministry can, on other lines of truth, be so helpful, but there are statements made in the writings we are controverting, that call for this examination in the light of Scripture. We cannot hope to convince these writers, but we may be able to help those who have listened to them.

We need hardly say how fully conscious we are of the need of the incentives of the gospel. In temporal matters how often we are dissatisfied when we ought to be content with such things as we have, whereas in spiritual things, with what meagre acquisitions we may be satisfied when we should, like the Apostle, be "forgetting the things that are behind" and be "pressing onward toward the goal, unto the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" and thus, ambitious to please Him, become "overcomers".

The motive which lies behind the teaching herein examined is, undoubtedly, to stir us up to a fuller devotion to the Lord, and we would not that anything that we have written should seem to hinder such devotion. But the precepts of Scripture are not designed to afford motives, for that would result in legality. It is the doctrine of Scripture, and *the love of it*, laid upon our hearts by the Spirit of God, that calls forth motives to obey God and to hate sin. The precepts are the guiding lines along which the impelling motive of love to Christ is rightly directed, but it is doctrine that turns the wheels of practice. The Apostles put before us the doctrine of the high and holy calling and the glorious destiny of those in Christ, and then, as Abigail did with David,¹ they exhort us by precepts to walk worthily of such a calling. They first set forth the glory which will be ours with Christ and then bid us, in view of that prospect, to mortify our members which are upon the earth.² The teaching we are considering reverses

¹ 1 Sam. 25. 30.

² Col. 3. 4-5.

this method. We are told that if we do not mortify our members we shall not appear with Christ in glory. We are urged to reach an undefined standard of obedience, with the warning that failure to do so will mean exclusion from the first resurrection and the Kingdom, and possibly involve a portion with the hypocrites for a time at least.¹ We may be sure of this, that nothing is ever gained by departure from the Scriptural method.

These teachers surely do themselves an injustice when they say that it is the thought of the honours of the Kingdom that is an incentive or stimulus to godliness, devotion and suffering. They may be, as they should be with us all, an encouragement, but a motive never. That would spoil it all. It would be to take Peter's attitude in Matt. 19. 27, when he said, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee: what shall we have therefore?" whereas those who leave all that to the Householder will find that "whatsoever is right" He will give us.² Make the reward the incentive and all becomes mercenary. Even when Christ is the constraining power we can, alas, have an overweening estimate, like Peter, of any little sacrifice we may make for Him.

Rewards do await those who serve Him. But will there be anything more humbling than to receive from His blessed Hand the reward He has in store? Who would hesitate to lay out his money in an investment which yields not five per cent or even a hundred per cent but a hundred pounds for every one invested? The very magnitude of the reward has a self-abasing effect upon the soul. Who could pretend that their service deserves to be rewarded with "thrones" or their "sacrifice" to be recompensed a hundred-fold? It is evident that those who are rewarded will be debtors to mercy alone.³ All talk of merit is excluded. That is why the rewards are so great. God bestows His gifts at one and the same time to glorify Himself and to humble the receiver. "When we see," said Cecil, "fully what Christ is, we shall be ashamed of the inadequate service we have rendered to Him and be never able to forgive ourselves for not having served Him better". "I know not how to separate," said he, "the idea of self-reproach from heavenly enjoyment". We cannot believe that at the back of the minds of these brethren there is the

¹ Matt. 24. 51.

² Matt. 20. 4.

³ 2 Tim. 1. 18.

constant dread of losing the Kingdom and that this impels them to continue in their delightful service for the Lord. They say that those who respond fully to the drawings of Divine love do not need these incentives, but who of us does respond fully? Do they? Do we? and if love is lacking how can the incentive take its place?

The principles of government in the Kingdom are applicable to real possessors as well as mere professors, and reality is shown by compliance with those principles. A soul may profess and go on well for a time, but if there is not life before God a slight circumstance may happen which will bring out the true state, and then the turning back from Christ proves that grace in the soul was lacking from the first. Only the love that subdues, saves. The Kingdom, as its parables show, embraces the true and the false, and in it, all is governmental, conditional blessing.

We are told that "no justified and regenerate person can be finally lost", but what is the implication conveyed by the word "finally"? Does it mean that a child of God may be temporarily lost? It would seem so. If so, a member of Christ, one whose life is hid with Christ in God, one whom the Good Shepherd has found, may temporarily be plucked from His Hand! If the believer can be lost for a time, the eternity of his salvation must count, not from his new birth but from some undefined time in the future. He cannot even be sure when he leaves this scene what his lot will be, for apparently a period may have to be spent in the "outer darkness"! The idea that carnal Christians may need to be chastened temporarily and sanctified even in the "lake of fire" is not repudiated by these teachers as a doctrine which impinges on any vital doctrine of the faith, though they admit that it needs to be supported by far plainer testimony of Scripture than has yet been discovered. We maintain, on the contrary, that such a doctrine does despite to the solitary efficacy of the blood of Christ¹ and that any kind of purgatory constitutes a denial of the truth that "there is now no condemnation (none whatever) to them which are in Christ Jesus".² It is said that the Great Tribulation will be a mercy to the Lord's people by fully developing and sanctifying them for their Heavenly destiny and glory. But what about

¹ 1 John 1. 7.

² Rom. 8. 1.

the major portion of the saints who have fallen asleep before the Great Tribulation? Is this developing and sanctifying process to be applied only to those who may be alive at the end? Some have even gone so far as to suggest that carnal Christians, who have fallen asleep, will be raised to earthly life again in order to pass through this Tribulation for such a purpose. Others teach that they will suffer severely in their disembodied state, in a kind of purgatory. Thus we see to what shifts such ideas logically lead those who in this way wrest the Scriptures. There is not a particle of evidence in Scripture of such a judgment of the believer after death. The Apostle in 1 Cor. 3. 3 never warned the carnal believers of his day of such a destiny. It is the loyal, not the disloyal, subjects of the King who, in this era, enter the Kingdom through many tribulations. They are thereby fitted for the high calling which (like Joseph) they are destined to occupy. The Lord never encourages us to escape these tribulations, whereas He bids the godly in a future day to pray for escape from the "great Tribulation" which is of a totally different character.

The interpretation of these teachers of Rev. 12 is an instance of confounding Israel with the Church. It entirely misses the contrast between the Man Child and the great red dragon, a mighty creature whose tail can draw the third part of the stars of Heaven. The One, manifesting all the traits of perfect Childhood in His lowliness, dependence and truth; the other, the old serpent, full of lies, subtlety and deception. Surely the Man Child, who sprang out of Judah,¹ can be none other than the One who was once the Babe of Bethlehem, and is viewed in this passage not as having lived His life in this world and reached maturity in the days of His flesh, but figuratively, as taken up from His birth to God and His (God's) throne. As the woman (Israel) and her seed are mainly in view in this chapter, no account is taken of the interval between the session of the Man Child on His Father's throne—which cannot be shared by any creature—and His session as Son of Man on His Own throne—where he will have companions,² for in vision we are taken right on to the consequences of His enthronement, the casting down of the Great Dragon. There is authority expressed in the Man

¹ Heb. 7. 14; Rom. 9. 5. ² Rev. 3. 21.

Child that can displace the power of evil in this world in every form both now and hereafter, and the apparent "weakness of God" will prove stronger than all the power of His adversary.¹

We are told that the "resurrection" and the "rapture" are connected with the "Day of the Lord", and with its 'times and seasons', and that as Paul had already, when with the saints at Thessalonica, given them instructions concerning the latter, he must have told them of the Rapture. We may well ask: What, then, was the purpose of this Epistle if they had already been instructed concerning the Rapture, and why their sorrow over the death of their brethren if they had been taught that the Lord could not come in their lifetime? The fact is that he had already taught them to wait for God's Son from Heaven who would be their Deliverer from the coming wrath,² and now, a new word from the Lord is given them for their encouragement and comfort in view of the falling asleep of some of their number.³ It needed a special revelation, as in the cases of Peter and Paul, to indicate those who would necessarily pass through the grave.

With regard to the Lord's Coming these teachers maintain that the word "quickly" in this connection, means not 'soon' but 'swiftly', or with 'rapidity of action'. The word "quickly" has, of course, both meanings, but we are not confined to this word "quickly" to show that the Lord's Coming is always referred to in the New Testament as imminent. It has been "drawing nigh" throughout this era which has always been "the last hour", and it has been true all along that "the night is far spent and the day is at hand". While His actual epiphany will be with swift celerity yet His return has always been presented as "soon", for He would foster throughout this era an attitude of expectancy. Anything that gives rise to the thought of "delay" calls down His disapproval.

It has been urged that the Lord knew that the interval would be a long one and that He wished His followers to know it by comparing Himself to a nobleman going into a far country to receive a Kingdom,⁴ and again, in Matt. 25. 19, because it would be "after a long time that the Lord of those

¹ 1 Cor. 1. 25.

² 1 Thess. 1. 10.

³ 1 Thess. 4. 15.

⁴ Luke 19. 12.

servants " would come. His words do, indeed, leave room for what has proved to be a considerable interval but, nevertheless, parabolically, those who are in service at the first are the same as those found at the end, as if the Lord, even in these parables, would not hold out the supposition of " delay " beyond the time referred to in the expression, " We who are alive and remain ".¹ The Apostle does not say " those ", but, " we "; as the common expectation of the saints of this era.

Space will not permit of our dealing with the confusion of the gathering of Matt. 24. 29-31 by angels, with the gathering of 1 Thess. 4. 17 by the Lord Himself; and with the identification of the last trump of 1 Cor. 15. 52, the signal to arise given to His deceased and living subjects, with the seventh trump of Rev. 11. 15, calling down judgment upon His foes who are alive in the world. Two distinct events are in view. This much, however, should be pointed out. Unlike the Old Testament writings, the New Testament Epistles could be understood both by their penmen and by their recipients because the Holy Spirit had then been given. Consequently, the Corinthian saints would be able to understand what was meant by the " last trump " without the aid of the Book of the Revelation which was written many years later. They had not to wait for thirty or more years to learn the meaning of the words " the last trump ". These words would convey to them a definite idea, as the other military phrases in 1 Cor. 15 would do. The revelation concerning the series of seven trumpets, as given through John, would be additional information of a prophetic character, and would not affect in the slightest degree what was indicated by the " last trump ", of which Paul wrote to the Corinthians. They would, doubtless, have discerned that the ' last trump ' related to themselves; the seven apocalyptic trumpets related to others.

The result of unfaithfulness in a child of God, we are told, will be exclusion from the first resurrection and the deferment of his resurrection until the end of the Millennium, with possible punishment meanwhile, for these teachers say they cannot see how " loss " can be inflicted on saints who have already been raised and robed in bodies of glory. It is,

¹ 1 Thess. 4. 15.

therefore, suggested that they will be deprived for a time of what is really the fulfilment of the purpose of grace, for resurrection is a part of God's salvation of spirit, soul and body.

The one and only condition, however, for this is to be "in Christ".¹ It is our standing in Christ and not our living a holy life that gives us the title for Heaven, and the fact that "He has made us meet to be partakers" is as true at the end as at the beginning of our course. Nevertheless, there is such a thing as "loss", and light is thrown on this problem by the analogous dealing with the unfaithful Levites of Ezek. 44. 10-14. In the coming Kingdom they are not excluded from the sanctuary but they will occupy a position subordinate to what they might have had had they been faithful. It follows that one may be a believer and therefore be eternally saved, and yet be deprived of special honours in the Kingdom because of unfaithfulness here, the "loss" consisting not of "exclusion" from the Kingdom but of "deprivation" of the sphere of service to which otherwise he could have looked forward. The rewards of the Kingdom consist, not in the right of entrance thither, for that is God's gracious gift,² depending on our being born of God,³ but of a wider sphere of service within it, and we fit ourselves for such an honour by deeds done "in the body" here and now, and not in our disembodied state hereafter. Not one tribe, not even Dan, so noted for its unfaithfulness to the true God, will be deprived of its portion in the land, as Ezek. 48 declares. As we have said, "He hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance" but faithfulness will determine the place of honour in it.

These teachers refer us to Luke 12. 43-46 where each steward appears to be dealt with according to what he is doing at the hour of his master's sudden return? How he may have acted during the earlier period of his master's absence, we are told, is not reckoned to his credit if he lapses into unfaithfulness and is so found at the return of the Lord. Now we may well pray that we may finish our course with joy and so strive that we may receive the incorruptible crown and not be disqualified in the contest.⁴ But Israel never less

¹ 1 Thess. 4. 16.

² Luke 12. 32.

³ John 3. 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. 9. 27.

merited entrance into Canaan than at the close of their wilderness journey, yet think of those words, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel",¹ and this notwithstanding Massah, and Meribah and Kibroth-Hattaavah. In the spiritual journey of the Israel of God through the wilderness of this world, how many Meribahs there are, and, but for the better covenant, who would ever reach the promised Rest? David was never less worthy of the Kingdom of Israel than when he was upon its threshold. His conduct in 1 Sam. 29 was confessedly against the main tenor of his life, and his song when he was graciously delivered showed that the root of the matter was in him.² But David, like ourselves, had to learn, on the very threshold of the Kingdom, that if grace sets us in the path towards it, it is only grace that gives us entrance at the end. To teach otherwise is to subvert the truth of God and is a very dangerous thing. It was not what David was doing at the end of his probation that settled his destiny;³ it was God's purpose of grace from first to last, and it is the same grace that will be brought unto us, too, in righteousness and holiness, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.⁴

It has been said that the "faithful servant" of Matt. 24. 45, turning from his fidelity and beginning his misconduct can end by being the "evil servant" of verse 48. We are told that the word "that" in "that evil servant" is emphatic and requires an antecedent which can be no other than the faithful servant mentioned just before. It is true that the word "that" usually has an antecedent, but this is not necessarily so. In Matt. 18. 7; 26. 24; Mark 14. 21 and 25; the "that" refers to the subject defined afterwards, not previously. To build up a theory such as this upon a parable is a dangerous thing, for it suggests that a child of God may have his portion after all with the hypocrites, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁵ This last expression manifests deep-seated enmity, and it is clear that such a servant has falsely taken the place of one, and had never been faithful at all. It is quite a mistake to suppose that no one is ever recognized as a servant unless really so. The solemn warnings of Scripture are intended to test the reality of our profession.

¹ Num. 23. 21; Deut. 33. 8; 9. 22.

² 2 Sam. 7. 25.

⁴ 1 Pet. 1. 13.

³ Psalm 34.

⁵ Matt. 24. 51; 25. 30.

There is such a thing as empty profession in contrast to the obedience of true discipleship.¹ It is possible to take the place of a servant, and yet never truly to serve. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee"² was the language of one to whom the music of the Father's house was a strange and unaccustomed sound. To call the Master an "austere man"³ suggests a reason in the Master for the servant's unfaithfulness, and betrays insensibility to all the ways and appeals of love. The Lord does not say in Matt. 7. 23, "I knew you once, but do not now", but "I never knew you". Parables and symbols need the interpretation of other passages whereas the plain teaching of Scripture carries its own interpretation, and, notwithstanding what these teachers have said, the axiom remains true that what is obscure must yield to what is plain and not vice versa.

It seems to be suggested that the Robe of Righteousness, the fruit of Christ's one act of obedience upon the Cross, and in which robe all believers are alike arrayed through faith in Him, will not alone suffice to give entrance to the Kingdom, but that it is the robe of fine linen, clean and white, the fruit of our own work and in which we may differ from one another, that gives us what they call "a share in bridal glory". But all this overlooks the fact that, unlike the Robe of Righteousness, these righteous acts have to be whitened in the blood of the Lamb before they can be worn.⁴

In the case of the Nazirite of old,⁵ it was after he had faithfully fulfilled his vow, that the sin, the burnt, and the peace offerings had to be offered. The holiest deeds of the holiest men find acceptance alone through the blood of Jesus. The very hair of the head of his separation, the evidence of human devotedness, is lost sight of in the value of the sacrifice of Christ. Our very best is stained by sin, and who will dare to compare the obedience of any creature with the obedience of Christ or suggest that something of our own must be added to His obedience to make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"? He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool and no better is he who trusts in his own grace. It is not our grace but His that is sufficient. It is growing confidence in the Lord that will support us in our

¹ Matt. 7. 21.

² Luke 15. 29.

³ Matt. 25. 24.

⁴ Rev. 22. 14, R.V.

⁵ Numb. 6. 13-18, R.V.

trials, embolden us in our conflicts and enable us to overcome the world.¹ It is not relief or escape on the one hand or a crown or the Kingdom on the other, that appeals to every waiting heart; it is the Lord Himself.

It is here that these teachers err in their interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The solemn warnings it contains are, as we have seen, emphasized and strained to such a degree as to cause saints to lose sight of the Lord in all His personal and official glories. It is the sight by faith of our Redeemer, our High Priest, our Forerunner, our Surety, the Leader and perfecter of faith, the Mediator of the New Covenant, with its unconditional terms, that is the true antidote against falling away, giving up the Hope, relapsing into legalism, bondage and desert-like famine with barrenness of soul. The remedy is not threats of exclusion from the Kingdom or purgatorial flames; the remedy is Christ, a deeper and more mature sight by faith of Him in His Person and His offices, and in the constant expectation of His coming. "Everyone that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."²

¹ 1 John 5. 4.

² 1 John 3. 3, R.V.

CHAPTER IX

SOME EVENTS AFTER THE RAPTURE

IT will, perhaps, help to a clearer understanding of the distinct call and constitution of the church, and its proper hope, if we say a little concerning those things which are to take place on earth after the "Rapture" spoken of in 1 Thess. 4. When God has fulfilled His purpose in regard to His heavenly people, the Church, He will resume His dealings with His earthly people, Israel. Of this the Old Testament speaks particularly.

The writings of the Old Testament prophets were occasioned by circumstances existing in their times. These writings have, therefore, a historical background and, when read in the light thereof, can be the more readily understood. They moreover, contain deep moral and spiritual instruction designed to correct errors and to encourage the reader in the path of truth. But they go beyond their immediate times and set forth the future intentions of God, particularly in relation to His earthly people Israel. They do not, however, speak of the Church for it had not yet been revealed by God. It is, therefore, a mistake to regard Israel as being synonymous with the Church.

Rightly to understand the future of Israel, attention must be given to their past record. Of it Micah wrote in his day prophetically thus: 'They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek'.¹ This was fulfilled in respect of the Lord Jesus. He 'gave His back to the smiters and His cheek to them that plucked off the hair'; He 'hid not His face from shame and spitting' when the high priest and his associates 'spat in His face and buffeted Him'.² The rejection, persecution and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was chiefly a Jewish crime, the plot of which was hatched in Jewry by Judas who found the religious element of that people ready bargainers. With them he agreed to sell the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. The religious leaders went to the garden to

¹ Micah 5. 1.

² Isa. 50. 6; Matt. 26. 67.

arrest Him; the people cried ' If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend ': ' Away with Him; we will not have this man to reign over us '. ' We have no king but Caesar '.

Public opinion did not admit that Jesus was the Christ. Some thought He was Elias; others Jeremias; others that He was one of the old prophets that had been raised from the dead. Only a very few, such as Peter at Caesarea Philippi, confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God. This being so, the Lord Jesus temporarily suspended the enforcement of His royal rights, and enjoined His apostles no longer to preach Him to Israel as the Christ. He knew that the inevitable trend of things would be that that people, led by their religious leaders, would arrest and kill Him. This they did, and it has stained Israel's history with the foulest crime that the world's annals will ever know. It demonstrated the utter depravity of man and the complete failure of every probationary dealing of God with him to effect an improvement.

" Therefore will He give them up until. . . ." The second verse of this chapter is a parenthesis, serving to identify the ' judge of Israel ' of verse 1, with the ' ruler ' of verse 2, whose place of earthly origin would be Bethlehem-Judah. It was there that the Lord Jesus was born, and it is He who is both ' judge ' and ' ruler '. Consequent upon Israel's national guilt, God has given them up, not finally, but temporarily. With this agrees Romans 11, ' God has not cast away His people ' altogether but they have been temporarily ' cut off '. This was caused by the fact that they rejected and slew their Messiah. The ' therefore ' of Micah 5. 3 should be linked with the last phrase of verse 1. Because they smote the Judge of Israel on the cheek therefore God has given them up. This is illustrated by Sarah's history. After the typical death of Isaac, Sarah his mother died and was buried in the corner of the field, for which a full price was paid.² So, after the death of the Lord Jesus, Israel (His mother nationally) died and became as described in the early part of Ezek. 37, mere bones scattered throughout the world. They have been ' buried ' in the dust of the Gentiles. The staffs ' Beauty ' and ' Bands ' were then broken.³ Israel is now Lo-Ammi ' not My people ': Lo-Ruhamah ' not obtained mercy '.

¹ Micah 5. 3.

² Gen. 23.

³ Zech. 11. 10-14.

If Israel's present state is understood it will help to clarify the mind as to the true position of the believer today. God has temporarily ceased to deal with an earthly people, and is at present calling out from all nations a people for His Name and for heaven. He is forming the Church, which is the body of Christ, and a Jew who trusts Christ today at once becomes incorporated into the Church. If any part of the Church is on earth until the Epiphany how, it may be asked, will the Elijah spirit in the imprecatory Psalms, which will be quite in accord with the days of vengeance, co-exist with the Christian spirit,¹ and how can Israel be recognized as having a national standing and an order of worship, divinely recognized, while churches are on earth? It is one thing to have a transition period of gradual unfolding of truth, at the beginning of an era, but quite another to have a gradual abandonment at the end. For the Christian to go back now to a worldly sanctuary, to recognize place, order and a distinctive priesthood, would be the very essence of apostasy.

In Old Testament times mankind was divided into Jew and Gentile. From Pentecost onward the division is threefold—"the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God".² After the Rapture it will revert to the former twofold division.

When Israel has returned to their land, under the super-governance of the revived Roman Empire, they will become guilty of the worst apostasy that has stained their history. A wild 'beast' will arise, who is variously described in the Scriptures. The Psalms speak of him as 'the wicked one'.³ Daniel describes him as the 'wilful king'.⁴ Zechariah names him as the 'foolish shepherd'.⁵ John calls him 'the anti-christ' because he is both against, and is a usurper of, Christ.⁶ He is the 'idol shepherd' who seeks to impose upon the people of Israel the demand that they worship the beast. His description is given at length in the second half of Rev. 13. He is the second person of an evil trinity, the counterfeit of the true. The first beast usurps the place of the Father; the second of the Son; and the dragon, the devil, takes the unseen role of the energizer of each. To him the Lord Jesus made reference when He said: 'I am come in My Father's Name

¹ Acts 7. 59; Rev. 6. 10. ⁴ Daniel 11. 36.

² 1 Cor. 10. 32.

⁵ Zech. 11. 15.

⁶ 1 John 2. 18.

⁷ Zech. 11. 17.

³ Psalm 36. 1.

and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive'.¹ Israel, represented by him, will make a covenant with the first beast (the head of the revived Roman Empire) which will ultimately be broken. God calls it a 'covenant with death'; 'an agreement with hell'.² It is the placing of national confidence in a broken reed. It is the climax of apostasy from the living God.

But God loves Israel too much to abandon them, and His purposes concerning them make it impossible for Him to do so. He says, "How shall I give thee up?"³ He cannot. Therefore, He allows trouble to ensue, consequent upon their apostasy, such trouble as has not hitherto been equalled in human history. It is commonly known as 'the Great Tribulation'. It is described in full in Rev. 6 to 19. 'Wrath from heaven' will characterize it. From that wrath believers of the present dispensation will be saved. Jesus is 'our Deliverer' from it, whereas the Jews will be its specific object. "God has not appointed" us "to it"⁴ for "we shall be saved from" that "wrath through Him".⁵ Could anything be stated more clearly? It will be the day of 'Jacob's trouble'.⁶ It will be the 'day of the Lord' described so gloomily by Joel in ch. 2. 1-2. To it Zechariah refers in ch. 14. 1-3. Of it the Lord Jesus speaks thus: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the foundation of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened no flesh would have been saved".⁷

This is the climax. There will be troubles leading up to it. 'Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail.'⁸ They anticipate a new life yet to be brought into the world. That new life is the manifestation in power on earth of the Son of Man. It is the Epiphany of His Parousia. To it the Epistle to the Hebrews refers: 'And when He again bringeth the firstborn into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him'.⁹

Of these birth-pangs Micah speaks: 'Be in pain and labour

¹ John 5. 43.

² Isa. 28. 15.

³ Hosea 11. 8.

⁴ 1 Thess. 1. 10; 2. 16; 5. 9.

⁵ Rom. 5. 9.

⁶ Jer. 30. 7.

⁷ Matt. 24. 21-22.

⁸ Matt. 24. 7-8, R.V.

⁹ Heb. 1. 6, R.V.

to bring forth'.¹ As with Rachel, it will be hard labour: troubles hitherto unknown and unequalled. The Jew has suffered much, very much, in the past, more than other nations. But there is worse to come. God will make inquisition at their hand for the blood of His Son. Outside of the city of Jerusalem they will suffer as once they caused God's Son to suffer there.² Retributive judgment will fall on them because of their guilty past. With what measure they meted out to Him it will be measured to them again. God will take them at their word: 'His blood be on us and on our children', and the children will certainly suffer.

We believe that no part of the Church will be on the earth in those times, the saints thereof having before then been caught up. It is Jacob's trouble, not the Church's. It has primarily to do with Israel, though it will have world-wide repercussions.

The persecuted Thessalonian saints thought they were already in the 'day of the Lord', but Paul, in the interests of safeguarding the doctrine of the Rapture, devotes the second chapter of his second letter to explaining that that day could not be then present however severe their sufferings might be. That day could not come until certain things had taken place: 'The apostasy' must first come: 'the Man of sin must be revealed' and then things would be ripe for this future day of trouble. But the man of sin cannot be manifested yet because God providentially is permitting a hinderer and a hindrance effectively to hold things down so that the Lawless one may be manifested in His own time and not sooner. The storm of judgment cannot break while the Good Shepherd has His own sheep out in the field of the world. His first move will be to gather the sheep in ere the tie on the winds of God's wrath is loosened, and the tribulation 'the great one' arrives.³

Let it once be grasped that the Church which is 'the body of Christ' and the "Rapture" were secrets (mysteries) disclosed to Paul, but not revealed earlier, and it will be readily understood that they could not have been mentioned historically or prophetically in the Old Testament or in the Synoptic Gospels. It is vain, therefore, to seek to find them there.

But the godly remnant will have a triumphant deliverance.

¹ Micah 4. 10.

² Rev. 14. 20.

³ Rev. 7. 14.

Micah cries, 'Thou shalt come to Babylon: there shalt thou be rescued: there shall the Lord redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies'.¹ Whatever the historical background of these verses, their prophetic significance is clear. When Babylon fell, Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a decree for the deliverance and restoration of Israel. So it will be when later ecclesiastical Babylon falls (as it will at the hands of the beast who will throw it over and destroy it) and when commercial and political Babylon later falls. Israel will be delivered from their troubles, and the fourfold Hallelujah of Revelation 19 will become a realized fact. 'God shall help her, at the dawn of morning'.² 'Unto the upright shall arise light in the darkness.'³ Then the feet that once left the Mount of Olives shall return to it and stand thereon again.⁴ His return will bring instant deliverance for His people. 'This same Jesus, whom ye have seen go into Heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go.'⁵ He left a small Jewish remnant of faithful souls: He will return to such a remnant. He left bodily: He will return bodily. He left the Mount of Olives: He will return to it. He left conferring blessing: He will return bringing blessing. It is then that "we shall be manifested with Him in glory."⁶ We shall then come *with* Him: He will not then come for us: He will come to deliver His earthly people. Those who, like Daniel, have risked life by refusing to obey the edict of the wilful king will then find that their God will deliver them as He did Daniel, and exclaim, 'This is our God; we have waited for Him'. Those who, like the three men, refuse to bow down to the image of the beast set up in the Holy Place at Jerusalem, will be thrown into a fiery furnace as their predecessors were. Some, in fact, will lose their lives because they will refuse the mark of the beast. But all will find that God is faithful. He can, if He will, preserve through and out of the furnace, or alternatively, He will raise those who are martyred in the first resurrection to share its blessings.

But deliverance through Christ must ever come on moral grounds. Sin must be dealt with. Confession must ensue. So will it be with Israel. 'They shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and all the tribes of the land shall mourn

¹ Micah 4. 10.

² Ps. 112. 4.

³ Acts 1. 11.

⁴ Ps. 46. 5, R.V. marg.

⁵ Zech. 14. 4.

⁶ Col. 3. 4.

because of Him.¹ 'They shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one is in bitterness for his first-born.'² It will not be a 'day of national mourning' when masses will be congregated together, apart from, possibly, any individual exercise of conscience, but the Royal House, the prophet's house, the Levite's family, and each individual family will separately feel the guilt and sorrow that is their just due for the rejection of Jesus, and will repent thereof. Isaiah 53 will then be the language of their confession.

What a deliverance it will be! During the trial the hardships will tell severely on mother and child, and the empty religion of the land will close all means of earthly aid on the 'sabbath day'. For that reason the Lord told them to pray that their flight might not be on that day.³ But when the trial is over, 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes'.⁴ After the initial deliverance, the Lord will set His Hand to recover His outcasts from the four corners of the earth. Micah looking forward to the days of Israel's international supremacy which are to follow, writes: "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem".⁵ Jerusalem will be the central metropolis of the whole earth. It was God's original intention that Israel should be made 'high above all nations which He hath made in praise and in name and in honour'.⁶ Had they hearkened to, and obeyed, God's word He would have set them 'high above all the nations of the earth'.⁷ They miserably failed, however, and became the tail instead of the

¹ Rev. 1. 7.

² Zech. 12. 10.

³ Matt. 24. 20.

⁴ Rev. 7. 16-17, R.V.

⁵ Micah 4. 1-2.

⁶ Deut. 26. 19.

⁷ Deut. 28. 1.

head. But after deeply repenting of their disobedience and sin, and after their deliverance in mercy and compassion, God will reinstate them according to His original design. He will 'set His King on His holy hill of Zion',¹ and make Jerusalem the joy of all the earth.

It follows that, Israel having received the 'Prince of Peace', peace will ensue not merely for them but for all the earth. His Kingdom will stretch from shore to shore and in 'His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace till the moon be no more'.² 'Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.'³ Micah, agreeing with Isaiah, says 'He shall judge between many peoples, and shall reprove strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more'.⁴ The crushing burden of the maintenance of armed forces will be removed and the heartbreaks, the widow's tears, the orphan's cries, will then be heard no more.

Then will have come the times when they "shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree"; and none shall make them afraid".⁵ Stability and plenty will characterize His reign. There will be economic contentment. The true Solomon will then be on earth, and what was so poorly adumbrated in Solomon's day of excessive exactions⁶ will be perfectly demonstrated in Messiah's day. Special care will then be shown to the poor and needy.⁷ Thus Micah declares the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham that 'In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed'. 'The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man nor waiteth for the sons of men.'⁸ The twelve gates of the Holy City Jerusalem symbolize that its blessings will come through them to the Gentile nations.⁹ The Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and openly glorified, reigning in power and glory, will use His redeemed and saved earthly people, Israel, as channels of blessing to the whole earth.

¹ Ps. 2. 6.

² Ps. 72. 7, R.V.

³ Isa. 9. 7.

⁴ Micah 4. 3.

⁵ Micah 4. 4.

⁶ See 1 Kings 4. 25.

⁷ Ps. 72.

⁸ Micah 5. 7.

⁹ Rev. 21. 12.

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