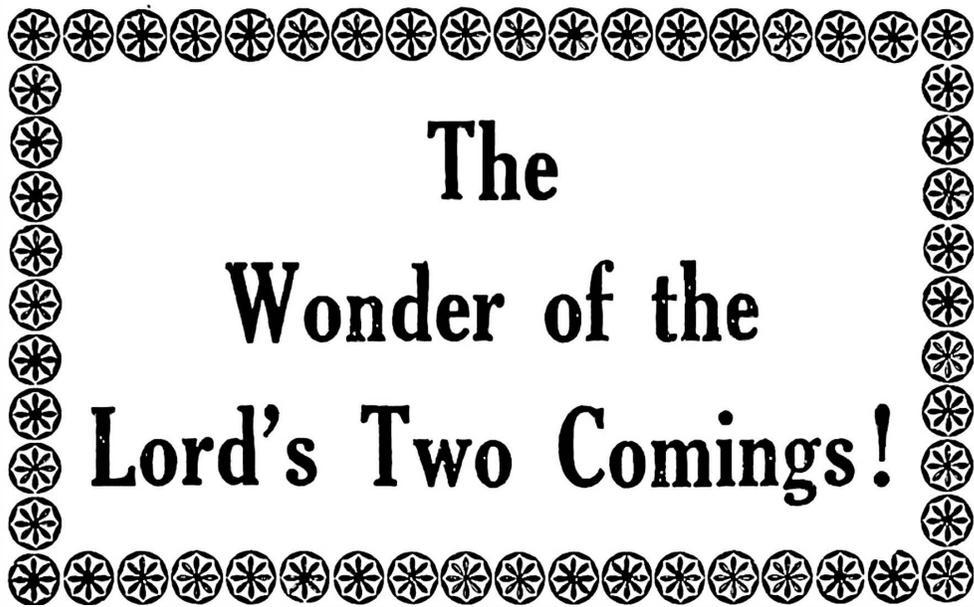


The Wonder of the
Lord's Two Comings!

By
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I. The Wonders of His First Coming.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come. The purpose of His coming is expressed in these pregnant words in the Hebrew Epistle, "Once in the end of the ages (ages in everyone of which man had failed) hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He accomplished that glorious work by His death on the Cross, the proof of its acceptance by God being His resurrection (Rom. iv.; 1 Cor. xv.) and present session at God's right hand (Heb. x.). He is coming a second time, **the two comings being linked together in the Scriptures and the purpose of God.** There could be no second coming of glory and power without the first coming of humiliation and suffering. The first coming laid the basis of earth's blessing and bought Him a bride (the Church), a people (Israel), and a kingdom (the earth), all in the power of His precious blood. The second coming will give Him His bride, His people and His kingdom.

Shall we now consider some of the wonders of His first coming. 1. **The wonder of God's matchless love;** "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life" (John iii. 16). How did God love? Perfectly, His was a perfect love which gave all to the objects of His choice. Whom did He love? St. Paul answers this question in Romans v., "God loved those who were too weak to keep His law or to glorify His name, who were ungodly (unlike God) in their walk and in their deeds, who were sinners in word, in thought and in deed, and who were enemies of Himself and of His Son." How wonderful that He should love the weak, the ungodly, the sinful and the enemy! Here we see the grace of His love.

How many did God love? He loved the world of fallen men and women in all its centuries of failure, in all its different nationalities, in all its different classes and moral conditions, and in all its ages, from the little child in its weakness to the aged man in his wickedness. Yes, God loved the world of Jew and Gentile. He must have loved you. Wondrous truth, He loved you! What did God love the world for? Surely for its blessing, that He might save all those in it who would believe on His Son from perishing in the lake of fire for ever, and that He might give them as a present possession and future prospect, eternal life. God, in His marvellous love sought man's eternal blessing and none but man himself can prevent that blessing coming.

2. **The wonder of God's priceless Gift;** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son—the Son of His love" (John iii.; Col. i.). The priceless gift God gave for man's salvation was His Son, the One who came out of His own bosom. His own Son, His Isaac, He gave for the sinner. He called Him twice from the opened heavens "My Beloved Son," and the Apostle Paul writes of Him as the Son of God's love. The Father loved His Son with an infinite and eternal

love. He was the companion of His days and His counsellor from eternity past and His chosen heir of all things, and yet, such was His love to guilty man that He gave Him as teacher, exemplar and revealer of Himself and of His love. Aye, more, **He gave Him up to death**, even the death of the cross, where He died as our Substitute, taking our guilty place (Isaiah liii.; 1 Peter iii.), our Sin-bearer, bearing the load of our guilt (1 Peter ii.; Isaiah liii.) and our Sacrifice, putting away all our sins from the face of God and our consciences in the power of His precious blood (Heb. ix.; 1 John i.). His was a death of shame, the death of the cross where He was placed between two felons and mocked as chief malefactor of all and a death of suffering, for in His death He suffered at the hands of God for our sins, and at the hands of men for His righteousness. What a priceless gift God gave when He gave up His Son unto death for our Salvation. Have you thanked Him?

3. **The wonder of His foreordained Sacrifice;** "Christ, a Lamb without blemish and without spot, Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter i.). The Lord Jesus was foreordained or set apart in a past eternity in the eternal love of God as the Lamb, the Lamb of God Who should come. He came without blemish or fault outwardly or spot or failure inwardly. He came to be slain and redeem in the power of His precious blood all who had or would trust Him as Saviour. His coming, as Saviour, was purposed in eternity past, for man's sin and fall were foreseen by God, and the divine provision for man's forgiveness and cleansing was fore-provided in the choice of God's Son as the Sacrificial Lamb of God (John i.; Gen. xxii.). So God was able to preach the Gospel of Salvation through sacrifice to the fallen pair in the day of their first sin.

The glorious message was passed on by them to their children. Abel heard it and, believing in the promised Lamb, offered typical sacrifices and was accepted in all the value of Him to whom his offering pointed. **He was saved by the blood of Christ, the foreordained Lamb**, but Cain, who also heard the good news, believed it not, offered a sacrifice without blood, was rejected by the Lord, and went to a lost eternity. So shall all perish who despise or neglect salvation through the Blood of Christ (Gen. iv., Heb. xi., Jude). The blood of typical sacrifices covered sins for a season until the great Sacrifice appeared, and then He put away all the sins of His people by His precious blood. For David's sin there was no covering sacrifice under the law, so God graciously allowed the power of Christ's blood to work in his case, and the prophet could tell the penitent King, "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

4. **The wonder of His coming in humiliation**, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii.). The Lord Jesus, in His first coming, laid aside the outward glories of deity. He was always God the Son, even in the darkest days and hours of His humiliation on earth. How rich He was as God the Son; how poor He became when He came to earth and became flesh so that He might have blood to shed for the forgiveness and cleansing away of our sins. It was for our sakes, for our forgiveness and eternal salvation that He became poor. He was born in a manger, Who made the palaces of the Heavenly City; He was born of a poor parent, Who owned all the gold and silver of the universe; He was brought up in a humble home, Whom all angels worshipped and all creation obeyed; He lived in a godless city, Who was incarnate holiness, righteousness, truth,

light and love, and He belonged to a despised nation, Who carried out His will amongst all the inhabitants of the earth and will rule over all nations. **What depths of humiliation and suffering He endured** when "for our sakes" He became poor, His poverty reached its depths when He became sin for us on the Cross, and by His Sacrifice put away our sins. Yes, He became poor to reveal God's heart of love to us, to reach us in our low estate and to purchase salvation for the lost, that through His death we may become rich by accepting Him as our precious Saviour and becoming joint heirs of His riches in glory (Rom. viii., Eph. i.).

5. **The wonder of His holy life**, "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. There is no fault in Him" (Heb. vii., 1 Peter ii., Luke xxiii.). All other men have been sinful, have failed to glorify God or keep His holy law, have transgressed His commandments and committed iniquity in thought, word and deed, and He lived for 33 years in the midst of men like these, yet friend and enemy unite in proclaiming His faultlessness, His righteousness, His holiness, and His guilelessness. He was born the Holy One, He lived on earth as the Holy One, and He died on the Cross the Holy One, for never was His holiness more fully seen than when our sins were laid upon Him, for they failed to defile Him. They were a horror to Him and they fled from Him when by His blood He put them all away. He born of a sinner, yet was that Holy One. He lived amongst sinners in Nazareth, yet in holy separation from them walked with God in holiness and truth. He died as the Sin-bearer and yet the sins He bore defiled Him not. He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh," yet He was holy; harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. **His perfection**, as

the Holy Man, was twofold. He was inwardly spotless and outwardly blemishless. As the Holy One upon Whom sin and death had no claim He was fitted to reveal God and to become our Saviour. His holiness, as the Son of Man, and His deity as Son of God unite in making the sacrificial work possible and giving it infinite value. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

6. **The wonder of His mighty works** wrought amongst men; "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts ii.). He healed the sick, all of them, He cleansed the lepers, all who came to Him; He cast out demons, He raised the paralytics, He healed the palsied and the lunatics, He multiplied food so as to provide for 5,000 at one time and 4,000 at another, He walked on the sea, He provided tribute money out of the fish's mouth, He withered the fig tree with His word and greatest of all miracles, He raised the dead in three stages of corruption, at three times of life and three "only" ones, the only son, the only daughter and the only brother, while He, Himself, rose from the dead in triumph over all His and our foes. **He never wrought a miracle for Himself** or for His deliverance, all were for the blessing of men; all, with one exception, were miracles of grace, that exception being wrought upon the fig tree (a picture of Israel) to warn men of coming judgment should they continue to despise His grace and reject Himself. His works reveal Him as Messiah, fulfilling the prophetic Scriptures. They left Israel without excuse; they were accompanied in many cases by the greater miracle of salvation and are designed to lead men to Himself as Saviour.

7. **The wonder of the gracious words** which

proceeded out of His mouth (Luke iv.). His words were words of grace spoken gracefully, telling the grace of God to guilty sinners. His words, like Himself, were full of grace and truth. They revealed the love of God which provided the ransom and the light of God which demanded it, and they drew the publicans and sinners near to hear Him speak. In the marvellous parables of grace, He revealed to men the heart of God as He desires the salvation of fallen man, and has provided for it at infinite cost through the death of His Son, which has made all things ready. The words, works and life of the Lord Jesus were unitedly **a revelation of God's love and grace**. Never man spake as He spake to the men of Israel, and the power of His words to change and bless the sons of men continue unchanged all down the centuries. He spake as One having authority, for He was God the Son and knew all His Father's love and grace and goodness towards lost man. Truly He has opened the kingdom of Heaven in His words of grace, "I am the way. No man cometh unto the Father but through Me. I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

8. **The wonder of His glorious Gospel** (Rom. i., John iii., 1 Cor. xv.). The Gospel is literally the good news concerning the Lord Jesus in the glories of His person and the wonders of His sacrificial work for sinners. His person gives infinite value to His work and so His sacrificial death for our sins, evidenced by His resurrection from the dead, avails for the forgiveness and justification of all who believe in Him and receive Him as personal Saviour. It is the good news of God's grace to sinners; in it salvation is freely offered to the unworthy and the sinful; and by it they are fully told the pitying love of God towards them. It tells of God's righteousness which has been satisfied by the death of Christ, and it reveals the righteous-

ness of God in covering the sinner with the best robe of divinely imputed righteousness, even Christ, Who, of God, is made unto us righteousness, the righteousness of God which is upon all them who believe (Luke v., Rom. iii., 1 Cor. i.).

The Gospel also proclaims **God's threefold gift to those who receive it**; His Son as their Saviour, Eternal Life as their portion, and the Holy Spirit as their indweller and filler. It is for sinners, those who have failed to glorify God and have transgressed His law, for men and women of every nation, class and condition; for it is preached to every creature and it can save all who believe it and receive Him Who is its centre and end. The Gospel blessing is received by faith. Not works, for God has chosen to save those who believe His promise, rather than those who call Him a liar by refusing His Son and denying the virtue of His finished work by working for Salvation. **The Gospel demands individual faith in all those who would receive its benefits.** "It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. i.); they must believe Him as personal Saviour of their own and receive Him as God's gift of life and salvation to them.

9. **The wonder of His sacrificial death**; "Once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix.). The time when He came to do this mighty work was the end of the ages of God's dealings with men in Old Testament days. The ages were Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, the Law, the 70 weeks of Daniel, and Christ's personal presence on earth. In every one of the ages man had utterly failed; He had failed of the object of his creation. He was made to glorify God. He had failed to master sin though he had made many attempts by religion, morality, education, arts and city life,

and had to confess himself a slave to Satan and of sin. He had also failed to put away sin from his conscience or from before the face of God. All his sacrifices, even divinely appointed ones, could only cover sin; none of them had power to put it away.

The One Who came at the close of the ages of man's failure was Christ. His name means the Anointed One Who has risen from the dead, having completed the work He came to do. Surely His name is prophetic of the work He did accomplish to God's eternal satisfaction and our eternal salvation. **He was able to bear divine judgment** because He is God. That judgment, had it fallen upon us, would have sunk us in eternal woe. He knew what it merited and would receive, and He was the only One upon Whom sin and death had no claim, for He was sinless and therefore death could not claim Him. By his sin man has become subject to death and is under judgment. What He came to do was the putting away of sin from before the face of God and from the conscience of man. He did not come to cover sins. The Jewish sacrifices had covered the sins of the Old Testament saints and pointed forward to the coming of Him Who should put them away. Sins that are covered might be uncovered, revealed and brought into judgment. How terrible the condition of such sinners would be! It was a stupendous task He undertook, to put away the sins of all ages, of all who did and should believe in Him.

How did Christ attempt this mighty task? By the sacrifice of Himself, by the shedding of His precious blood for sinners. This was the only way by which the claims of God could be met, "for without the shedding of blood is no remission" of sin. The blood of animals, being of little value, could not put away sin, but His blood, because of the matchless glory of His person, is of

infinite value and it avails for the eternal salvation of all who believe in Him. Has Christ done the mighty work of sacrifice to God's satisfaction and the salvation of His people? Yes, He has. How do we know? Because God has done two things, (1) He has raised His Son Who died bearing our sins, up from the dead and He has not a single one of those sins upon Him. They have been put away from God's face, blotted out of God's book and cast behind God's back. (2) He has seated the One Who has purged our sins by His blood at His own right hand and there He lives as our representative, advocate, high priest and intercessor. **His resurrection proves our clearance from the guilt of sin.** "By Him all that believe are justified" (Acts xiii.) and have peace with God (Rom. v.), having been forgiven all their sins (Eph. i.), and His seat at God's right hand proves our cleansing from the defiling power of sin, and so we have access into His presence through our seated Lord (Heb. x.).

10. **The wonder of Christ's glorious resurrection;** "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. xv.). The resurrection of our Lord Jesus which is of such great importance to us, because of the great issues involved in it, issues of life or death for us, was proved by His being seen of many witnesses, men and women who had often before His death heard Him speak, had companied with Him and had eaten in His company. They saw Him at different places and times during a period of forty days. They heard His words, sat at table with Him, asked Him questions, and saw the marks of Calvary upon His blessed person. These witnesses had everything to lose and nothing to gain in an earthly sense by bearing witness to the truth of His resurrection. In defence of that glorious truth they all suffered persecution, and many of them death

itself in defence of the glorious message of a risen and seen Christ.

Christ was raised from the dead to die no more. Those whom He raised from the dead had to pass through that experience a second time, for they were raised in mortal bodies, and He was raised in a glorified body. The resurrection is the proof of God's acceptance of His sacrificial work. Hence it is the second great fact of the Gospel, "and that He was raised the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv.). God's glorious Gospel is built on the two great facts of Christ's sacrificial death, proved by His burial, and His evidential resurrection, proved by His being seen of many trustworthy witnesses, His death and resurrection being in fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures and according to their doctrine. His resurrection looks at the side of truth so powerfully presented in Romans. He is risen, therefore in the power of His blood our guilt is gone and we are justified from all things, justified by grace, justified by faith, justified now and justified for ever. In the high court of Heaven **we stand justified through the blood of Christ.** The Judge there is He Who died for us, rose for us, lives for us, intercedes for us and is coming back in person to receive us unto Himself. Why should we fear? Those whom God justifies are the ungodly who believe in Christ as Saviour and rest on His precious blood alone for salvation. And the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the pledge of the resurrection of all His people in glorified bodies, fitted for the life, service and worship of Heaven at His coming (Phil. iii., 1 Cor. xv.).

II. **The wonder of His right hand seat.** "Jesus Christ, who is gone into Heaven and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter iii.). The

Lord Jesus is seated at God's right hand in fulfilment of prophecy (Psalm cx.). He will remain seated until at the end of this age He arises to crush His enemies underneath His feet as the conquering Son of Man and Word of God (Rev. xix.). He is there as a proof of the acceptance by God of His finished sacrificial work (Heb. x.). This is the Hebrews' side of truth. He is seated in the holies at God's right hand. Therefore by His shed blood our uncleanness is gone, we are cleansed, having right of access there through Him (Heb. x.). Christ is seated as supreme over all created powers, angelic and human (1 Peter iii.), as exalted in name and glory above every name in every age both past and future (Eph. i.), as crowned with glory and honour, the reward for His obedience unto death (Heb. ii.), and as God's answer to man's hatred to and murder of that blessed One Whom God ever delighteth to honour (Acts ii.). And may we add He is seated on our behalf, exercising the wondrous ministry of His risen life for us (Rom. v.), thereby saving us from all our enemies (Heb. vii.) and meeting all accusations against us in the power of His blood as our Advocate (1 Jno. ii.). Do you value the filled seat at God's right hand?

12. **The wonder of His present work for His people;** "Christ is entered into Heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix.). He entered there at His ascension and from there, ten days later, He poured forth the Holy Spirit, He Who came to seal, to indwell and to fill all the saved as the Comforter on earth. Christ is the Comforter in Heaven, before the face of God. He appears as our representative, and God accepts us "in Him" and looks at us through Him. How blessed to have such a representative at the Court of Heaven. He also appears to defend us from Satan's charges, as our Advocate, meeting every

accusation in the power of His blood, which has fully atoned for all our sins and failings. He appears there to receive our worship and present it in His own merits to the Father as our Great High Priest (Heb. x.), and He appears as our Intercessor to make all prevailing and unceasing intercession for us, so that suited grace may come to us to meet our every need (Heb. iv. and vii.).

II. The Wonders of His Second Coming.

He is coming! We have the testimony of the Lord Himself, "I will come again"; of the angels at His ascension—"This same Jesus shall come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven," of the writers of the Acts and Epistles, Luke, Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John, who **all bear repeated testimony to the Lord's second coming** and the sevenfold affirmation of the risen Christ in Revelation to His second coming for and with His own. Those who deny the second coming of our Lord in person will have to cut large portions out of the New Testament Scriptures and contradict the united testimony of all its writers. He is coming first to the air for His saints; that will be our glorification, for the dead shall be raised in glory and the living shall be changed so that their bodies shall be conformed to His body of glory (1 Cor. xv., Phil. iii.). Then after an interval He is coming to the earth with His own; that will be their vindication. They shall then be seen and known as His and be vindicated from all the shame and reproach that was attached to their names on earth as His people.

During this present age of grace and truth the times of the Gentiles run on (Luke xxi.) and so He, earth's rightful King is kept out of His kingdom. In the same period the bodies of His saints are sleeping in their graves and so He is deprived of

the companionship of His bride, and Satan is the acknowledged prince and god of this world; so Christ does not receive the obedience and worship from it which is His rightful portion (John xiv., 2 Cor. iv.), and through its course He remains in Heaven and so is kept out of His rights as Messiah and from the fellowship of His much loved earthly people (Dan. ix.). There will be **several manifestations of the Lord Jesus in the one second coming**. We remember that in His first coming He came as the Babe to Bethlehem, as the Man to Nazareth, as Messiah to Jerusalem, and as the sacrifice to Calvary; and at His second coming He will come (1) to the air to receive and reward His own; (2) to Armageddon to destroy the Roman armies; (3) to Olivet to deliver Jerusalem and smite the Assyrian hosts; (4) to the valley of Jehoshaphat to judge the living nations; and (5) He will be revealed from Heaven in flaming fire to execute judgment upon the civil population.

The wonders of His second coming are many.

1. **The first wonder is that He should come again** at all; the world has rejected Him, Jew and Gentile united in crucifying Him on Calvary's Cross of shame, and ever since they have persecuted His servants and saints, often unto death. His people have often grieved Him by their lack of love towards Himself and one another; they have disobeyed Him in their lives by living for the world or self when they should have been serving Him and His Church has utterly failed in her commission to carry His Gospel to every creature. Yet wonder of wonders, His delights are still with the sons of men and He will come in person for us and will return to earth with us to bring in the golden age of righteousness, peace and plenty for man.

2. **How wonderful that He should come in person for His own**—"I will come again and re-

ceive you unto Myself''; the Lord Himself shall come for His own, He will descend from Heaven to the air. Isaac came from His home to meet Rebekah in the field, so the Lord will come from His home, the Father's house to meet His bride at a distance from her dwelling and His home, in the air. He will come in person; in person He loved us, in person He gave Himself for us up to death, even the death of the Cross; in person He rose from the tomb and in person He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, to assure our hearts that God was satisfied with and glorified by His completed sacrificial work; in person He appears in the presence of God for us, in person He intercedes for us, and **in person He is coming to receive us unto Himself in the air.** Elijah was taken up to Heaven by His servants, the horses and chariot of fire, but we shall have the greater honour with all His saints of being met by Him, the Lord of Angels, in person. What honour it would be if the King invited us to his palace; it would be greater honour if he sent his servants to bring us; but the greatest honour of all would be if he came in person and brought us to his palace home. That will be what Christ will do for all His people. "This honour have all His saints."

3. Another wonder of His second coming is that **He should come alone to meet us;** "The Lord Himself shall descend, we shall meet the Lord; I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (1 Thess. iv., John xiv.). In the type of this wonderful event Isaac came alone to meet his bride, the servant (type of the Holy Spirit) presenting her to him so Christ will come alone to meet His saints who shall be presented to Him by the Spirit. The angels are often mentioned in connection with His coming to earth, but they are never mentioned in connection with the rapture, as coming with Him; then at the revelation of His glory, in His public

vindication and judgment on His foes, He shall be accompanied by the angels of His power. He Who left His disciples, going up alone into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as they saw Him go, i.e., alone. As no man was present when Joseph, that great type of Christ, revealed himself to his brethren, so none shall be present when He comes to meet us in the air (Acts i., Gen xlv.). **We shall see Him in that moment for the first time**, Who is the centre of our love and the object of our worship. There shall be no display of angelic power to take our attention from the Lord Himself in that moment of supreme emotion and love when we meet Him for the first time in person.

We shall meet Him, the Man Who loved us, Who kept us from our foes, Who delivered us from ourselves, all in power of His sacrificial death for us; and we shall fall down at His feet in adoring worship, we shall be with Him and that for ever. We who have never been with Him yet, shall never be separated from Him from that moment; we shall enter with Him through the gates and pass with Him through the everlasting doors into the Father's House, **where He will present us to the Father**—"Behold, I and the children which Thou hast given Me, Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me; I kept them in Thy name and none of them is lost. Father I will that they also be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (Heb. ii., John xvii.). There shall be no blaze of glory to alarm us when we meet Him; many will be ashamed before Him then, because of failure on earth; He will not add fear to that. The appearing in glory will be afterwards to the earth.

4. **The wonder of His raising the sleeping saints in glorified bodies** (I Thess. iv., I Cor. xv.). The bodies of the saints have remained in the grave

during this age; death reigns over all, saved and unsaved alike; the number of the dead increases 1,500 millions every 40 years. The Old Testament saints knew of the resurrection of the body. Job, David and Daniel all write of it, and the New Testament makes a full revelation of this glorious truth; Christianity depends for its power and efficacy upon the resurrection of the Lord's body (1 Cor. xv.). The power of God makes resurrection possible; we have a **threefold sample of resurrection power in our Lord's ministry**. A child, a youth and a man were raised; the child had just died, the youth was being carried out to burial and the man had been buried four days and had seen corruption. He raised an only child, an only son, and an only brother. He was the only "only One" Who was not spared from death and that for our sakes (Rom. viii.).

We have Hell's challenge and Heaven's answer to it in the Lord's resurrection; all the powers of earth and Hell united to keep Him in the tomb; He was pierced, the stone was placed, the seal was put on the tomb, the Roman guard was there, the hosts of Hell surrounded it; Pilate's word was literally carried out—"make it as sure as ye can." But all in vain did man and demons seek to keep Him there. "It was not possible that He should be holden of death" for David foretold His resurrection and "the Scripture cannot be broken"; it must be fulfilled and so Christ must rise from the dead. **What mighty issues were dependent upon His resurrection**—our salvation and resurrection in glorified bodies; Christ was raised in a glorified body of flesh and bones (Luke xxiv). He was seen of many witnesses, under differing conditions, at intervals during forty days, and though Jews and Gentiles no doubt sought for His body it could not be found on earth; it is now seated at God's right hand in Heaven, and He was raised to die no more

(Rom. vi.); Lazarus and the others whom He raised in natural bodies died again.

What God had done once in the case of His Son He could do again and again and He will, for as He raised Christ so will He raise all the sleeping saints also, in glorified bodies meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. There will be a **twofold resurrection—unto life and unto judgment**; the two hours of salvation and resurrection both extend over a thousand years; the hour of grace has now run on for 1,900 years and is not yet finished; so we need not wonder that the hour of resurrection will embrace over 1,000 years. The hour of resurrection is coming; in it all that are in the graves, both saved and unsaved, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, at different times, the saved at the Lord's coming to the air and the unsaved at the close of time just before the judgment of the great white throne; and they shall come forth in different resurrections of life and judgment, to different destinies in eternity, eternal life to the saved and eternal fire, torment and restlessness for the unsaved (John v., Acts xvii., Rev. xix., Matt. xxv.).

Lazarus was a type of what shall happen then; his spirit came back as the maid's also did into his body, and he, the whole man, spirit and soul and body came forth from the tomb. To which of these two classes, those who have done evil (deeds of evil flowing from the old unregenerate nature, "out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts," etc.—a ghastly list it is), do you belong? Which time shall you be raised at? For raised you must be; "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth." The mighty stone vault, burial at sea, destruction by animals or cremation will not prevent resurrection. Shall you be raised in the first resurrection which is of the just, unto

life? or shall you be raised in the resurrection of the rest of the dead which is of the unrighteous and is unto judgment? **What destiny shall you be raised to?** In the resurrection of life unto eternal life and glory, or in that of judgment to be judged at the great white throne?

The resurrection "from" the dead first spoken of by our Lord (Mark ix.) applies to His resurrection and that of His people: it means that one, as He, or many, as we are raised and all the rest left in their graves for a further period. The risen body of the saints will be the same body in which they lived on earth, raised in a new condition for a new life, the body is sown not buried; sown as the farmer sows his seed in spring to be reaped in harvest; it is sown in four conditions of humiliation—corruption, dishonour, weakness, a natural body. **It will be raised in four conditions of glory**—incorruption, glory, power, a spiritual body. It would be quite easy for God to create new bodies for His people, but that He will never do for He will not leave the precious dust of His saints in the hands of the enemy; that would give victory to death, the grave and Satan, and God will never admit defeat or allow the enemy to have the victory over Himself and His redeemed ones.

The natural body in which we live on earth lives by blood, but the spiritual body in which the saints shall be raised will live by the Spirit of God. Man at death leaves his house, the body in which he has dwelt on earth. In resurrection he returns to the same house either glorified or in ruins. **Where has he been in the interval?** If a child of God by faith in Christ he has been with Christ in paradise (Phil. i., Luke xxiii., 2 Cor. v.). But if he died unsaved he has spent the interval in conscious torment in hades (Luke xvi.). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the pledge and pattern

of His people's. The order in resurrection is—(1) Christ, the firstfruits of the coming harvest; (2) the saints ("afterward they that are Christ's at His coming") of the Old Testament days and this age will form the harvest; (3) the gleanings, the seals and tribulation martyrs (1 Cor. xv., Rev. xx.). Christ is the firstborn from the dead in point of dignity, the first fruits from the dead in point of time.

5. **The wonder of changing the living saints into His own likeness** at His coming (Phil. iii., 1 John iii.). When He comes to the air the first event will be the resurrection of the sleeping saints; He spoke of this to Martha in these words, "I am the resurrection; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The type of this resurrection was Lazarus raised out of the tomb, the voice of Christ reaching him, and his spirit coming again into his body and he, coming forth a risen man, spirit, soul and body. **The second event will be the change of the living saints;** of this He also spoke to Martha. "I am the life, whosoever liveth (is living when I come) and believeth in Me (is a believer in Me) shall never die" (John xi.). The power of the great "I Am," Jehovah-Jesus, will accomplish both events. The type of the latter event is Enoch, a living believer who was taken up to Heaven without dying.

There will be living believers on earth when the Lord returns—"we which are alive and remain" (1 Thess. iv.). St. Paul writes concerning them, "We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv.). A generation of Christians will go to Heaven without dying. When a funeral passed you have often heard the unbelieving words, "That's the way we all must go." That is we must all die, but the truth is, many shall be alive when He comes; they shall never die and shall enter Heaven

by the way of the change and the air. The living saints will be changed, they shall put on immortality; their bodies, the pattern of which is the glorified body of our Lord, shall be immortal; that is, not subject to death; we shall be like Him as we see Him in the air. **All the living saints shall be changed;** the great inclusive words "we shall be changed," and "we which are alive and remain" unto the coming of the Lord, must mean that all living saints shall be changed, not merely those who are "watching" or "waiting" or "looking." It is not "we which are alive and looking" or "we which are alive and watching." It is, "we which are alive (irrespective of these things) and remain" (on earth, not having fallen asleep), who shall be caught up with the risen dead to meet the Lord in the air.

When we are caught up there, 1. We shall be like Him, bearing His glorious likeness. 2. We shall see Him for the first time in all His loveliness. 3. We shall meet Him in the presence of His and our foes. Oh, the rapture of the moment of meeting the Man Who died for us. And 4. We shall be with Him always thereafter throughout eternity. St. Paul assures us "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. xv.). As the sinner must be born of the Spirit to enter God's family and kingdom on earth (John iii., 1 Peter i.), so **the saint must be changed to enter His glorious home;** "flesh and blood" is the present condition of the living saints, a condition not suited for the life of Heaven. "Corruption" is the present condition of the bodies of the sleeping saints; corruption could never enter into the incorruptible inheritance, so both must be changed. How? The mystery now revealed tells us how all will be changed, both the living and the sleeping, they shall be changed quickly—"in a moment, in

the twinkling of an eye," this when the last trump sounds for resurrection and change. At the trumpet call the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and "we," the living, shall be changed, for the dead "must" put on immortality before they can enter into God's House of holiness and light to dwell in His presence for all eternity.

When this glorious change has taken place, "the corruptible having put on incorruption and the mortal (we are in mortal bodies now, bodies subject to death) having put on immortality, then (and not before, for death is still conqueror over the sleeping and prospective victor over the living saints) shall be brought to pass the saying that is written (in Isaiah) death is swallowed up in victory; "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" shall be **the cry of the two companies who have escaped** from his present and prospective power by the coming of their Lord, for both the living and the sleeping saints' victory over mortality and the grave shall come through our Lord Jesus Christ; they were saved through His redemption by blood and they will be changed and raised in His redemption by power. So that He may be the first-born amongst many brethren who shall be His eternal companions; all the saints shall be conformed to His image, being made perfectly like Him in the moment of His coming (Rom. viii.).

6. **The wonder that all His saints shall be raptured** (I Thess. iv., I Cor. xv.). Many of them are carnal, malicious, worldly, sinful and evil speakers; some of them are drunken, unrighteous, lying and immoral; such certainly do not deserve to be caught up; but the change is a part of the salvation which is all of grace and so worthiness does not count; but they shall "be ashamed before Him at His coming" who are caught up from

scenes of evil or worldliness on earth, and life will certainly come into review at the judgment seat of Christ and all those Christians who have lived unworthy or wicked lives shall "suffer loss," the loss of His smile of approval, His words of approbation, His reward of faithfulness and His grant of authority in His kingdom. It is indeed **an evil thing bringing forth bitter fruit, for a child of God to go into the world and its ways,** but it will not prevent them being changed and caught up with the saints.

The two great Scriptures which reveal the wondrous fact of the Lord's coming for His saints (1 Thess. iv., 1 Cor. xv.) make it clear that "all" sleeping saints will be raised — "them that are Christ's, the dead in Christ," and that "all" living saints shall be changed — "we shall be changed, we which are alive and remain"; and both events, the resurrection of all the sleeping and the change of all the living will take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." How then could any be left behind to pass through tribulation and be changed later, if all must be changed in "a moment," which is equal to the twinkling of an eye; and **how could God righteously raise the "unwatchful" sleeping if He did not change at the rapture the unwatchful living?** The truth is, salvation is all of grace, the salvation of the body included, for He is coming as Saviour in grace to save our bodies and conform them to His own likeness; this He will do with all His people for He will have a completed bride to present to His Father (Eph. v.). The type is Lot the carnal; he must be taken out of Sodom ere judgment fell, and when Israel left Egypt not a child was left behind. So shall all His saints be changed and raptured to Him in the air, thus being saved from the judgments shortly to fall on this guilty Sodom of a world.

7. **The wonder of the redemption of our bodies** from mortality and corruption—"waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body—we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Rom. viii., Phil. iii.). Our salvation is a three tense one, past salvation; we were saved from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ; present salvation, we are being saved daily from the power of sin by the risen life of Christ, through His ceaseless intercession for us (Rom. v., Heb. iv. and vii.). And future salvation, we will be saved from the presence of sin by the second coming of Christ, when He shall redeem our bodies by His power. This latter tense of salvation is nearer than when we believed in Christ (Rom. xii.). **Our bodies are not yet redeemed;** there is blood in them, there are flaws on them, there is sin in them, and mortality bound up with them, but He is coming to redeem them by His power, for "we shall all be changed" when He comes to the air for His saints; our bodies were sealed as God's property by the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts at conversion; they were sealed as His "until the day of redemption" (i.e.) the day when our bodies which were purchased by His blood shall be redeemed by His power (Eph. i. and iv.).

Man is a three-part being—"spirit and soul and body" (I Thess. v.), and he in the fulness of his being must be in glory; therefore it is necessary that the body should be raised or changed, the spirit was saved through the death of Christ, the soul or life is being saved through His intercession, and the body will be saved by His power when He comes. **These three aspects of salvation are all part of one great salvation** for man's three-part being—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" — present salvation from sin's

guilt and awful doom. "He is able to save to the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession," daily salvation from sin's power in our lives and He is coming as "the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to conform our bodies to the body of His glory"; future salvation from the presence of sin in the redemption of our bodies (Acts xvi., Heb. vii., Phil. iii.). Of course all who are saved from sin's guilt will share in the other two great blessings—deliverance from its power and presence.

The future part of salvation—"now is our salvation nearer than when we believed"—is in St. Paul's case 1,900 years nearer than when he believed in the Lord Jesus as his own personal Saviour; it is not from the guilt and judgment of sin; we were saved from that at conversion; and it is not from the power of sin, we are saved from its power daily through the grace ministered to us by Christ's intercession; but it is from the presence of sin and all the ravages which it has committed in these bodies of ours, by their redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel which St. Paul preached to the Philippian jailor—"thou shalt be saved"—showed that it was the purpose of God to save the whole man, but his body is not yet saved, for though he (the spirit) has been with Christ, at home, in paradise, in Heaven (Phil. i., 2 Cor. v., Luke xxiii., Heb. ix.) for over 1,800 years, his body has been lying in an eastern grave for that same long period; it is not redeemed yet but it will be, for **Christ holds the keys of death** for this very purpose (Rev. i.). He will use them to open the graves for the redemption of His people's bodies—those of them who have fallen asleep.

We entered into the possession of many blessings at conversion—the forgiveness of all our sins, justification from every charge against us, peace from

every fear concerning our future and eternal life became ours. Our bodies were purchased by the blood of Christ (1 Cor. vi.), but they have not been redeemed yet; the proof is that the living saints are subject to the sorrows, pains, sicknesses, weaknesses, that befall men in the body, aye, even subject to death itself. None can deny that **all these things befall saints "in the body,"** so their bodies are not redeemed by power, and the bodies of the sleeping saints are in the grip of corruption and in the power of the grave; Satan has the power of death and death holds them captive (Heb. ii.), they are not redeemed by power. How precious the body is! Precious alike to the Lord Who loved it and to us who dwell in it. St. Paul called it "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. iii., R.V.). It has been humbled by the presence of sin in it, by its being used as the servant of sin, by being subject to death, and by seeing corruption and going down into death and the grave.

How great was the cost of its purchase! The precious blood of Christ was shed to purchase it from sin, death and the grave, for His joy and possession throughout eternity. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God the Spirit has made these bodies of ours His dwelling place, thus constituting them His temple (1 Cor. vi.). The body of our Lord was cared for in death and buried in a new tomb; Stephen's mangled body was tenderly lifted up and buried by devout men; the bodies of the sleeping saints shall be raised and the bodies of the living changed, so that all His saints shall be in bodies throughout eternity—in glorified bodies of flesh and bones, conformed unto His body of glory (Luke xxiv., Phil. iii.). **The three conditions of the believer** are described by St. Paul (2 Cor. v.). 1. The believer "clothed" in this present life in a body of flesh and blood. 2. The believer "unclothed or naked" in the interval between death

and resurrection, he an unclothed or naked spirit, the man without his body at home with the Lord, the body being in the grave and seeing corruption (Acts xiii.). 3. The believer "clothed upon" with his house from Heaven, the risen body, raised by Heavenly power and fitted by Heavenly wisdom for dwelling in Heavenly glory. The last condition is the most desirable; it is good to be saved and serving the Lord on earth in a clothed condition, in our body of flesh and blood; it is better to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord in Heaven as an unclothed spirit, i.e., without a body, but **it is best of all to be clothed upon with a spiritual body** of power, incorruption and glory, to be with Christ as His companions, to be like Christ as His heirs and associate rulers and to be for Christ as the joy of His heart and the servants of His hand.

The redemption of the bodies of the saints is future; He is coming from the glory, "from the gates of Heaven" to do this mighty work. **What will it be?** Our bodies shall be conformed to His image, that He the Son of God might be the first-born among many brethren, everyone of whom shall be like Him and shall be His companions through eternity. **What are we in?** We live surrounded on every side by a groaning creation, in the bondage of corruption through man's fall, and we dwell in a groaning body, which though it has the first fruits of the Spirit, even His regenerating indwelling, sealing and filling power; yet groans because of the weakness, pains, sorrows, sickness and approaching death which it has in common with the unsaved. A groaning creation and a groaning body! **What do we wait for?** We wait with all creation for the redemption of our bodies, for the time of creation's deliverance cannot come until we as the sons of God have first our bodies redeemed by power, and afterwards manifested in

glory with the coming King. When our bodies are redeemed by His power and caught up to His presence, He, the Man in the glory, shall have many other glorified men with Him.

The glory of the redeemed body is described by the Apostle (Phil. iii., 1 Cor. xv.). He comes from our city home, the city of which we are born-again citizens as Saviour, to save our bodies by His power, as at His first coming He saved ourselves by His precious blood; He will then **complete our salvation by the redemption of our bodies** by the power of His glorious name as "the **Lord Jesus Christ.**" "We shall be changed," such is the revealed mystery (1 Cor. xv.).

"**Who shall change?**" He is the revealed Saviour of our bodies. **Change what?** "The bodies of our humiliation" which have gone down into death or were going there. **Change how?** By His power which is able to subdue all things, even corruption and mortality unto Himself. **Change to?** To conformity to His body of glory, like unto His body of flesh and bones (Luke xxiv.). A spiritual body yet a true body—"a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have," a body which lives not by blood but by the Holy Spirit, a body perfectly fitted to do Heaven's service, enjoy its glories, share its worship and hymn its praises. **Change for?** The whole man—spirit and soul and body—will enter glory at the Lord's coming. Israel's two-fold redemption is a type. They were saved by the blood of the Lamb from sin's guilt and judgment in Egypt, and they were saved by the power of the Lord from Egypt's presence and power at the Red Sea.

8. **The wonder of meeting the Lord** — "We shall meet the Lord in the air. I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (1 Thess. iv., John

xiv.). We shall meet the Lord, Whom we have never seen yet; we shall then see Him for the first time. Oh, the wonder of that moment when we shall behold His face, the face that was marred more than any man's because of His great love in coming to save us by His sacrificial death on the Cross; then we shall see the marks of Calvary upon Him, in His hands and feet and side; as He looks upon us we shall see love in His eye and hear grace upon His lips as He welcomes us to His side and leads us onward to His home. How the love of our hearts in all its fulness shall go forth to Him then, as we fall at His feet in deep, deep gratitude to praise and worship Him for all His love and grace to us. The meeting at Emmaus when Jesus Himself drew near to His two disciples, representatives of His sleeping and living saints, is **a wonderful picture of what will take place** when we meet Him in the air. How He will talk with us of all our sorrows and perplexities. How He will walk with us in fellowship sweet on the golden street of Heaven, expounding to us the sacred Scriptures which foretold and recorded all His sufferings and glories. How He will bless us with His presence and words of benediction and make His abode with us in the Father's House on high, where we shall dwell together in the house of Jehovah for ever (John xiv., Psalm xiii.). And how He will make Himself known to us in all the wondrous fulness of His glorious person and ways! What wondrous blessing to meet Him for the wondrous glories of that eternal walk!

9. **The wonder of the place of our meeting with the Lord**—"the air" (I Thess. iv.). This is the secret of the Lord shared only with those who fear Him, and so it is only once mentioned in the Scriptures. We shall meet Him in the presence of our foes, for Satan is the prince of the power of the air and he and his armies have their dwelling there

(Eph. ii. and vi.). It will be **in their presence that Christ's triumph over them** in emptied graves, risen saints and glorified bodies shall be fully seen. There shall follow for us a prepared table at the marriage feast, an anointed head as the Spirit lives in our glorified bodies and we live by Him; a full cup as we begin to be merry in the full enjoyment of all the wonderful provision which our God has made for our eternal blessing and glory and an eternal dwelling, for we shall exchange the pilgrimage of earth with all its reproach, suffering and persecution for the abiding places of the Father's House with their matchless glories of foundations, walls, gates, light, river, tree, throne and street (Rev. xxi. and xxii.). The type of this wondrous meeting is Isaac meeting Rebekah (Gen. xxiv.). He left his home in his father's inheritance and she left her home in the world to meet each other in the field, at a distance from both their dwellings, and when he met her he loved her, was comforted by her, and took her to his home. So we shall enter into the full exhibition of Christ's love; we shall comfort His heart and He shall take us to His own home where we shall become His bride, the Lamb's wife, His eternal partner in glory and rule.

10. **The wonder that we shall recognise each other then** in our glorified bodies—another wonder of His coming—"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. ii.). Heaven is compared in the Holy Scriptures to a home, a feast, a city and a family. In the home they who dwell there know and converse with each other; at a feast those who are present know and talk to each other; in the city the inhabitants know one another and have fellowship together in many things and in the family the members are linked together by ties unbreakable; they know each other and have fellow-

ship in all things. Is the Heavenly home, feast, city and family to lose the chief joys of the earthly ones, knowing and conversing with one another in holy fellowship? We trow not! We shall know and talk with our friends in the Heavenly home, feast, city and family most surely.

There was recognition in the spirit world of Hades; Lazarus and Abraham could be recognised even at a great distance; there was recognition and conversation in manifestation on the Holy Mount. Moses and Elijah were known and talked with the Lord. There will be **recognition and holy fellowship in resurrection bodies**; many shall see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and many others shall sit down with them there (Luke xvi., Matt. xvii., Luke xiii.). Our Lord is the only One Who is in a glorified body. He was recognised in it, He was seen of many witnesses; men and women who knew Him to be the same Jesus Whom they had known in the days of His ministry on earth, who talked with Him, who were commanded by Him, who ate with Him and had sweet fellowship with a known Lord on many occasions (Luke, John, Acts). On one occasion when He did not desire to be known of His disciples for a season, a miracle was performed to prevent them recognising Him; this was on the road to Emmaus when He desired to lift the load of sorrow from the hearts of those two men, typical of His ministry to us in the time of His absence (Luke xxiv.). When their eyes ceased to be holden they at once recognised Him; on the first Lord's Day He called upon the Apostles to recognise Him as the Glorified Man—"a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have," and on the second Lord's Day He rebuked Thomas for his unbelief and showing him the marks of Calvary upon His hands and His feet and in His side He called upon him to examine these marks; it

was enough, even Thomas acknowledged that He was the same Jesus and falling at His feet worshipped Him as Lord and adored Him as God (John xx.).

We are to be raised or changed into bodies made like unto His body of glory. If He was known and conversed with in that body, so must we be recognised and conversed with in our glorified bodies. Heaven will be the city of God, we the citizens; it will contain the family of God of which we are members; it is the house of the Father where in the joys and fellowships of home we shall eternally dwell and it will be the companionship of God, where Christ shall be the firstborn among many brethren. Nearness to Christ and to each other will depend upon our spiritual likeness to Christ on earth. The spiritual shall be near the spiritual.

II. The wonder that "we shall be for ever with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv.). We have never yet been with the Lord, but we shall never be absent from Him after the rapture. We shall be in His retinue so that wherever He goes we shall follow Him; He will bring us to the Father's house where He will present us to His Father (John xiv., Jude). He will reward us at His judgment seat for all the life and service we have given Him down here (1 Cor. iii., 2 Cor. v.). He will set us down at the marriage feast, the marriage of the Lamb, when we shall be united to Him as His bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. xix., Eph. v.). He will come forth with us from Heaven in power and great glory for our vindication as His servants and our acknowledgment as the sons of God (2 Thess. i., Col. iii., 1 John iii.). He will reign with us over the kingdom age of earth's millennial blessedness (Rev. v.), and He will have us near Him throughout all the coming ages of eternity (Rev. xxi.). **We shall never**

weary of His presence and His fellowship for "we shall be like Him."

12. **How wonderful that He should present us to His Father with joy**—"Behold I and the children which God hath given Me; He is able to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight" (Heb. ii., Jude, Col. i.). He will enter Heaven from the air with all His ransomed ones; after His sacrificial death and His resurrection He ascended to Heaven alone (Acts i.), so the words of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews cannot refer to His ascension; they do refer to His journey from the air to His Father's House and His presentation of them to the Father. When He ascended He could say, "Behold I Who have kept Thy word and done all Thy will, Who have glorified Thy name and finished Thy work." But He did not bring the children, risen and changed with Him then; but now on the morning of the rapture **He cries as He enters the gates of pearl and walks up the golden street**, followed by the redeemed of all ages, "Behold I and the children. Thine they were and Thou gavest them to Me; they are all here whom Thou gavest Me, and not one of them is lost; all of whom Thou hast chosen and given Me, I have loved with an infinite and unchanging love. I have given Myself unto death, even the death of the Cross for their salvation; I was raised from the dead for their justification and peace, I have sought them as they wandered upon the hills of sin and the mountains of wickedness; I have saved them by grace in the power of My precious blood, and I have kept them from all their enemies, the world and the flesh and the Devil" (1 John ii.). I have raised those of them who had fallen asleep in glorified bodies, and I have changed the living ones into bodies conformed to My body of glory, and now I present them unto

You faultless, My blood having cleansed them from all stain; even I present them in the presence of Thy glory for **its light will only reveal more clearly their likeness to Myself** and I present them with exceeding joy, for now I see of the travail of My soul on Calvary; now I know the fulness of the joy which was set before Me when I endured the Cross and despised the shame, and I present them in the power of My blood holy, unblameable and unproveable in Thy sight." What a moment that will be to Him, what exceeding joy will fill His soul and what glory will adorn His brow.

13. **The wonder that He will reward us for service done in His name**, for words spoken in His praise and for lives lived to His glory at His Bema—"we labour that we may be found well pleasing unto Him, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. v., 1 Cor. iii., Matt. xxv.). Our great privileges as the children of God bring great responsibilities. We are entrusted with our Master's goods, to trade therewith in the time of His absence and at His return He will call us to answer before His judgment seat; He shall reckon with us concerning our life, how we have lived it; our body, how we have used its members; our time, how we have redeemed its passing hours in His service; our words, how we have seasoned them with the salt of His grace and truth; our deeds, how they have caused men to cry, "he has been with Jesus"; our money, how we have spent it in the extension of His Kingdom and the spread of His Gospel; and our gifts or talents, how we have glorified Him by their use.

The Bema or Judgment Seat will not be for condemnation; it will be for manifestation and reward; the ambition of St. Paul "to be found well pleasing unto Christ" should urge us on to please Him now in view of His "well done" on that day.

Who shall appear there? All the saints of God (2 Cor. i. and v.). What shall be manifested there? The full record of our lives on earth from conversion onwards; our words (Matt. xii.), our deeds (2 Cor. v.), our service (Matt. xxv.) and our work (1 Cor. 3) shall all be received before "the Bema" in the presence of the Lord Jesus and all His saints. **Who shall be manifested?** All the saints, both great and small, those who have served the Lord publicly and those who have worked in a private sphere, those who have occupied a great place in the Lord's service and those whose work has been known to only a few; those who have laboured in the homeland and those who went forth into lands of Roman and pagan darkness. None shall escape the review, the reward or the loss of His judgment; how we should order our lives in view of that day.

Why shall all the saints be manifested there? To reveal the grace of Christ in saving and keeping them, to reward all that grace has wrought and to reveal all that the flesh had done to hinder the work of God, injure other saints and dishonour the worthy name of Christ. Many would desire that the failures of the saints should not be manifested, but God did not cover the many failures of His Old Testament people; it would seemingly have been to the advantage of godliness to have done so, for the enemies of Christ have found their choicest weapons in the sins and failures of Abraham, Jacob, Job and David, failures which they never would have heard of had they not been recorded in the Word of God. He Who recorded their failures as a warning to us, will also reveal ours for His own glory in that day. **When shall they be rewarded?** The Bema shall be set shortly after the Lord's coming to the air; we shall be recompensed at "the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv.) which will take place as He descends to the air (1 Thess.

iv., 1 Cor. xv.). He has promised to bring His reward with Him when He comes (Rev. xx.) and He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, so that every man may have praise of God when He comes (1 Cor. iv.). The saints shall receive the wedding garment at "the Bema," they shall sit down in it at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix.). So the judgment seat must be set between the rapture and the revelation.

Where shall we be rewarded? In Heaven or the Father's House (John xiv.). We shall be with Christ from the Rapture for ever afterwards; we shall appear before "the Bema" in glorified bodies; the sleeping saints shall be raised in glory and the living ones have their bodies fashioned like unto His body of glory (1 Cor. xv., Phil. iii.). We shall stand there to have the life we have lived, the words we have spoken and the service we have rendered, reviewed and rewarded, or it may be to suffer loss for all (1 Cor. iii.). **How shall we be rewarded?** All the saints shall receive some reward, "then shall every man have praise of God." All shall be rewarded righteously; every man shall receive his own reward for his own labour; there are many links in the conversion of a soul, many have laboured ere it was brought to Christ; each labourer shall receive the portion of the reward which he has wrought for; it is possible that he who led the soul to Christ will receive a very small part of it indeed. We shall hear His words of approbation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," "Thou hast been faithful," "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (the joy he has as the faithful servant of God) (Matt. xxv.).

We shall see His smile of delight as He tells us that we have done our service unto Him; we shall know His joy in our reward as He recognises that

we served Him for love of His name and the glory of His kingdom, and we shall receive the places in the kingdom for which we have shown our fitness by our service and faithfulness in the time and place of His rejection—"because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities, be thou also over five cities" (Luke xix.). The twelve Apostles shall sit on twelve throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. xix.).

How wonderful that the Lord Jesus should purpose to reward us for the poor service we have done in His name! The judgment seat of Christ will be a revelation of the grace of His heart in giving His people credit for all that which they purposed to do, but were unable through infirmity or circumstances to accomplish. The foundation of our eternal house is laid in His sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection; the building on that foundation is our work, done either in the power of the Spirit for His glory or done in the power of the flesh for man's praise. We can build into it—"Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," **six different kinds of material**, three of which will abide the fire and three which will be destroyed by it. The first three materials speak of the spiritual work, gold, that which is done for the glory of God; silver, service wrought out of gratitude for the redemptive work of Christ; and precious stones, the graces of the Spirit revealing Christ in the believer's life. The work of the carnal is wood, nature's growth, hay, the food of animals; and stubble fit for the fire; all that which is done for self, for praise of man, or for the increase of a party falls under this threefold head. How much there is in Christian lives which is merely nature's growth, not the fruit of the Spirit. How many servants of Christ are out for the praise of man and trim their messages and acts to please

those to whom they speak and amongst whom they work, and how many of the Lord's people are zealous not so much for His glory as for the increase of a party, the growth of a sect, the addition of believers to their peculiar views of meeting and the separating of themselves and others from fellow saints who ought to be loved and sought out in fellowship.

The test of fire will be applied to your house, the house which your hands, your lips and your heart have built upon His work, the sixfold materials put into that house will be tested by the fire in His presence. Do not forget that **even now His eyes are on your work**; He knows all you are doing and saying and thinking and He sees through all your motives which lie behind your works and words and thoughts. How the knowledge of this should make us careful only to work and speak and think for His glory and praise. The fire will test every man's work of what sort it is. It is not quantity but quality which will tell at the Bema. That done for His glory and praise will abide the test of fire and be rewarded, but that which was wrought otherwise shall be burned up and the loss of His smile, approval and reward felt by the worker. The loss will not be of life and salvation, but of the reward, of the garments (the righteousness of the saints, Rev. xix.), and His well done. How the thought of His Bema should move every Christian to live daily in the light of the judgment seat of Christ, seeking to be found well pleasing unto the Lord in all the acts, words and thoughts of their daily lives. Do you thus live? (2 Cor. v., 1 Cor. iii.).

14. **How wonderful that Christ will be united to His Bride at the marriage of the Lamb** (Rev. xix.). The false apostate bride will first be taken out of the way, being visited by divine judgments

executed by the beast and the civil power, and then the true bride will be manifested in Heaven and united to the Lamb Who loved her and gave Himself for her (Eph. v.). The marriage feasts will commence when the door is closed by the rapture upon all those who are only professors and not possessors and confessors of Christianity, and they will continue after the marriage possibly until the revelation of the Lord and His people in glory. **Notice how all is ascribed to Him.** It is His marriage, His supper, His bride, His love, His purchase, His care, His nourishment, His cherishing, His guests, His servants, and His Kingdom and rule. He must have the first place for He is the worthy One; the Son of God and the Bride always is placed in subjection to Him, though in wondrous grace He brings her into association with Himself in kingdom rule and power.

15. **The wonder of His appearing in glory with us** (Col. iii., Rev. xix., 1 Thess. iii.). When He comes in glory to the earth which rejected and crucified Him and persecuted and murdered His saints, that will be the hour of His public vindication and ours; all who have suffered with Him shall share the glory of His vindication and reign. This twofold vindication of the Lord Jesus and His people is preliminary to and necessary for His reign over the earth with us. He and we must be cleared of the charge which man has brought against us before we could be acknowledged as fit to reign in righteousness over the earth. Shall those who have practised unrighteousness in life on earth have any part with Him in kingdom rule? The world shall see Christ and His saints associated in divine and creatorial glory. He shall come in the glory of His Father and in the glory of the holy angels.

16. **The wonder of His reign over the earth**

with His Bride (Rev. v.). Even as Adam and Eve ruled over creation, so will Christ and His saints rule over all the earth. He will associate His people who suffered with Him in the time of His rejection, with Him in the time of His earthly power and glory. "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. ii.). Christ's personal suffering time was when He was present in person upon the earth, but He has all down the ages suffered in the persecution of His people—"Why persecutest thou Me?" The saints' suffering time has been all through the age, the killing time being mostly at the hands of pagan and Papal Rome when they had the ascendancy over men.

17. **The wonder that He will have as His eternal companions** the men whom He has taken out of the world, whom He will raise and change, conforming them to His own likeness, that He, the Glorified Man, might be the first-born amongst many brethren (John xvii., Rom. viii.). How wonderful the grace of God which has made it possible for sinners of the Gentiles to be saved to be His companions and co-heirs for ever. Will you be for ever with the Lord?

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