

# THE RAPTURE AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION

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*"Is Armageddon Near?"*  
*"The Miracle Book"*  
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Paper \$1.00      Cloth \$2.00

Books obtainable from:

Gavin Hamilton,  
41 South Boulevard, Oak Park, Illinois.

Loizeaux Bros., 19 West 21st Street, New York, New York

Pickering and Inglis, 29 Ludgate Hill, London E. C. 4,  
England

Christian Press, 20 Goulburn St., Sydney, New South  
Wales, Australia

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## FOREWORD

The Bible would be left in tatters if the Second Advent of Christ were removed from the texture of Holy Scripture. His return is inevitable—

- IF our redemption is to be complete
- IF creation's groans are to be silenced
- IF Satan and his satellites are to be overthrown
- IF God's promises to the Church, Israel and the nations are to be fulfilled
- IF the rights of God are to be vindicated and established in the earth.

These truths are so correlated that they nullify the theories that death, or the advent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, or the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem under Titus in 70 A.D., fulfill the promise of the Lord's return.

From beginning to end Scripture maintains that the resurrection, translation and manifestation of the saints accompany the Second Advent. Not one of these things occurred in connection with any of the above mentioned theories.

Let no theory of the Second Advent rob you of the soul-thrilling anticipation of seeing Jesus Himself when He returns. His coming is Personal. He said to His own,

and to us, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). If that is not so clear, then let the two men out of heaven speak to you, as they spoke to the disciples on ascension day, "this same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). And if that is not enough to satisfy you then let Paul's words be heard, "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Second Advent devotees are divided into three groups. First, the Pre-millennialists believe that Christ's return will initiate the millennium. Second, Post-millennialists teach that the Church will usher in the kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel after which Christ will bring in a new heavens and a new earth. Third, A-millennialists hold that Christ may return at any moment to wind up world affairs by raising the dead, dividing the living into sheep and goat categories, then dissolving the old creation to be replaced by the new. They also spiritualize all the promises and prophecies given to Israel to nullify their literal fulfillment in the Davidic kingdom.

The Pre-millennial group offers at least three different viewpoints in regard to the time when Christ shall come. One group says He will return before Daniel's seventieth week begins; another advocates that His return is timed for the middle of Daniel's seventieth week, while the last points to the end of Daniel's seventieth week as the time of His return.

It is freely admitted that these different beliefs look

like confusion. However, they are with us and we must face them. Probably they may offer some good if they send us to the Bible in prayerful consideration of the Divine Revelation to ascertain what our God does actually say about the Second Advent. It will pay big dividends if we, like the Bereans of old, will search the Scriptures daily to see what they teach on this glorious theme.

At this moment a great controversy is being waged between the Pre and Post Tribulation Rapturists groups. For certain, both cannot be right. There is but one interpretation, though many applications, of Scripture. Then, it is good to remember that there are no contradictions in the Word. Perfect harmony obtains everywhere. How necessary then for us to show ourselves "approved unto God, workmen which needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Whatever our differences, beloved, one thing is evident. We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again, and that the general consensus of Christian thought pin-points the coming to the era in which we live. Surely, this truth should make us trim our lamps and be all-set for the home-going! I trust sincerely, that through the reading of this book, the coming of our Lord will become precious to your heart. "Maranatha."

YOURS IN THE BLESSED HOPE  
GAVIN HAMILTON

# CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	The Great Tribulation Approaching . . . . .	7
2	The Time of the Great Tribulation . . . . .	17
3	Specific Great Tribulation Scriptures . . . . .	29
4	Mid Great Tribulation Events . . . . .	42
5	The Rapture and the Great Tribulation . . . . .	55
6	The Divine Restrainer and the Great Tribulation . . . . .	68
7	Post Tribulation Rapturist's View Point . . . .	80
8	The Great Tribulation in the Book of the Revelation (Part 1) . . . . .	98
9	The Great Tribulation in the Book of the Revelation (Part 2) . . . . .	112

## *CHAPTER 1*

### **THE GREAT TRIBULATION APPROACHING**

This is crisis hour. We stand on the brink of an international collapse. The doom of the world's religious and political systems is now inevitable. In simple, easily understood language, we are face to face with the tribulation, the great one.

The gravity of the moment cannot possibly be overestimated. With two world wars behind us, wars fought to end all wars and make the world safe for democracy, we are farther from peace than ever. The future is filled with the forebodings of evil. For this reason "men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26). One American statesman says, "In the next decades either a fairer world than mankind has yet known, or a world black with tyranny and strewn with death, will come into being under the shadow of wings."

#### **FOUR ESSENTIAL FREEDOMS**

Despite all the forebodings of evil the future definitely holds for men it is still true that "hope springs eternal in the human breast." In the face of the plain, unadulterated Word of God's prediction about the world

getting worse and worse (2 Tim. 3:1-13) men delight to think something to the contrary. For instance, the late President F. D. Roosevelt said in his message to the United States Congress, "In the future days which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential freedoms." He then stated the terms of the Atlantic Charter. The four freedoms in the Atlantic Charter are—first, freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world; second, freedom for every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world; third, freedom from want—everywhere in the world; and fourth, freedom from fear—anywhere in the world.

Those who have eyes to see know that the four freedoms promised mankind have skilfully eluded us. Indeed, men have been disillusioned and plunged into the vortex of mortal despair. The problems between East and West are unprecedented and clearly indicate an inevitable clash sooner or later. It is perfectly evident that their differences cannot be resolved around the peace-table so they will have to be resolved in the air, on the sea and upon the land.

### **PEACE NOWHERE**

The international situation has the nations sitting at the base of a live volcano. The rumblings are being plainly heard and an eruption is expected which will inundate the world with burning lava. To be sure there is no peace anywhere. Throughout the Kremlin orbit, which incorporates all of Eastern Europe, the peoples are imprisoned as in one huge concentration camp. Such is the tyranny that cries rise from millions of hearts for deliverance. Throughout the Orient, and down through South East Asia, there are urgent demands for independence. The

Asiatics have suddenly awakened from their slumber of the centuries and are beginning to show their strength everywhere. A great revolution is underway. The white man's day is well-nigh over in Asia. Then the Jewish-Arab situation worsens with every passing day. One incident might bring on world-war three. It is a marvel, yea, a miracle, that peace has been maintained so long. Finally, as we gaze at the Western world, feverish preparations are in evidence everywhere pending the approach of zero hour.

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21). And, as we draw closer to the end of the age, peace shall be taken from the earth. The red horse and its rider will soon appear with the great drawn sword (Rev. 6:3-4). It is God's answer to man's rejection of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the One who made peace by the blood of His Cross (Col. 1:20). The time for "peace on earth" (Luke 2:14) awaits the return of Him who is "The Peace" (Micah 5:5) who shall cause the nations to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks (Isa. 2:4). Until He returns God says, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezek. 21; 27).

Present world conditions perfectly fit into the prophetic program. Jesus our Lord declared, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places . . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . . Upon the earth distress of

nations, with perplexity" (see Matt. 24:6, 7, 21, 22 & Luke 21:25).

### **ARMAGEDDON IS NEXT**

There is no need to speculate in connection with this utterance. It bespeaks an attempt at world-suicide. And it appears that this obtains when East meets West to settle their age-long differences and to decide, once for all, whether Communism or Democracy shall dominate the world. Another Scripture mentions this final world-war as the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

In this regard it is rather interesting to note that General Douglas MacArthur said, "We have had our last chance. The battle of Armageddon is next."

What zero hour holds for the world of mankind is vividly described by Professor Harrison Brown. He says, "If the hydrogen bomb works, technically speaking, it is easy to visualize a series of hydrogen bomb explosions carried along a North-South line at about the longitude of Prague. The radio activity produced by the explosion would be carried Eastward by the winds, destroying all life within a strip fifteen miles wide, extending from Leningrad to Odessa, and 3000 miles deep, extending from Prague to the Ural mountains.

"The United States could be attacked in similar manner. Hydrogen bomb explosions could be set off on a North-South line in the Pacific approximately 1000 miles off California in about a day, and New York in four or five days, killing all life as it traversed the continent."

### **UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION**

Armageddon is just around the corner. It is later than we think. War is absolutely inevitable for Armageddon

is a war not only between East and West but also against both our God and His Christ. As far as war against our God and His Christ is concerned the die has already been cast. Universal departure from God has been in evidence for a considerable time now but the inauguration of the United Nations Organization brought it out into the open. At San Francisco, California, United States of America, where the U.N.O. was born in September 1945, the Communistic nations delivered the Democracies what amounted to an ultimatum. It was made crystal clear that the Communist bloc would not stand for any public recognition of God in prayer. To acknowledge God in this way would seriously jeopardize the formation of the U.N.O. Instead of the Democracies taking their stand against this blatant denial of God they unconditionally surrendered. They evidently considered fellowship with GOG of more importance than fellowship with GOD; and chose rather to acknowledge COMMUNISM than CHRISTIANITY. From the inaugural meeting of the U.N.O. until this present writing there has never been a public acknowledgement of our God in prayer. It is quite evident that the first time GOD is acknowledged by the Democracies will be the last meeting of the U.N.O.

### **UNIVERSAL REBELLION**

We have travelled a long way towards the realization of the Psalmist's prediction about all the nations of the world. He declares, "Why do the heathen (Gentile nations) rage, and the people (Jews) imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their

cords from us' " (Psa. 2:1-3). While this prophecy had a partial fulfilment at Calvary (Acts 4:25-26) it looks forward to the end of the age for its fullest realization.

This is universal rebellion against God. It is the moment when the world's cup of iniquity is full. Jews and Gentiles alike have collaborated together to overthrow God and His authority. Such an attitude can only invite quick, retributive judgment from God. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure" (Ps. 2:4-5). This is the time when God shall deal with all nations to give them the due reward of their deeds. He will cast them into the furnace of fire, heated seven times, as the Seals are broken, the Trumpet judgments sounded, and the Vials of wrath are poured out (see Rev. 6 to 16).

### **POST-MILLENNIAL TEACHING**

Post-Millennialists have little, if any, comfort or encouragement from this prophetic outlook. They teach that all mankind shall be converted by the preaching of the Gospel and the world made ready for Christ to take over at His Second Advent. But such teaching is definitely unscriptural, untenable, and 100% untrue to facts. Instead of the Church converting the world and bringing it to the feet of Jesus to worship and adore Him it can be seen moving swiftly towards apostasy. But, then, that is the Scriptural picture of the world at the close of this present age of grace.

Daniel beholds the great Gentile empires being smitten by the Son of Man at His Second Advent (Dan. 2:35). John pictures the nations at Armageddon gathered for the

great supper of God Almighty (Rev. 19:17). Paul also describes them as being given over by God to the strong delusion so that they should believe the lie, that they might be damned (2 Thess. 2:11-12). Jesus Himself asks "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). And, in His discourse by the sea-side, He speaks of 75% of the ministry not bearing fruit (Matt. 13:18-23); of a great harvest of tares at the end of the age (vs. 24-30); of the fowls of the air, or evil ecclesiasties, finding shelter in the branches of the great tree, Christendom (vs. 31-32); of the fine meal being leavened, or the Gospel being corrupted (v. 33); and, of the bad fish caught with the good fish in the net, or unsaved mixed with the saved, which will be cast away (vs. 47-50).

Let us not approach the work of God with mistaken ideas as to the final results of our efforts. To work, wait, and hope for the conversion of the world is futile. Sheer despair and frustration will grip us. Rather, let us preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and wait upon God to save those who will complete His New Testament Church. This is the moment when God is calling out from amongst Jews and Gentiles a people for His Son; not that of the conversion of all mankind.

Eventually the nations shall be brought under the benign sway of Jesus our Lord. That day, however, is beyond the great tribulation and shall be ushered in by the return in Person of earth's rightful Sovereign. Then "all nations shall serve Him" (Psa. 72:11).

### **GREAT TRIBULATION LIMITED**

The great tribulation shall be limited to 3 1/2 years. It shall cover the last half of Daniel's seventieth week,

that seven year covenant period which shall be entered into by the Roman prince and the ungodly Jewish nation (Dan. 9:27). Daniel and John speak of the duration as 1260 days (Rev. 12:6); 42 months (Rev. 13:5); or as a time, one year; times, two years; and half a time, or six months (Rev. 12:14. Dan. 12:7).

This time-limit is set because of the elect. "Except those days should be shortened," says Jesus, "there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:22). The elect are Jewish believers. They are not the saints of the present Church-age. Elsewhere they are called the "saints of the Most High"—a term which positively identifies them with Israel (Dan. 7:22). And they are very precious in the eyes of our God. He tempers their sufferings; indeed, He notes each day they suffer. As with us, so with them: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

### **DISINTEGRATION OF UNIVERSE**

Another reason for this time-limit to the great tribulation is that God will not permit man, under the direct control of Satan, to commit universal suicide. That would render the purposes of God without effect. He has purposed to reconcile the heavens and the earth under the headship of Christ and to give Him "the heathen, or nations, for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psa. 2:8).

Then, too, our God will limit this fearful era lest man put forth his hand to disintegrate the universe. Certainly the great cities of our world shall be under fire and

be reduced to smouldering heaps but the right to disintegrate the universe belongs to God. "The heavens and the earth," declares Peter, "which are now, by the same word, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men . . . The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:7, 10).

Despite the fact that we are threatened with suffering on an unprecedented scale, and we hear constantly that our universe is in danger of being dissolved by the release of atomic weapons, we may rest assured that God shall permit man to go so far and no farther. True believers need entertain no fear. How wonderful to be able to say "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" (Psa. 46:1-2).

One thing is sure. The world's religious and political systems are hastening to their doom. "Man's Day," marked by rebellion against our God, is about to terminate. It will end disastrously under the fiery judgments of God in the tribulation era. Then shall come "The Day of the Lord" when Jesus shall assume world sovereignty.

The New Testament Church will accompany Christ when He returns to reign. "Know ye not," says Paul, "that ye shall judge the world" (1 Cor. 6:2). And John, in his vision of glorified saints in heaven, heard them sing, "we

shall reign on, or more correctly over, the earth” (Rev. 5:10). So, we anticipate with deepest and keenest delight the moment when the trumpet shall sound. We shall then be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, in preparation for the public display when “He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day” (2 Thess. 1:10).

## *CHAPTER II*

### **THE TIME OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

The approaching world cataclysm, known as the great tribulation, is timed to begin in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. Practically all prophecy finds its fulfillment during this seven year period. In fact, it can be said without fear of controversy, that, all dates set in relation to the future have the great tribulation in view. Let us quote at length this celebrated prophecy of Daniel so as to familiarize our souls anew and afresh with the complete text.

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision, and to anoint the most holy.

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

"And after three-score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanc-

tuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even unto the consummation, and that determined shall be poured out upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:24-27).

### **GOD'S TIME PIECE**

All prophecy relates to Israel. This is of infinite importance, for the student of prophecy, to understand. To lose the way here is to wander everywhere throughout Scripture without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Keep clearly in mind that the Church is not in prophecy. Indeed, she is never seen in relation to national or international events, nor is she linked, in any way, with dates. Israel alone is God's time-piece. He chose her to be His executor in all His dealings with men and nations.

You require no more proof of the above statement than the words of Gabriel to Daniel: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city" (Ch. 9:24). Daniel's people are the JEWS; the holy city is JERUSALEM. There is no mention of the Church, for she had not yet been revealed. To be Scripturally correct the first mention of the Church awaited the incarnation of Christ when He made it known to Peter (Matt. 16:13-18); while the full revelation of the mystery awaited the conversion of Saul (Acts 9, Eph. 3).

### **THE SEVENTY WEEKS**

The seventy weeks here is a definite datum of time. The word translated 'weeks' means a seven of things, spe-

cifically units of time; a week of years, hence 490 years. History supports this view. You will observe that the entire period is divided into three divisions. The first covers a period of 49 years—the time taken to rebuild Jerusalem after the edict from Artaxerxes to Nehemiah. The second embraces 434 years which followed the building of the city until Jesus the Messiah was cut off by crucifixion. The third seven years is unquestionably in the future and appertains to the end of the age.

Sir Robert Anderson in his book "The Coming Prince" advances the evidence that the edict from Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was given on March 14, 445 B.C. and that Messiah the Prince entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, April 6, A.D. 32. This made a total of 173,880 days, or exactly 483 years. A few days later Jesus was crucified, or "cut off, but not for Himself," or, as one translation renders it, "cut off, and had nothing." He was rejected as Israel's King so was denied His crown and His earthly kingdom.

This calculation assures us that the seven year period remaining is future.

### **IRRECONCILABLE DEDUCTIONS**

Some saints do not accept the above calculations, or the belief that the seven years are future. They believe the entire prophecy has been literally fulfilled. Briefly, they believe that Jesus was baptized at the end of the 483 years, that  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years later He was crucified which brought the sacrifice and oblation to an end, and that  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years later the 490 years period ended with the martyrdom of Stephen.

These deductions are irreconcilable with the plain

teaching of this prophecy. For instance, Jesus the Messiah was "cut off" by crucifixion, not baptism. His baptism was His identification with the godly remnant in Israel; His crucifixion was ungodly Israel's answer to His claim to Messiahship.

To advocate that Messiah by His death took away the sacrifice and oblation is to run contrary to the Word and history which assure us that these continued on the temple altar until TITUS destroyed the city and temple in A.D. 70. Moreover, Messiah was not to be "cut off" at the end of 486½ years, but at the end of the 483 year period.

Again, when Messiah was crucified there was no "over-spreading of abominations." This term refers to the Man of Sin making himself known as GOD in the Jerusalem temple in the middle of the seventieth week. It shall be the blasphemy of the ages. History, as well as Scripture, is silent as to anything comparable to such an act taking place at the time Jesus died.

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week" is taken to mean that Messiah by His death has made a covenant with many. How He ever made a covenant for one week, or seven years, with any person, even the many that believed in His Name (John 1:12-13), or the Church, or even Israel, is difficult to understand. Indeed, it is so utterly ridiculous and untenable, we do best to pass over it in silence.

How could He make a covenant for seven years if He died 3½ years later? The Bible teaches everywhere that the New Covenant was made at Calvary and that it is an everlasting covenant. And that covenant is between God the Father and God the Son on behalf of Israel's

eternal blessing (Jer. 31:31-34). This seven year covenant is made by the Roman Prince with Israel.

To believe that the 490 years ended with the martyrdom of Stephen with history absolutely silent about an era of righteousness following, an era promised in these words: "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision, and to anoint the most holy," is to make void the whole promise and purpose of God.

Finally, we must remember that the DESOLATER spoken of here is none other than the Assyrian, the king of the north. How he fulfilled his part of this prophecy at the time Christ died, or at Stephen's martyrdom, would be difficult to establish. The historic king of the north had long since passed into history; the future king of the north awaits the time of the end, the time when Messiah shall return to earth.

### **THE COMING PRINCE**

For a moment let us consider the seventieth week as set forth by the prophet.

The one who makes the covenant with many, or Israel, is "The prince that shall come." He comes from the people that destroyed the city and the sanctuary. That immediately identifies him with the Roman Empire which is destined to reappear upon the earth. As historical Rome rose out of revolution and anarchy, so will prophetic Rome arise in days ahead. In our day there have been attempts to revive the empire, particularly by Mussolini, but these attempts were premature. It can hardly be gainsaid that the presence of Communistic Russia, with her menacing atti-

tude, necessitates a strong bulwark of nations in the western world. When this revived empire is formed with ten kings and kingdoms united there shall be one supreme dictator, called here "the prince that shall come," and elsewhere in Daniel "the Little horn" (Ch. 7:8). John describes him as the "beast . . . out of the sea" (Rev. 13:1).

The many refer to Israel. Never let us forget that for 2500 years this people had no status of nationhood. Its national status was forfeited when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded the land about 606 B.C. and was not regained until as late as May 15, 1948 A.D. At once you will see how impossible it was for the Messiah to make a covenant with a nation that did not exist as such. Israel was under Rome in Messiah's time. Now that she is a nation in her own land, with Jerusalem as capital, the prophecy can, and will, be fulfilled in days ahead.

### **SIGNATURES SEAL COVENANT**

This seven year covenant becomes a necessity because of the menacing attitude of the king of the north. He looks jealously upon the land and plans an invasion. Well Israel knows his evil intentions and how utterly helpless she will be in the face of his formidable forces. Daniel describes him as being able to strike like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships (Ch. 11:40). Joel's description is even more striking and terrifying. He speaks of the king of the north coming with a "great people and a strong; there hath not been any the like, neither shall there be any more after it, even to the years of many generations" (Ch. 2:2). It is Russia's confederated hosts, and all the Asiatic nations, plus many in the Arab world, in a final attempt to seize Palestine and conquer the western

world. You can well imagine why Israel turns to the Roman Empire for help. And the help is forthcoming. The pact, or covenant, is signed for a seven year period. This is Rome's pledge to Israel to stand by her should the Northern Powers launch an unprovoked attack against her. When the signatures are put on paper, thus sealing the covenant, then shall Daniel's seventieth week begin.

### **THE OLIVET DISCOURSE**

The Lord Jesus had this time in mind when He delivered His Olivet Discourse. His disciples will know and understand, in the coming day, the implicate of the covenant. When they see the covenant signed they will be alerted to the fact that "the time of the end," or, "the end of the age," is upon them. Three and one-half years from this time the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, shall enter the Temple and show Himself as God. This, says Jesus, referring to Daniel's prophecy, is "the abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15). His disciples shall read the warning and immediately take their departure to a place of safety (see Matt. 24:15-22). The great tribulation will break in all its terrifying fury just then.

It is given to the prophet Isaiah the significance of the covenant as God evaluates it. "Wherefore hear the Word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, 'we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.' Therefore thus saith the Lord God: 'behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth

shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it" (Ch. 28:14-18).

### **A JEALOUS GOD**

The terrible tragedy of this covenant is that Israel turns from God to seek protection under the wings of an apostate empire. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 18:5). Of that man, or nation for that matter, God says, "He shall be like a heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited" (v. 6). What plainer words are needed to assure us that our God is a jealous God! He everlastingly seeks our blessing and is ever veering us away from evil. He knows that it is in our highest interest, and for our greatest good, to put our trust in Him. He wants us for Himself. And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

### **APOSTATE ISRAEL**

We are not surprised that Israel turns from God to the Roman Empire. Even at this moment she is back in the land in unbelief. She will have nothing to do with Jesus our Lord. To Israel He is still an imposter, One under divine judgment, for proclaiming Himself Messiah. So, in rank unbelief, the nation will crown Antichrist their king in accordance with Jesus' statement: "I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall

come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). They will put their confidence in him, and in the Roman Empire, to save them out of the impending trouble. But all will be of no avail. The overflowing scourge will pass through the land and cause unprecedented suffering and destruction. It is God's way of answering their unbelief.

The picture is presented to us in these graphic words: "The king of the south (Egypt) shall push at him (the Antichrist); and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown" (Dan. 11:40-41).

From here on the great tribulation will be underway. It is described as "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to the same time" (Dan. 12:1). It shall be a dreadful, horrifying, night-mare experience for Israel. The land shall be overrun and devastated. Jerusalem shall be surrounded and experience its severest sufferings in history. The nation shall be between the upper and nether millstones of God's righteous fury. Its terrible, God dishonoring sin of crucifying Jesus and then recognizing the Antichrist as king shall be brought forcibly to mind.

### **PETRA—THE HIDING PLACE**

Throughout this entire period, when the tribulation is raging, not only in Palestine but throughout the world, the godly remnant in Israel shall be preserved by their God. He shall prepare a place for them and feed them for 1260 days (Rev. 12:6). Some saints have the idea that the rock City, Petra, in the land of Edom, shall be the hid-

ing place. It is noteworthy in this regard that Edom escapes the fury of the invading forces from the north. "These shall escape out of his hand, even Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" (Dan. 11:41). Edom is in Trans-Jordan. This may mean that in the Tribulation era the Arab nations around Jerusalem will be neutral and thus become a haven of shelter for the remnant. But judgment will be meted out to them at the appearing in glory of the Messiah. Isaiah visualizes this moment thus: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save" (Ch. 63:1). It could mean that while Messiah inflicts judgment upon Edom He comes to take His blood bought saints back to the city Jerusalem to be displayed in final victory. Another part of this godly remnant shall be active in proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom in other parts of the world which shall result in the conversion of many Gentiles (see Matt. 24:15, Rev. 7:9-17).

### **ALL ISRAEL SAVED**

Then cometh the end of the tribulation by the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ in great power and glory with all His holy angels and His glorified saints (2 Thess. 1:7-10). "So shall all Israel be saved; as it is written, "there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. 11:26-27). What a moment for unbelieving Israel! Many in that nation will not have bowed to the Antichrist, yet will not have accepted Christ as the Messiah. Immediately Jesus is revealed the blindness will be taken away and they shall acknowledge,

with great bitterness of heart, their awful sin of unbelief. They shall look upon Him whom they pierced and see the place where the blood flowed that filled the fountain for their cleansing (see Zech. 12:9 thru 13:6).

What a moment for Israel when, cleansed by the blood of Jesus their Messiah, they are put into the place of supreme power! "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go up and say, 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, 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. And He shall judge amongst the nations, and shall rebuke many people: 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" (Isa. 2:2-4).

And what a moment for the world at large when Messiah reigns with His people Israel in fellowship with Himself! "Now," says Paul, "if the fall of them (Israel) be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? . . . For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead." (Rom. 11:12, 15). In that coming day, so near at hand, "His Name shall endure for ever: His Name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed" (Psa. 72:17).

Our God has put on record the time of the great tribulation, and the signs which will precede and accompany it, for the guidance of His people in that day. To them, not to us, He has given "times and seasons" (Acts 1:7). "The Jews require a sign," is God's verdict (1 Cor. 1:22). Our case is entirely different. With our heavenly calling we wait to be raptured to glory. Once this takes place the way will be clear for all the signs to materialize. So let us wait for our Lord's return.

## *CHAPTER III*

### **SPECIFIC GREAT TRIBULATION SCRIPTURES**

Looking casually across the pages of Holy Writ there may be observed five outstanding portions which relate to the great tribulation. This is aside from the hundreds of other prophetic portions, and manifold types, which depict the same period. Two of the five portions are in the Old Testament and three in the New. These throw light upon the question as to whether the Church or Israel, or both, will pass through and experience the horrors of this unprecedented world crisis. It will serve a good purpose to quote in full some of the Scriptures concerned.

#### **JACOB'S TROUBLE FORESEEN**

Let us begin with Jeremiah's prophecy. "These are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and Judah. For thus saith the Lord: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts,

that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore, fear thou not, O My servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel; for lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid" (Ch. 30:3-10).

You will observe at once that the entire background is Jewish and relates to the land of Palestine. Indeed, the whole prophecy anticipates the time when Jehovah will bring the Jews back to their own land. That such a movement has been underway for more than half a century is undeniable. Phenomenal things have happened since the first Zionist Congress met in Switzerland in 1897 to decide that Israel should be populated within a comparatively short time with a preponderating body of mainly self-supporting Jews, who would develop into a homogenous people, with high Jewish ideals, and ultimately become a self-governing commonwealth. The Balfour declaration expedited this resolution beyond the fondest dreams of the Zionists. It read as follows: "His Majesty's government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights or political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

It is perfectly true that Great Britain, the Mandatory Power, embarked upon a policy of appeasement in the

middle twenties and whittled down the immigration of Jews to their own land because of the strife between the Jews and the Arabs, but it is likewise true that some 400,000 Jews were returned to Palestine between 1918 and 1948.

### **JEWISH INDEPENDENCE**

In 1939 World War II broke upon the world. During this war Herr Hitler, the German Fuhrer, slaughtered six million Jews. It was the most inhumane act ever perpetrated against any one people since time began. The severity of the persecution, however, tended to uproot Jews throughout Europe and to create fervent desires in their hearts to return to the land of their fathers. By May 1948 so many had returned that they were given their independence. For the first time in 2500 years they became a nation again. And since that time almost one million Jews have returned to Palestine. This is the greatest migration of any people in world history.

We believe that this migration is the beginning of even greater things. Our God has decreed, "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for My hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks" (Jer. 16:16). The Lord is determined to "bring them again into their own land that I gave unto their fathers." So we are yet to witness greater, and more far-reaching, schemes set in motion to accelerate the fulfillment of God's purpose.

At this moment the strip of land occupied by Israel is much too small to contain the numbers desirous of immigrating to their land. To allow for this more room is required. Unless relations better themselves between the

Jews and the Arabs the extension of Israel's boundaries may incur serious difficulties and even precipitate world war three. The nations around are literally terrified at the probability of hostilities in the Near East. The situation, to speak mildly, is very grave and highly explosive. However, regardless as to what takes place now, we are assured that the Jews will continue to return to their land to make good the prophetic word.

### **UNPRECEDENTED SORROW**

This prophecy also brings into relief that unprecedented sorrow awaits the Jews that return. Listen to the question: "Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?" Then comes the answer: "Alas! for that day is great; so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble."

Jacob's trouble is the great tribulation. "There is none like it" says Jeremiah, words used by both Daniel and Jesus to describe the occasion. At long last the perverseness of Jacob, the schemer, has caught up with him. He schemed his way despite the breaking of the law, the rejection of the prophets, the crucifixion of the Messiah, and his refusal to accept the message of grace in the Gospel. He still schemes to build cities, to till the land, and to enlarge his boundaries. Jehovah-Jesus means nothing to him. But these things will catch up with him. They will bring repercussions and retribution. His darkest night will come when Jehovah-Jesus wrestles with him till the break of day. At that time He will lame Jacob for ever. No more scheming after this experience. He will cling to his God and have his name changed to Israel, for as a prince he

will have power with God and men (Gen. 32:24-32).

This is Israel's night of weeping. The ungodly mass of the nation will have crowned the Antichrist king and have done obeisance to him. What an eye-opener when the floods from the north overflow the land and their king is unable to deliver them! Every cherished hope of theirs will vanish and nothing but total extinction will face them. Then shall they cry unto God "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man, whom Thou madest strong for Thyself. . . . Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved:" (Psa. 80:17-19). Immediately the night shall pass with the dawning of a new morning without clouds when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings.

No comment is necessary to indicate the extreme view that must be adopted to put the New Testament Church into this prophecy. Without controversy Israel and Palestine, not the Church, occupy the divine interest here. It is Jacob's trouble, not the church's trouble. It is Jews that are being brought back to Palestine not the members of the Church being brought to heaven. It is Israel's Messiah who returns to earth to reign and whose blessing will include the Gentile nations.

### **MICHAEL CHAMPIONS ISRAEL**

The second Old Testament prophecy which deals specifically with the great tribulation is mentioned by Daniel. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince that standeth up for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time, and at that time thy

people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:1-3).

Michael is always mentioned in connection with Israel. He is the archangel with whom the Devil contended for the body of Moses (Jude 9). John envisioned him leading the holy angels in the final war in the heavenlies at the moment of the Dragon's expulsion (Rev. 12:7-9). Now Daniel tells us that he is the "great prince that standeth up for the children of thy people."

### WAR IN HEAVEN

It is self-apparent that both Daniel and the Apocalyptic Seer have the same event in mind when describing Michael's determined stand for Israel. The Revelator lifts the veil to show us behind the scenes when he says: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the Dragon: and the Dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven" (Rev. 12:7-9).

The affairs of earth are ordered in the heavens. Indeed, events on earth are the reflection to events that have already been determined in the heavens. Here the great struggle between Michael and the Dragon results in the Dragon's overthrow and the eventual, eternal deliverance of Israel. God's purpose for His people must, and will, stand. Satan will be permitted of God to afflict Israel but the affliction will serve to bring her forth as pure gold.

The great tribulation will be the great purifier. The dross, that is the ungodly, apostate part of the nation that has whole-heartedly committed itself to the Antichrist, shall be taken away; while the pure gold, the godly remnant that withstood all the onslaughts of Satan, shall be retained. These are those whose names are written in the book.

### **NATIONAL RESURRECTION OF ISRAEL**

The purpose of God for the national resurrection of Israel becomes operative after Jesus the Messiah returns. It is subsequent to the great tribulation. The resurrection, referred to by Daniel 'Many of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life; and some to shame and everlasting contempt' is moral not physical. It is the same occasion spoken of by Ezekiel when he beholds the bones come together by the preaching of the Word and sees life imparted by the blowing of the wind or Spirit (ch. 37).

There shall be multitudes of believing Jews throughout the world during the great tribulation. These shall bear an eloquent testimony to the saving grace of God. When their Messiah returns to set up His earthly kingdom these dear ones shall be recalled to their own land. This is their national resurrection. All shall be together, both Judah and Ephraim, never more to be separated. "Thus saith the Lord: 'Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one King shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither

shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. . . . Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 37:21-26).

Jesus speaks of this same regathering: "Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days . . . He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:29, 31). Then shall come the awards for soul winning to those faithful Jewish believers. "They shall shine as the brightness of the firmament . . . and as the stars for ever and ever."

Nowhere in Daniel's prophecy is there a hint about the Church. The entire context of this portion has to do with the battle of Armageddon when the land shall be deluged with suffering and the nation is in jeopardy of extinction. At that time Messiah appears with deliverance for Israel (see ch. 11:36 to 12:1-3). The Church is conspicuous by its absence.

### **WORLD WIDE SUICIDE ATTEMPTED**

Our first Scripture in the New Testament is found in the Olivet Discourse. Jesus is speaking to His Jewish brethren about the end-time. He tells them that at the time of His coming to earth in great power and glory there shall be "great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:21-22).

To paraphrase this prophecy is to say that during this

period of world travail there shall be an attempt at world suicide. And this is perfectly consistent with both Old and New Testament prophecies. Isaiah says that there shall be "few men left" (Ch. 24:6). The Book of the Revelation leaves us in no doubt as to the wholesale slaughter of men in the tribulation era even to one fourth of the world population under the fourth seal and one third at the sounding of the sixth trumpet (ch. 6:8; 9:15, 18).

Divine intervention, however, is promised. This is a definite reference to the Second Advent of Christ. It shall bring man's folly to an end and thus preserve a remnant of the human family to begin the kingdom on earth. This intervention is because of the "elect." And the "elect" are the Jewish saints of that era. They refer to those that flee Jerusalem when the Antichrist sets himself up as God—the abomination of desolation—in the temple, and those who are brought back to Palestine for rehabilitation during kingdom days.

No one who rightly divides the Word of truth would infer that the Church is seen in this part of the Olivet Discourse. Elsewhere we have pointed out the difference between this discourse and the teaching in the Upper Room (John 14). Suffice it to say that while the men are the same they are looked upon in different relationships. In Matthew they are Jewish believers animated with earthly hopes: in John they are rather "brethren" and "sons" anticipating the realization of the heavenly hope.

### **KEPT FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

The final two statements made about the great tribulation are found in the Book of the Revelation. In this Book the prophetic future is outlined from Chapter four

to the end. The first chapter deals with the vision of the glorified Christ walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. Chapters two and three give the history of the professing Church from century one until Christ returns. Chapter four introduces the time beyond the removal of the Church from earth to glory. It is in this section there are given the most graphic description of the conditions in the world, and the judgments that shall be poured out upon men, in the great tribulation period.

The first statement is given in the Church section. To the saints in Philadelphia the Lord says, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

### **CHURCH HISTORY IN REVIEW**

To understand the implication of this promise it is necessary to know that in the seven churches we have Church history in review. Each Church represents a particular period from Pentecost until Christ returns. For instance, Ephesus presents the "First-love Church" of century one: Smyrna postulates the "Martyr Church" of centuries two and three: Pergamos pictures the "Married Church" of century four: Thyatira predicates the "Political Church" of century six: Sardis points to the "Reformation Church" of century sixteen: Philadelphia portrays the "Missionary Church" of century nineteen: while Laodicea prophesies the "Self-sufficient Church" of century twenty.

These periods are not put into water-tight compartments, for the conditions carry through, more or less, from first to last. The Church has never really returned to her

first-love; she has never been quite exempt from suffering; her unholy alliance with the world still obtains; she still wields political power in the midst of the nations as seen in the Roman Catholic system; there is still that remnant that protests the hierarchy of Rome and its heresies; missionary enterprise is still being carried on by the Church; and we know that the professing Church is lukewarm and about to be spued out of the mouth of the Lord.

With these things in mind you can readily perceive how the promise to the saints in Philadelphia extends to the saints at the time when the great tribulation is within sight.

#### **TRANSLATION BEFORE TRIBULATION**

“This is a specific declaration, that as a result of waiting for Him, the Church should be kept from that grievous affliction of the world; and not only from it, but from “the hour” when it comes upon it. This cannot be but by her translation before its affliction. If she is on earth, she would evidently be in ‘the hour’ even if she could be sheltered from the suffering—a thing scarcely possible for the Church while on earth, and the prevalence of the judgment, which is declared to be universal. But the promise is distinctly that the Church shall be kept from ‘the hour’ of its occurrence, which is far more, and involves evidently her removal beforehand.”

The word here is plain. It admits of no misunderstanding. The saints are not to be kept ‘*in*’ the hour of trial, but ‘*from*’ the hour of trial. Nothing but translation can accomplish this and fulfill the promise. And the translation is graphically described by Paul when he says that at the Lord’s coming “the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up

together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

This is the only portion in the Bible where the Church is seen linked with the great tribulation and it is promised preservation from the very hour.

### **PRESERVATION PROMISED SAVED GENTILES**

The second statement made in regard to the great tribulation by the Apocalyptic Seer is in his seventh chapter. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.' And all the angels stood round about the Throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the Throne on their faces and worshipped God, saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? and I said unto him, 'Sir, thou knowest.' And he said to me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God. . . ." (Rev. 7:9-17).

This chapter seven witnesses two companies; the 144,000 sealed Israelites, and the innumerable host of saved Gentiles. The first are sealed before the great tribulation begins to insure them against death; the other is seen at

the close of the great tribulation as it moves into the kingdom glorious on earth. Both companies will be associated with the King in His world-wide kingdom. A millennial scene is pictured at the close of this chapter, one that depicts blessing for both sealed and saved. Without question the 144,000 are Jewish witnesses throughout the tribulation period and the host of saved Gentiles are the trophies of grace as the direct outcome of their preaching. Multitudes that have never heard the Gospel story from the Church, shall hear it after the rapture, and these are described here.

The fact that two companies, Jews and Gentiles, are seen suggests strongly the absence of the Church. The Church dispensation is completely finished. The rapture has taken place before this vision is realized. That is visualized in John's translation in chapter four. From that time henceforth the Book of the Revelation is occupied with matters which relate to Isreal particularly.

In the five portions deliberated upon, three refer to Israel with Jacob's trouble, Michael's intervention, and the elect's preservation in view; one refers to the Church where promise of being kept from the hour of trial is given which means translation beforehand; while the last refers to the saved Gentiles who will pass through the trial to be with the King in His earthly millennial reign.

## *CHAPTER IV*

### **MID GREAT TRIBULATION EVENTS**

The prophetic Scriptures focus attention on the middle of Daniel's seventieth week as crisis hour in world history. The darkness will be almost impenetrable. This is the moment towards which all past, contemporaneous and future history moves. Such is the precision in timing that all nations will then play their final act in the world drama.

#### **SATAN CAST DOWN TO EARTH**

Satan's expulsion from the heavenlies is first on the divine agenda for this crisis hour. The scene is pictured in graphic, dramatic style in these words: "There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the Dragon; and the Dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great Dragon was cast out, that Old Serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:7-9).

No language could be plainer. This war is in the future and takes place in the heavenlies. It offsets the popular idea that Satan is in Hell, or, at best, on the earth. Contrary to human opinion his base of operations is in the heavenlies. Ever since his fall he has occupied this sphere.

Few people realize that Satan began his career as "Lucifer, Son of the Morning," a "Lightbearer," or "The Daystar," and, as the "Anointed and Covering Cherub" acted as universal premier (Isa. 14:12, Ezek. 28:14). "Thou wast perfect in all thy ways," says God, "till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezek. 28:15). And this iniquity, traced to pride (1 Tim. 3:7), is tellingly told by the Divine Narrator thus: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God," said Satan, "I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the height of the clouds: I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14). His allegiance to God is hereby renounced.

### **SATAN'S ACCESS TO GOD**

The probability exists that the original creation sustained a major cataclysm at that time. Otherwise, the statement "the earth was without form and void," is difficult to explain (Gen. 1:2). Be that as it may we know that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). This implies his control, within the limits of the permissive will of God, of the atmospheric heavens. From here he had access to God to question Job's integrity (Job 1:6-12), and to secure authority to deceive Ahab the king (1 Kings 22:15-23). Gabriel makes clear that he was intercepted by wicked powers as he sped from God with the answer to Daniel's prayer (Dan. 10:1-13). It is in the heavenlies we ourselves wrestle against "the rulers of the darkness of this age, against wicked spirits" (Eph. 6:12). And here is where the final conflict between Michael and Satan shall be fought (Rev. 12:7-9).

The fact that Satan is also called "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) brings into relief the

mystery of the age-long conflict between good and evil, righteousness and sin, light and darkness, God and Satan. Satan has set himself, with resolute determination, to overthrow God's purpose for the Seed of the woman, Christ (Gen. 3:15), and the seed of God, the redeemed.

### **SATAN CANNOT WIN**

Early in world history he sought to so corrupt the human race by having the sons of God, fallen angels, marry the daughters of men, thus producing a human monstrosity, that the incarnation of Christ from a virgin woman might be impossible (Gen. 6:1-4). After the flood he assiduously attacked the 'Seed Royal' especially when wicked Queen Athaliah slew all the royal household save the seven month old Joash (2 Kings 11:1-3). He then planned the extermination of all Jews through Haman, the race from which Messiah must be born (Esther 3:12, 13). Undaunted by his failures he tried to catch Jesus in His words (Luke 11:53-54), and even tried to kill Him before His God-appointed time (Matt. 2:1-16, Luke 4:28-30, John 8:59). The Scripture we are considering now tells us that the "Man-child was caught up to God, and to His Throne" (Rev. 12:5). Satan cannot win.

The principal work before Satan is to murder the "Mother" of the Man-child (see Rev. 12:15). He knows to successfully overcome her is to make void the purposes of God for the earth, for, all God's purposes are linked with her. To understand this truth is to know why Satan incited Herr Hitler to murder 6 million Jews, and why Russia and the Arabs are so insistent on exterminating Israel. Yet, the Jews have seen Hitler buried and his Germany divided, probably not to be reunited until Christ

returns; and they will see Russia, and her cohorts, buried in the largest communal grave ever dug on the shores of the Mediterranean (Ezek. 38 & 39). How God must laugh at Satan's futile attempts to defeat Him!

### **ISRAEL THE MOTHER**

Satan will make an all out attack against Israel the Mother, and all humanity, in the end-time. Ere long, he will be cast out of the heavens to the earth, and will come down, having great wrath, because he knows his time is limited to 3 1/2 years (Rev. 12:10-12). The world shall then have its last blood-bath. The preparations afoot today indicate that we might easily be approaching this zero hour. Before it strikes, however, the saints of God belonging to the true Church, shall be raptured into the realm of eternal peace and love.

The "Mother" is Israel, not the Church. No amount of spiritualizing can fit the Church into the picture. Nowhere in Scripture is she described as "Mother." Paul sets her forth as a "chaste virgin" (2 Cor. 11:2) and a "Bride" (Eph. 5:25-27) while John speaks of her as "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife" (Rev. 19:7-9, 21:9-11). Only Israel answers to this symbol; only Israel is connected with the 1260 days of the great tribulation; and only Israel will be manifested "clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1-2). It is the great tribulation travail which will eventuate in the birth of the Man-child spiritually as she has had the unspeakable privilege of giving birth to Him physically (Rom. 9:1-5).

### **DEVIL-POSSESSED ROMAN EMPIRE**

The second major event scheduled for the middle of

Daniel's seventieth week is the emergence from the bottomless pit of Satan's God-state, the Roman empire (Rev. 17:8). It shall be totally dominated by Satan under one supreme dictator. Both the empire and Emperor, to all intents and purposes, are one. So we read that it is "like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion" (Rev. 13:2). This beast-like empire "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 17:8) and its dictator shall receive power from Satan to continue forty and two months (Rev. 13:5). "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time (one year), times (two years), and the dividing of time (six months)" (Dan. 7:25).

Grim days are ahead of so-called Christian Europe. "Bad as Pagan Rome was," says W. Kelly, "it would be an exaggeration to affirm that it ever had come out of the bottomless pit. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the saints at Rome, he particularly specified the then duty of absolute subjection on the part of the Christians to the powers then existing. Of course, the application to the Roman empire would be immediate in the mind of any Christian at Rome. No one doubted the character of the Emperor; there never had been a worse. Yet God took this opportunity to lay it on the Christians as their duty to the worldly authority outside and over them. It was generally ruled that the worldly powers were ordained of God. But it is a very different thing to emerge from the abyss. . . . For a short time (1260 days) Satan will bring forth an empire suited to his purposes; as it will work on human self-will and the unbelief which denies God and His truth. It will

be not only apostate but openly claiming to be God, and excluding the true God."

The revival of this empire is, without controversy, the reversal of all history. As one writer says, "What mighty empire has existed, then become extinct, and finally reappeared, with higher pretensions and peculiar power, only to perish with unexampled horrors? Satan will be the spring of its final rise and strange energy; he, and not God in any way whatever, will give it its character; as also he gives it his power and his throne and great authority."

### **SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH**

Daniel informs us that this empire, with its diabolical dictator, "shall wear out the saints of the Most High" (Ch. 7:25). The expression "wear out" implies a concentrated effort to exterminate those saints. John affirms this prediction, saying, "It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:7).

The saints before us are Jewish. The fact that Daniel writes freely about them would automatically indicate it. He knew nothing about Church-saints, or the dispensation of the grace of God. And that is true of any Old Testament writer. Indeed, you will look in vain anywhere in Scripture to find the members of the Body of Christ called "the saints of the Most High." The very title "Most High" sets our God in relation to Israel (Gen. 14:18, 19, 22). The prophet makes clear that the persecution will continue "until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan. 7:22). The persecuted saints will possess the kingdom. Since this is the earthly kingdom of the Son of Man, the kingdom promised

to Israel, it is but reasonable, as well as in keeping with the whole tenor of prophecy, that Israel should possess it. It is the time when the inheritance promised the Patriarchs will be given to their seed (Gen. 13:14-17, 15:18-21, 17:8, 19, 21, Lev. 26:42, Ezek. 37:13-14, Amos 9:13-15).

### **THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION**

Third on the prophetic calendar for the middle of Daniel's seventieth week is the manifestation of the Anti-christ as God. Paul expressly states that the Day of the Lord "shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Here is the APOSTATE of the apostacy: his act of making himself God the blasphemy of the ages. Both Daniel and Christ refer to it as "the abomination of desolation" (see Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15).

This presumption of the Anti-christ precipitates the great tribulation and provides warning for the Jewish saints. They will hurriedly take their departure to the mountains of Israel where safety is promised them (see Matt. 24:16-22, Rev. 12:6).

The blasphemous act of the Anti-christ shall give the signal for the sacrifice and the oblation to cease (Dan. 9:27). All temple worship will be stopped in favor of worshipping the newly acclaimed God. It will be Israel's unpardonable sin, as indeed Christendom's.

### **ANOTHER AGE DAWNED**

To carefully study the statements of both Daniel and

Christ will be to discover that they have not the Church of God, but the Jewish people, before them. Elsewhere, Daniel's seventy weeks is fully treated, so, suffice it to say, that God makes it plain to him that He is speaking about his people and the city Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24). Then Jesus, in His Olivet discourse, speaks of the land of Judea, the holy place of the Jerusalem temple, the Sabbath day, and the regathering of the elect, or Jewish saints, to Palestine (Matt. 24:15-31).

Since "the abomination of desolation" is reserved for the tribulation era at the time the Jews are occupying the Divine interest we cannot but conclude that another age has dawned. And for another age to dawn means the removal of the Church by rapture beforehand. Really, it is not our business to be occupied with the Anti-christ's manifestation as God, or the cessation of sacrifices on the temple altar. "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20-21). It is ours to "wait for His Son from heaven" to translate us to be with Himself so that Israel might be reinstated to the divine favor when the prophecies can be fulfilled.

One word more about the passage in Thessalonians where the Anti-christ declares himself God. Evidently, Christendom will receive and worship him. "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a (or the) lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11, 12). This is the last end of peoples that have basked in the light of the Gospel for centuries. But we see it coming. The spirit of Anti-christ, that denies the Father and the Son, is abroad in our midst. It is this spirit that is back of the Modernist preacher and all modernism, and is prepar-

ing the way for the personal Anti-christ. Once the Divine Restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is taken out of the way, then "that WICKED shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming" (v. 8).

### **OVERTHROW OF BABYLON—THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS**

Fourth on the divine agenda as a middle of the week event is the overthrow of "Babylon, the Mother of Harlots" (Rev. 17:5). Babylon is the mother church, so called, but really the apostate church. The reason given for her final overthrow is logical. The Roman empire, at this time, will become the "God-state," while the Anti-christ will be the "God-man." It is but reasonable that this unholy church be removed. What lends irony to her total collapse is that the empire she puts in power is the executor of the judgment. Like Haman, she prepares the gallows to hang herself (Esther 7:9-10). Our God causes the wrath of man to praise Him.

Two full chapters are devoted to Babylon's judgment (Rev. 17 & 18). The "Vatican" answers to the description given here. She is the "Mother of Harlots," the harlots being the apostates in Protestantism.

For centuries the Vatican reigned over much of Europe but in 1849 her political authority was taken from her. Then came Mussolini, the Italian dictator, and restored her temporal power in 1929. She then became a nation within a nation. Now she is seeking to secure authority in all countries, especially the English speaking ones, to regain her hold on them, and if at all possible, to unite them under her control. As long as the true Church is in the world this will not happen. Her presence is the deter-

rent to this evil design. But soon after the rapture her aims will be realized in the unification of the ten-kingdom empire with its supreme dictator.

### **THE MYSTERY CHURCH**

The word "mystery" linked with this false church is significant. She holds a "golden cup" in her hand, symbol of that which is divine, but it is "full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (Rev. 17:4). "She is the mother of harlots, also (and with still deeper guilt) of the abominations of the earth. This means the idolatries of the earth, real shameless idolatry too—here it is the positive worship of the creature besides the Creator, yea, and notoriously more than Him. For who knows the horrors of Mariolatry? Babylon is the parent of the prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth. It is not therefore, a question of virtual idols suitable to ensnare God's children, but that of open image worship which is of the earth itself, or rather of him who is the prince of the power of the air, thorough going palpable idolatry. What is the crucifix and the Mass? What the honor paid to dead men's bones, nail-parings, and old clothes? Relics indeed!"

What but the judgment of God could be the lot of such an idolatrous system! She was given space to repent but repented not (Rev. 2:21, 22). Therefore shall she be cast into the great tribulation where the wrath of God will be hers.

The striking contrast to this unchaste woman is the Bride of Christ. She is brought into the picture immediately after Babylon's doom is announced. Look at her! "His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that

she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," for the fine linen is not the righteousness given her in grace (2 Cor. 5:21), but a garment of her own weaving. She provided, by the Spirit of God, all the threads for it during her sojourn on earth. It represents her devotion to Christ in the time of His absence. And this is what the eye of her Bridegroom saw in the midst of Babylon's apostacy. O for a true devotion to Jesus our Lord made manifest in a life of purity!

### **THE GREAT TRIBULATION BREAKS**

Fifth on the divine agenda for the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel is the breaking forth of all the forces of evil on earth in the final international struggle between East and West to culminate in the battle of Armageddon.

The king of the north shall come on the land of Palestine in blitzkrieg style. "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown" (Dan. 11:40-41). Joel refers to this invasion in these grim words, "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near: let them come up. . . . Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down, for the press is full, the fats overflow: for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:9-14).

### **EAST VERSUS WEST**

Then shall come the hordes from the East. The river Euphrates shall be miraculously dried up to facilitate and expedite matters so that the kings of the East might join the king of the north already in the Holy Land. Says John, "loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. . . . And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand . . ." (Rev. 9:14-16). "The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared" (Rev. 16:12). Both Palestine and the Roman world will feel the impact of this gigantic army of 200 millions.

It is at this crucial moment, when Israel shall be in jeopardy of total annihilation, that the Western Powers shall rush to her assistance. This act will demonstrate the solidarity and complete agreement between the Roman and Palestinian governments. When the opposing forces meet, to settle once for all whether the East or the West will rule the world, the issue will be the battle of Armageddon. Just then, after the nations have fought for 3 1/2 years, the time element for the great tribulation, shall Jesus return in great power and glory to bring all the nations to their knees in deepest humiliation and begin His universal, one-thousand year reign.

Up to this present hour, and we are in the latter half of the twentieth century, not one of the above mentioned events to take place in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week has taken place. Yet, we are keenly aware of their imminence. Once the Lord removes His Church from the world and brings back Israel to Himself then the program

will go forward to a speedy realization. Meantime, we must abandon ourselves completely to Him and speed with the knowledge of salvation to the peoples that sit in darkness and in the shadow of eternal death. They must not perish for the lack of the knowledge we possess. So, let us arise and finish our unfinished task.

## *CHAPTER V*

### **THE RAPTURE AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

The ultimate in the divine purpose is the total subjugation of all created intelligencies to Christ (Phil. 2:10, 11), and the reconciliation of all things under Him (Col. 1:20). This period is rightly termed the "dispensation of the fulness of times" (Eph. 1:10, 11), and anticipates the day when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and His Christ (Rev. 11:15).

A vast range of truth will be realized then—and only then. Zechariah asserts that Messiah's feet shall touch the mount of Olives and that the mountain shall cleave in two (Ch. 14:4). Many prophets advocate that when Messiah comes out of Zion He will effect deliverance and forgiveness for Israel (see Rom. 11:25, 26). Isaiah assures that Jerusalem will be the metropolis of the world (Ch. 2 & 4). Jeremiah advances the truth that with Israel the head of the nations the Gentiles shall be subservient to her (Ch. 30:3-10). John alerts us to the fact that for 1000 years Satan, and his satellites, shall be consigned to the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-3). Paul attests that creation shall be delivered from its bondage and groaning when the Creator Christ appears with the sons of God (Rom. 8:20-22). And David particularly amplifies the word of

all Psalmists and Prophets that in the day of Messiah's kingdom all nations shall call Him blessed (Psa. 72).

## SECOND ADVENT

These things demand, for their realization, the Second Advent of Christ. As every prophetic utterance in regard to His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension were made good literally at His first coming in grace and humiliation, so those hundreds of unfulfilled prophecies shall find their answer when He comes back the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:28).

This era of blessedness, however, will be preceded by a nightmare of world-wide tribulation. A horror of great darkness shall fall upon the people. The furnace of affliction shall be heated seven times over. It is God's reply to man's rebellion against Him in the murder of His Son. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). The Man whom men put to death will eventually break the seals which will introduce the trumpet and vial judgments (Rev. 5-16).

A very casual reading of the Old Testament prophecies, with fuller details given in Revelation 7, will show that throughout this period of unexampled sorrow a remnant nation (144,000), and an innumerable host of Gentiles, shall be saved. These shall pass out of the night of tribulation darkness into the millennial blessedness and meridian brightness of the Sun of Righteousness to bask in His favor (Mal. 4:2). To them, as to Adam, shall the word be given, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

**RAPTURE—A NEW TESTAMENT TRUTH**

In all these prophecies, relating to the Second Advent, the rapture of the saints to heaven is conspicuous by its absence. It is not only not revealed but there is not the shadow of a suggestion of it anywhere. Well might we ask the question, "WHY?" And, the answer is simple, incontrovertible. The rapture is a New Testament truth vitally related to Christianity and the Church. It should occasion us no surprise, therefore, when we do not find it in the Old Testament or in the Synoptic Gospels. It is met on the pages of inspiration, for the first time, in our Lord's upper-room discourse. There He said, "If I go away, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

Theologians have long since declared that Matthew is for the Jews; Mark is for the Romans, Luke is for the Greeks, and John is for the Church. Then, too, we know that Matthew is Messianic and prophetic; Mark is practical and realistic; Luke is historical and catholic; while John is spiritual and Christian.

**OLIVET AND UPPER ROOM DISCOURSES**

That should help to clarify the truth before us. You will note that the Synoptic Gospels record the Olivet Discourse, each man according to his view-point, but John omits it entirely. As another says, "The fourth Evangelist gives us instead the Lord's conversation with His own in the guest chamber in Jerusalem. In chapters 13 & 14 of John's Gospel the Lord is speaking on lines wholly different from the Olivet Discourse, although the listeners were the same. On the Mount He brought to a conclusion His

earthly ministry as Israel's Messiah, and He addressed the disciples as a believing remnant of Jews animated by earthly hopes (compare Matt. 24:3).

In the guest chamber He addressed the disciples as men who would soon be "brethren" (John 20:17) and filled with heavenly hopes. Hence the familiar words of John 14:2 were a divine revelation, and must be distinguished from everything that had been made before. He spoke of going up to the Father's house, not only to receive glory for Himself, but also to prepare a place for His disciples, and He promised to come again, and receive them to Himself that they might be His companions for ever."

The rapture then, as set forth in our Lord's promise, is something altogether different from anything the disciples had ever heard or known. That is why they were so completely surprised. Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" (John 14:5). In one way it was a reversal of their long cherished, national hopes. As the two disciples expressed later, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21). They looked for the kingdom on earth under Messiah and anticipated sharing it with Him. Already He had said, "Ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). Now, He speaks about leaving them for the Father's house and of His return to take them there.

### **THE LORD'S PROMISE AND PRAYER**

Whatever else this promise may be construed to mean it is crystal clear the disciples believed they were to be

with Christ in the Father's house above *before* the kingdom was established on earth. His personal return would serve this initial purpose. The promise, in no way, presents the earthly kingdom.

During the evening this promise was given, the Lord offered His great intercessory prayer for His disciples and for us. He said, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24). Again, there is no suggestion of any earthly kingdom here. His chief concern is that they might be with Him in His glory on high.

### **THE CHURCH AND THE RAPTURE**

We believe not only in the inspiration of the Scriptures, but in their moral order. There is a reason why God overruled, in His providence, the putting together of the Books in both Testaments. So the Acts of the Apostles, or better still, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, and the Pauline Epistles, which deal with the Church, follow the Gospels. The sequence, or development, of truth, is perfectly natural. Already we have observed the revelation of the rapture in John 14:2, 3; now this truth is fully developed as the Church comes into prominence.

Let it be understood, once for all, that the CHURCH and the RAPTURE are truths exclusive to the New Testament.

The Church is one of the many mysteries revealed in the New Testament. Paul says it was not made known to the sons of men in the old dispensation but was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. 3:1-6). The

Church is something altogether new in the ways of God with men, something hitherto God's secret.

But the Church is more than God's secret; she is His masterpiece. And, in the development of this fact, Paul shows that creation was brought in by Christ to be the stage on which to enact the divine drama "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:9-10).

These things interest us in the light of the first mention of the Church made by Christ at Ceasarea Philippi. Peter had confessed Him as "The Christ, the Son of the Living God," whereupon He said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:13-18). Seemingly, the Father had rent the veil of Christ's humanity to show Peter the glory of Deity, and now Christ rends the veil of the Father's purpose to show Peter the divine secret about the Church.

Obviously Jesus speaks prophetically. He did not say, "I have been building My Church" as if He had been doing it down through the Old Testament centuries: or "I am building My Church," as if He were engaged building it at that moment: but, "I will build My Church," as something He would do in days ahead.

Pentecost is the answer to His prophecy. That was the birthday of the Church (Acts 2). It was the realization of the Feast of Pentecost (Lev. 23). On this occasion all believers were baptized in the power of the Holy Spirit, into the one Body (1 Cor. 12:13). And this mysterious and miraculous formation of the Body of Christ is conveyed in the words of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus when He

said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts 9:1-6). There was now a living, eternal union between Christ and Christians; the Head and the members of the one Body. It was not a matter of being subjects in the kingdom but a closer relationship as members of Him who was glorified above. So "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

### **CRISIS HOUR FOR ISRAEL**

So far so good. Because of this new thing, the Church, in the world, it should not be thought incredible but inevitable that God should break off relations with Israel. In other words God must sever relationship with Israel when He assumes relationship with the Church.

Until the Church, God recognized Israel as His people. "Out of Egypt have I called My son" (Hos. 11:1). Again, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). And yet again, "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6). According to the divine revelation God chose Israel that she might be the mother of everything divine. She was a highly favored people. Through her He gave the Law, the Holy Scriptures of Truth, and His own precious Son, the Messiah (Rom. 9:1-5).

Her responsibility, however, was equally great. History records one failure after another until full apostacy is reached. She hastened after other gods and gave no heed to the divine admonitions through His prophets. Then when "crisis hour" came at Messiah's manifestation she set herself against Him. "He came unto His own, and

His own received Him not" (John 1:10). Says Paul, "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). But He was despised and rejected (Isa. 53:3). Jehovah's lament is that "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider" (Isa. 1:3). Indeed, from the moment He made His entrance into human life and history He was given the outside place, even the stable, and as He entered upon His public ministry it became more and more evident that Israel's rejection would eventuate in His crucifixion. What else could He do but go to the Gentiles.

And this He did. His action with His mother and brethren cannot be interpreted otherwise. They desired to see Him, but He said, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, 'Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother'" (Matt. 12:46-50). This was a fitting prelude to His leaving the house, symbolic of Israel, and sitting by the sea-side, figure of the Gentiles, and there introducing the seven parables of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 13:1). He was showing what would transpire in the world during His rejection by Israel and His return in great power and glory to Israel. It is this present dispensation of grace.

### **THE CHURCH—THE DIVINE INTEREST**

Jesus still has His mind occupied with leaving Israel when He tells the "Sign-Seekers" that He will give them the sign of the Prophet Jonah. That was solemn. As Jonah

left Israel to go to the Gentile Ninevites, so He would leave them, by way of His death and resurrection, and go to the Gentile nations (see Matt. 16:1-4). And out of this prophecy sprung the great truth concerning the Church which Jesus began to unfold to His disciples (see vs. 13-18).

Israel was fading out of the picture. The Church was about to occupy the divine interest. The break actually came when the nation officially crucified the Messiah. Thereupon the way was made clear for the Church to become God's new witness on earth. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost gave effect to the eternal purpose.

Meantime, all the divine interest is centered in the Church. She is spoken of as "The House of God," "The Temple of God," "The Church of God," "The Body," "The Bride of Christ," and "That Great City, The Holy Jerusalem" (1 Tim. 3:15, 16; 1 Cor. 3:16; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 21:9-10). To her has been committed the ministry of reconciliation so that she may bear the glad tidings to the nations (2 Cor. 5:18-21). Moreover, the glorified Head has enriched her with various gifts "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4:7-13).

One thing remains to be considered in connection with the Church and that is her hope. He would be blind indeed that did not see that her hope is heavenly. She looks for the Saviour from heaven to take her there (Phil. 3:20, 21). Paul distinctly says that she will meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Jesus says He will take her to the Father's house above (John 14:3).

This is altogether different from His coming to the Mount of Olives and setting up His kingdom on earth.

That was Israel's hope, yet to be realized. But it will be held in abeyance till the Church is glorified.

### **ISRAEL—TODAY AND TOMORROW**

That this must be so let us consider Israel's relation to God throughout the Church age. Without controversy her designation is "Lo-Ammi," or, "Not My people" (Hos. 1:9). "Ichabod," the glory is departed, is written over her head (1 Sam. 4:21). As Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). Paul declares that "blindness in part" hath happened unto her while she is cut off from the good Olive tree (Rom. 11:13-25). He states, too, that "until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament" (2 Cor. 3:14). Israel is out of fellowship with God today.

This condition, however, is not to continue for ever. God hath not cast away His people, Israel. Far be the thought. He plans to bring her back to Himself when the "fullness of the Gentiles" be come in (Rom. 11:25). Once He completes His purpose for the Church He will establish relations with Israel again.

### **WHEN WILL GOD RESTORE ISRAEL?**

When will God restore Israel to Himself? Is it at the beginning of the tribulation era or at Messiah's appearing to set up His kingdom? This question answered satisfactorily will solve the age-long problem as to whether the Church or Israel will be prominent in the Great Tribulation. Should the Bible emphatically state that Israel takes the dominant place at that time, then, of necessity the Church must be raptured ahead of it,

To have both the Church and Israel on earth in the tribulation era would create impossible situations. Even

God, in His infinite wisdom, would not, and does not, provide a solution to such a complicated matter. If both were here then no believer would know whether he were linked with Israel or with the Church. He would not know whether he were destined for heaven or to wait for the kingdom on earth.

Such a situation, with these insolvable complications, is never contemplated in Scripture. Our God has but "ONE WITNESS" in the world at any time. He had Israel until the Church; He will have Israel after the Church. When, then, does Israel become His witness?

Any unbiased reader of the prophetic Word must be aware that during the tribulation period God brings into prominence the 144,000 sealed Jews (Rev. 7:4-8), and the "Mother of the Man-Child" (Rev. 12:1-5). These are two figures of speech used to identify spiritual Israel. Since these figures shall be dealt with in another chapter a brief statement must suffice here.

The 144,000 are saved Jews. This eliminates all doubt as to their identity. It is gross ignorance, and total disregard for the plainly written Word of God, for the Seventh Day Adventists, or Jehovah's Witnesses, or the A-Millennialists to claim to be this company. This company is sealed prior to the great tribulation to insure its preservation throughout the world-wide holocaust. The great tribulation has not come upon us yet so how could any claim, made by the above-mentioned groups, be valid?

The Mother and the Man-Child are presented to bring into the open the hatred of the great red Dragon. He mustered his might against the Man-Child at Bethlehem and finally at Calvary but He was caught up to God and to His throne (Rev. 12:1-5). The Mother's life will be

in jeopardy, and a last desperate attempt to take it will be made, not in the Church age, but in the time of the great tribulation. That is when she plays her part in the world drama. But she will escape and stand by the side of the Man-Child when He rules all nations with a rod of iron.

### **ISRAEL—GOD'S WITNESS**

In view of this coming restoration of Israel—that is the Jews that will trust Jesus after the rapture of the Church—in the tribulation era it should be remembered that when God was in relationship with her in the past, He recognized Palestine as His land (Deut. 32:8), Jerusalem as His capital (Psa. 87), the temple as His dwelling place (2 Chron. 5:13), the Levitical Priesthood as His order (Num. 17), animal sacrifices upon the altar (Lev. 1-5), the Old Covenant as His bond (Ex. 20), and the Sabbath as His day of rest (Ex. 20:8-11).

All these things have ceased during the Church age. From the day of Pentecost until the rapture God recognizes the Church as His people (1 Pet. 2:9, 10), Jerusalem above as His capital (Gal. 4:26, Heb. 12:22-24), the Church as His dwelling place (1 Cor. 3:16), all saints as His priests (1 Pet. 2:5, Heb. 13:15, 16), the one offering of Christ at Calvary (Heb. 10:1-12), the New Covenant as His bond (Heb. 8:6), and the Lord's Day as His day of rest (John 20:19, Acts 2:1, 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:1, 2, Rev. 1:9).

Now, if you look carefully at the prophetic Scriptures, which deal with the great tribulation period, you will discover that God recognizes once more Jerusalem as His capital (Rev. 11:1-2), the temple, yet to be built, as His dwelling place (2 Thess. 2:4, Rev. 11:1, 2), animal

sacrifices offered on the temple altar (Dan. 9:27), and the Sabbath as the day of rest (Matt. 24:20).

These things assure us, without question, that Israel, not the Church, is GOD'S WITNESS on earth in great tribulation times. They insist that the Church is raptured: that Israel is again in relationship with God. As in the past when God removed Israel to bring in the Church, so when Christ comes into the air He will remove the Church to bring in Israel.

We expectantly await the trumpet sound to call us from earth to glory. With the Jews now a nation in their own land, and the stage being set for the great tribulation era to begin, we may anticipate our rapture to heaven at any moment. Certainly our days on earth are few. Whatever time is left, let it be occupied in sweet, devoted service to Him whose face we soon shall see and whose image we shall bear for ever.

## *CHAPTER VI*

### **THE DIVINE RESTRAINER AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

One of the hall-marks of inspiration is fulfilled prophecy. Our God speaks of things which are not as though they were. The future is as well known to Him as the past is to us. To His own people He said, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure' " (Isa. 46:9-10).

Peter speaks of "the sure word of prophecy" as a "light in a dark, or squalid, place" (2 Pet. 1:19). It is given to show us the way God is about to take in His dealings with men and nations. So we may appreciate that the prophetic word is a priceless heritage, something that enriches us as we apprehend what God is about to do.

#### **SECOND ADVENT IN THESSALONIANS**

God's plans for the future in relation to the Church are clearly outlined in the Thessalonian Epistles. He brings before us the Second Advent in its many different relationships. For instance in chapter one it is linked with our conversion (vv. 9-10); in chapter two it relates itself to our coronation at the Judgment Seat of Christ (vv. 19-

20); in chapter three it is set forth in connection with our sanctification (vv. 11-13); in chapter four it is given for our consolation in time of bereavement (vv. 13-18); and in chapter five it is associated with our preservation in this world (v. 23). The Second Epistle, chapter one presents it as the time when the world shall have its retribution for its rejection of Christ (vv. 8-10); chapter two shows it as the time when the Man of Sin shall be destroyed (vv. 8-10); and chapter three insists that we have our hearts directed into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ (v. 5).

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The work of the Holy Spirit is clearly revealed in Scripture. He is in the world to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). He regenerates the believer by the impartation of the divine nature (John 3:5, 6; 1:12, 13), and seals us as God's property (Eph. 1:13). He becomes the earnest of the inheritance, which is our claim upon God (Eph. 1:14). He indwells our mortal body (1 Cor. 6:19). He is the instrument used in baptizing us into the One Body so that we are vitally and eternally united with Christ, the Head (1 Cor. 12:12-13). And, He is seen as the Divine Restrainer, the One who restrains evil meantime, so that the Man of Sin cannot appear in the world until God's time comes (2 Thess. 2:1-8).

Since we have referred to a great controversial scripture, it will be best to quote it at length. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that day of Christ

is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for **that** day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of **ini-**quity doth already work; only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that **WICKED** be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. 2:1-8).

At once this prophetic Scripture admits four easily defined and closely related truths. They can be set in chronological sequence so that the workings of the Holy Spirit be seen throughout this present Church age and in the time immediately preceding the return of Christ to take issue with the Man of Sin.

### **DIVINE PEACE FORFEITED**

The first thing seen here is the working of Satan in the way of deception. He had informed the Thessalonians that they were in the Day of the Lord, that the tribulation they were experiencing was the great trial that was to come upon all the earth according to the Old Testament prophecies and the teaching of Jesus their Lord. They were completely unprepared for this, and, being so contrary to what Paul had taught them, divine peace was forfeited. The enemy had taken undue advantage over them. He had succeeded in filling their minds with questions, doubts and fears.

But Paul comes to their rescue. He beseeches them not to be "shaken in mind, or be troubled." It is God's way of telling them that this new teaching was foreign to the divine plan. He knew that the great tribulation, and its accompanying Day of the Lord, would be nineteen hundred years distant. He also knew that they would have no connection with them so their fear was unfounded.

This letter is for us today. Many voices tell us that we are in the great tribulation now. They point to the rising tide of persecution against the Christians in many countries. They refer to the prisons, concentration camps, and altars of martyrdom raised behind the Iron, Bamboo and Purple curtains. And, it is all too true that we are seeing persecution gather momentum against the Christians. But this is not the great tribulation; nor is it the Day of the Lord. Those who say so are misinformed and they misguide the saints. They throw them into the vortex of fear. But, like the Thessalonians, we need not fear.

Let it be said that the saints that have to go into this unprecedented trial will be perfectly prepared by God for it. They will understand their lot and gladly accept it. God never supplies grace where it is not needed: He never fails to supply it where it is needed. It is not needed by us to endure the great tribulation trial; it will be needed by others that have to experience it.

### **THE DAY OF THE LORD**

The second truth before us is the instruction given about the Day of the Lord. It should be noted that the Authorized Version has the "Day of Christ," but the proper translation is the "Day of the Lord" (v. 2). There is a vast difference between these days. Every place the Day of Christ is mentioned, and that is only in the Pauline

Epistles which in itself is suggestive of its vital link with the Church, it is connected with divine blessing, or some phase of reward that shall be given saints at the Second Advent of Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16). It is an expression which speaks of Christ's coming for us to take us into a sphere of infinite blessing. Nowhere does it hint at judgment.

The Day of the Lord, however, is altogether different. It is the time when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to initiate His world-wide kingdom. For 1000 years He will hold sway over the sons of men. God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:32). The day shall be characterized by blessing and judgment; blessing for those that obey His mandate, judgment for those that oppose His rule.

"Isaiah 2:10-22 is the first of Scripture which specifically mentions that day; and it graphically describes the complete overthrow of all that which man has boasted himself, that Jehovah may be exalted. Terror will fill men's minds when this takes place. Twice it is stated that Jehovah will arise to "shake terribly the earth." All human schemes and accomplishments will tumble to pieces to be patched up no more. The cataclysms of two world wars, appalling though they were, are as nothing compared with the utter collapse of everything of man's at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Happy are they that have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken."

Paul makes it clear that this day could not come "except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed." The Day of the Lord, therefore, is deter-

mined by the inexorable law of the Man of Sin's appearance in the world first. Christ's return to earth follows the manifestation of Anti-christ. A very definite time element is here established.

### **THE FALLING AWAY**

What is this "falling away"? Evidently the word itself, "apostasia," has been questioned as to its true meaning. Opinions differ. Some incline to believe it means a total denial of the faith once for all delivered to the saints; or a departure from divine truth. Others think it means a "taking away" of the saints at the rapture; or a departure of saints from this world to meet the Lord in the air.

Whichever viewpoint is correct it must be admitted that nowhere else in the Thessalonian Epistles does Paul deal with the departure from the truth. His whole approach has been towards the Second Advent in its relation to rapturing the saints to heaven in preparation for their manifestation with Him when He is revealed to the world. Then, he beseeches the saints "By the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him" not to be disturbed about reports as to the Day of the Lord being at hand, or present. It might well be that here he assures them of their rapture before the Man of Sin makes his debut as God. If so, then the difficulty about the Church escaping the great tribulation is forever solved.

It must be admitted, however, that Paul deals with the great Apostate, the Man of Sin, and might have in mind the apostasy which he heads up. We know that Christendom will overthrow our God and His Christ. The mystery of iniquity which has been at work since Paul's day will eventuate in a total abandon of all divine truth.

Could it be that the double truth is presented in this word "Apostasia"? Why this veil over such a simple, straightforward presentation of truth?

### THE RESTRAINER

The third thing presented here is the RESTRAINER who restrains the Man of Sin from making his appearance in the world. "Ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time . . . only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way" (vv. 6-7). Some theologians have thought that Michael the Archangel, the Devil, the Roman Empire, or the Holy Spirit might be the Restraîner mentioned. While each has some merit yet it does seem that the first three fail to satisfy honest enquiry. For instance, Michael is seen only in connection with Israel, never the Church, in Scripture. The Devil unquestionably empowers the Man of Sin, but at no time does he hinder evil. The Roman Empire has not been in existence for centuries, nor will she reappear until after the Church is raptured, so she restrains nothing meantime.

The Restraîner must be a sovereign person with power to withhold and withdraw, one who is present in the world throughout the Church age. The Spirit of God alone answers to this dual description. He is sovereign and has been in the midst of His people since the day of Pentecost.

### "WHAT" AND "HE"

Some saints hesitate to identify the Holy Spirit with the neuter gender employed in verse six of our chapter. "Ye know *what* withholdeth . . ." But this should not stumble anyone for the neuter gender is used in Romans 8:16 & 26 thus: "The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit . . ." and, "The Spirit *itself* maketh intercession for

us . . .” The seventh verse of our chapter employs the personal pronoun for the Restrainer, “only *He* who now letteth, will let, until *He* be taken out of the way.” Apparently the reference in verse six is general, but in verse seven particular. Verse six reveals what is being done, or what is being used for the purpose stated; whereas verse seven shows the Person who is doing it as now present.

The “what” in verse six, unnamed by the Apostle, is probably government. It is still true that “the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). While this is so there is at least a measure of check on human will. But very soon Romans 13:1 will cease to be true. The supreme power in Christendom will receive his throne and authority direct from the Dragon (Rev. 13:1-4). Then the way will be open for evil to show itself in its most extreme form. The restraint will be removed.

The “He” in verse seven, seen as the Holy Spirit, dwells in the Church of God corporately. He also has His abode in the body of every saint. While in the world He guards the interests of Christ. He will not suffer the fearful impiety, manifest in the Man of Sin while He is here. But when the Church is raptured He will quit the scene, and man shall be left to the will of his own heart, and to the Devil.

### **THE SALT OF THE EARTH**

One writer remarks, “God’s saints are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13), and little as the world realizes or appreciates it, the fact remains that it is the presence of God’s people here which prevents the mystery of iniquity coming to a head and preserves mankind from an outpouring of God’s wrath. Ten righteous men in Sodom would have stayed the Divine judgment, but only one could be found.

The salt character of God's people is due to the Holy Spirit's indwelling within and working through them. Let His gracious manifestations be resisted and despised, and they will be withdrawn, then the measure of man's iniquity will be quickly filled up. These two restraining facts are brought together in 2 Thess. 2. Before our Lord shall return to the earth itself, accompanied by the saints, (previously translated) there shall come one who is denominated "the Man of Sin," "The Son of Perdition." This superman shall oppose God and blasphemously exalt himself above all that has reference to God, so that he shall sit in God's temple (at Jerusalem) claiming to be God, and demanding divine homage. His coming will be after the working of Satan, 'with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,' but though this 'mystery of iniquity' was at work in the days of the Apostles, two things have prevented it coming to full fruition. The "Man of Sin" cannot be revealed until 'his time' because of 'that withholdeth,' and 'He who now letteth (hindereth), will let, until He be taken out of the way' (2 Thess. 2:6, 7).

### **HOLY SPIRIT AND CHURCH REMOVED**

Undoubtedly, the neuter pronoun here has reference to the Church of God, and the masculine gender to the Holy Spirit Himself. While they are upon earth Satan's work is held in check: but let them—the Holy Spirit and the Church—be removed, let the salt be taken away and the One who gives it pungency, and the rest of the reigning and preserving influences are gone, and then nothing remains to stay corruption or hinder the outworking of God's plans.

Yet another writer says, "The name of the restrainer, here referred to, is not revealed. His sovereign power over the earth and all the forces of darkness identifies Him with the Godhead, and since the Spirit is the present active force in this dispensation, it follows that the reference in the passage is to the Spirit of God. Satan might have sufficient power; but hardly would it be exercised against himself. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." It is evident that it is the Spirit of God that hinders Satan's man and Satan's projects until the divinely appointed time. There is no hint that Satan will withdraw, or be removed out of the way before this "Man of Sin" can be revealed; but there is a sense in which the Spirit will be removed. That particular relationship or Presence which began with the Church and has continued with the Church will naturally cease when the Church is removed. As the Omnipresent One, the Spirit will remain, but His present ministry and abode in the Church will have been changed. The restraining power of the Spirit will be withdrawn and the Church removed at a time known to God, and then will the forces of darkness be permitted to come to their final display and judgment."\*

### **THE MAN OF SIN**

Finally, we come to the manifestation of the "Man of Sin," that "Wicked" one. He goes into the temple in Jerusalem and declares himself to be God. This is the blasphemy of the ages. His act is prophesied by Jesus thus, "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place . . ." (Matt. 24:15). "Then," says Jesus, "shall be great tribulation . . ." (vv. 21-22).

\* He that is Spiritual by L. S. Shafer

The Lord insists that the great tribulation begins when the Anti-christ manifests himself as God. Since the great tribulation will last 1260 days we know that the Anti-christ's manifestation takes place in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. Now Jesus proceeds to show that "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven," and He "shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (vv. 29-31).

### **STRONG DELUSION**

Our portion reveals that the Man of Sin shall have Satan's resources back of him by which he will bring proud Christendom under his sway. Other Scriptures reveal that he will have apostate Jewry, or Israel, at his disposal. Jesus said, "Another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). Daniel declares that "The king shall do according to his own will" and he "will not regard the God of his fathers" (Ch. 11:36-38). These things result from both Christendom and Israel refusing to believe in God's Christ. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

This sinister character shall meet his doom at the appearing of Jesus our Lord. He shall be consumed "with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. 2:8). John describes his end grimly, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet (the Man of Sin) . . . . These both were cast alive in a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20).

In the final analysis there was no reason for those Thessalonians to fear. Their loss of peace had come from teaching contrary to the mind of the Lord. And, let it be said, that all teaching which takes from us that quiet confidence in God, and that perfect peace of heart, is not divine. The truth always sets us free—free to enjoy the presence of God, free to enjoy the whole purpose of God.

### **NO JUDGMENT**

The apostle sums up his teaching in these most precious words, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because He hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

Here is a sweet reminder that we are not "appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation" (1 Thess. 5:9). This simply means that the wrath of the great tribulation era, or wrath throughout eternity, shall not be our portion. Jesus declared that we shall never come into the judgment (John 5:24). John also makes it crystal clear that "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). As Jesus is beyond the reach of both death and judgment so are we in this world. No judgment, either governmental or penal, will ever be ours.

Since the Man of Sin will initiate the great tribulation, and he cannot be manifested to the world while the Holy Spirit is present in the Church as the Divine Restraint, then we may well believe that the Church will be removed to glory before his manifestation. Such a salvation stems from the divine purpose, the eternal counsels, therefore may we experience everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (2 Thess. 2:16).

## CHAPTER VII

### POST TRIBULATION RAPTURIST'S VIEWPOINT

It would be absolutely unfair, and altogether unreasonable, if we did not consider a few of the principal Scriptures which suggest to some brethren that the Church will pass through the great tribulation. These brethren believe that *after* the unprecedented trial the Lord will be revealed to rapture His own into the air, then, *without further delay*, He will reveal them with Him in all His glory to the world.

At once we omit the Old Testament in our consideration of this theme. Neither the rapture, nor the Church of God, are made known there. Every Old Testament prophecy, in connection with the Second Advent, has to do with the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth. The New Testament alone deals with the Church and the tribulation. We refer first of all to the parable of the Tares and the Wheat (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).

#### PARABLE OF THE TARES AND WHEAT

"As to the general significance of this parable," says Alexander Reese, "little doubt obtains amongst prophetic students. Like other parables in Matthew 13 it describes the state of things following everywhere from the preach-

ing of the Word of God throughout the Gospel dispensation."

One of the clearest and concisest expositions of this entire chapter is found in C. I. Scofield's notes. He writes, "The seven parables of Matthew 13, called by the Lord, 'the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven' (v. 11), taken together, describe the result of the presence of the Gospel in the world during the present age, that is, the time of seed-sowing, which began with our Lord's personal ministry, and ends with the 'harvest' (vv. 40-43). Briefly, that result is the mingled tares and wheat, good fish and bad, in the sphere of Christian profession. It is Christendom."

There seems to be a vast difference of belief in the interpretation of the harvest. Some expositors maintain it refers to the rapture *prior* to the great tribulation; others contend it refers to the rapture *after* the great tribulation. Regardless as to the time element involved the expression "gather the wheat into My barn" is taken to mean the rapture.

### **NO RAPTURE IN PARABLES**

To inject this meaning into the parable does not have the slightest Scriptural support. Immediately it would make the barn to mean "heaven." But Scripture does not speak of it in this way. Rather it is meant to mean the earthly side of the kingdom glorious. The Baptist declared to the Pharisees and Sadducees "The axe is laid to the root of the trees. . . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable" (Matt. 3:10-12). The garner, or barn, then

is the place of divine blessing under the benign sway of Messiah.

The rapture is not seen in this parable. To be more thorough in our understanding of the Synoptic Gospels we will not find the rapture in any parable there. We must studiously avoid reading into Scripture some ideas of our own to support some theory we hold. So, to read the rapture into the parable of the tares and the wheat is fanciful, untenable, unscriptural procedure. It is always the earthly kingdom that is set forth. For instance, Christ will return to earth as

The Fisherman to divide the good and bad fish  
(Matt. 13:47-48);

The Husbandman to thoroughly purge His floor  
(Matt. 3:12);

The Bridegroom to welcome the five wise virgins  
(Matt. 25:1-13);

The Nobleman to reward His servants  
(Luke 19:12-17);

The Shepherd to separate the sheep from the goats  
(Matt. 25:31-46);

The Householder to gather the wheat into His barn  
(Matt. 13:36-43).

To translate saints to heaven in any instance mentioned above would create confusion. Rev. Alexander Reese in his book, "The Approaching Advent of Christ," says in connection with the end of this age, "The age He had in mind was the present evil one, during which Israel is in unbelief, Jerusalem trodden underfoot, Gentile dominion holds sway, and the saints of God suffer for His Name. But this evil age will have a consummation: Messiah appears in His glory; Israel repents; the sleeping

saints rise; Anti-christ is given to the burning flame; and the kingdom is established. This is everywhere the "consummation of the age."

### **ONE TAKEN—ONE LEFT**

Unwittingly, however, this belief does irreparable damage to the prophetic Word. For instance, first on the agenda here is the consignment of the tares to the burning fire. The work is assigned to angels. The same order is observed in the parable of the good and bad fish . . . "The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire . . ." (vv. 49-50). And this was the procedure adopted at the flood, typical of the happenings at the coming of the Son of Man. "As the days of Noah were," says Jesus, "so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Matt. 24:37-40). At the appearing of the Son of Man, the one is taken in judgment; the other is left for kingdom blessing.

The harvesting of the wheat is next. If this meant the rapture it would necessitate the removal of every Christian from the earth at the very time Christ is returning to establish His world-wide kingdom. For no Christian to be on earth to welcome back the King would be altogether contrary to the hope of the godly remnant in Israel, so clearly expressed in the Old Testament, and so fully brought to light in the teaching of Christ. He taught that the "Sheep nations" would go into the kingdom (Matt.

25:31-46) and these are upon earth at His return. John definitely asserts that the 144,000 will be waiting for Christ when He comes back immediately following the great tribulation (Rev. 14:1-5). These are those who say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39).

Why say "Israel repents" if the tares are already judged, and that "the kingdom is established" if all saints are glorified and raptured? Neither tares (unsaved), nor wheat (saved), are left upon earth according to this interpretation. And incidentally this automatically rules out the millennial kingdom of Jesus our Lord.

The interpretation of the parable is simple. The Lord anticipates His Second Advent to take over His earthly kingdom at which time the false professors shall be dealt with in judgment and the real Christians shall pass into the kingdom glorious. It is John who identifies the Christians at that time in the 144,000 sealed Jewish believers and the innumerable host of saved Gentiles (Rev. 7:4-17). These will take our place after the rapture and be in testimony for Christ when He comes back to earth to reign. No other group of believers fits the description or answers to the meaning of the parable.

### **REGATHERING OF THE ELECT**

Another Scripture which never fails to create controversy as to whether it refers to the rapture or the regathering of the Jewish elect to Palestine is Matthew 24:31: "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The Williams New Translation says, "And He will send

out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His chosen people from the four points of the compass, from one end of the sky to the other." Weymouth, in the 'New Testament in Modern Speech,' says, "And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet blast (Isa. 27:13), and they will bring together the elect from North, South, East and West—from one extremity of the world to the other" (Deut. 28:64; 30:4).

Most theologians agree that the Second Advent is in view. Earlier in the Olivet Discourse the Lord spoke principally about believing Jews, not Gentiles at all, for He refers to the Jerusalem Temple (v. 15), those that live in Judea (v. 16), the Sabbath Day (v. 20), and the manifestation of false Christ's and false prophets (vv. 23-26). He goes on to specify the happenings preceding His return, viz., phenomenal changes in the solar system (v. 29), the sign of the Son of Man's appearing—probably the Shekinah Cloud—to be followed by His appearing in Person (v. 30). Then, at His appearing, the angels shall be employed to gather His elect (v. 31).

### **THE AIR OR PALESTINE?**

The question is "Is the gathering together of the elect to Him the rapture into the air, or the regathering of saved Jews from every country back to Palestine?"

To make this prophecy mean the rapture is to run into the same difficulties encountered in the parable of the tares and wheat. It abandons you to accept the viewpoint of the A-Millennialist. You are faced with the belief that here you have the last judgment, a general resurrection, and the dissolution of all things for the introduction of a new heaven and a new earth. And Post Tribulation

Rapturists repudiate this teaching! But there is no alternative.

The only logical, Biblical conclusion as to the import of the statement is to see the regathering of the Jewish Elect—those saved after the rapture of the Church—to their own God-given land. This will be put into effect when Messiah returns to Zion. The promise is “I will take you from among the heathen, or nations, and gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land” (Ezek. 36:24). And again, “Thus saith the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and One King shall be king to them all . . .’” (Ezek. 37:21, 22). This is when He, by the ministry of angels, “Will bring together His elect to Him from North, South, East and West, from one extremity of the world to the other” (Matt. 24:31). This is Israel back in her land, gathered to Him, for “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:10).

### **THE FIRST RESURRECTION**

All Christians, whether pre- or post-tribulation rapturists, believe in two resurrections. The first resurrection is unto life; the second unto judgment (see John 5:28-29). Their difference lies in the time when the first resurrection takes place. Briefly, the pre-tribulation Rapturists believe that:

- (1) the resurrection of both Old and New Testament saints takes place when Christ comes into the air, at least seven years before His descent to the earth (1 Thess. 4:16-17), and

- (2) the resurrection of saints that die in the tribulation period, takes place at Christ's return to earth (Rev. 20:4).

The Post-Tribulation Rapturists believe that all saints that die, regardless of dispensation, shall be raised when Christ comes to earth to inaugurate His earthly kingdom according to Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2, 3; Matthew 13:43; Luke 14:14, 20:35; and John 6:39-40.

### **RESURRECTION IN OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

Let us glance at the post-tribulation Rapturist's viewpoint first. Remember that there is very little light on the subject of the resurrection in the Old Testament. The Psalmist speaks of Christ's resurrection (Psa. 16:10-11); Job visualizes his own resurrection (Ch. 19:26-27); while Daniel is instructed about his resurrection (Ch. 12:13).

The passages in Isaiah and Daniel might easily refer to Israel's national, and not physical, resurrection since Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, made to live, sets forth this very truth (Ch. 37). Matthew 13:43 definitely refers to the heavenly side of the kingdom—the kingdom of the Father—while verse 41 views the earthly side as the kingdom of the Son of Man. All saints, raised from the dead, shall share the heavenly side of the kingdom (Rev. 20:4). Luke's portion insists upon recompense at the time of the resurrection of the just (14:14); and he states likewise that in the resurrection no marriage state is known (20:35). John deals with the "Last Day" when men and creation shall be raised so that what the Father gives Him shall be His portion forever (Ch. 6:39-40).

### **THE HOUR OF RESURRECTION**

The New Testament reveals the details connected

with resurrection. It tells us that there shall be two resurrections; the first unto life, the second unto judgment (John 5:28-29). These two resurrections shall take place in the hour that is coming (v. 28). They take place in a specified time called by Jesus "THE HOUR." The same writer, John, assures us that "the hour" covers a period of 1,000 years. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them . . . I saw them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus . . . they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (Rev. 20:4-5). To the woman of Samaria Jesus had spoken about "the hour of spiritual worship" (John 4:23), and a little earlier in the chapter we are considering He spoke about "the hour of eternal life" (Ch. 5:25). The hour, in both instances, embraces this entire dispensation of grace, a period of almost two thousand years. We cannot but believe, therefore, that when Jesus speaks about the "Last Day" He has a period of time in mind. He is not thinking about a single act performed at a certain split second.

### **DAYS OF SCRIPTURE**

That such terminology is employed throughout Scripture is quite obvious. Paul mentions "The Day of Salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2) which has lasted since Christ came into the world until now. He speaks also of "The Day," first, as it stands in contrast to the night, when divine Light will radiate throughout the kingdom reign (Rom. 13:12); and second, as the period when our works shall be tried and manifested in the light of His holiness (1 Cor. 3:13).

Then He speaks about "The Day of Christ" or, a

time of blessing and reward which will commence with our arrival in His glad presence in glorified condition (1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16). Finally, we constantly meet with the expression "The Day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2—margin) which means the millennial kingdom of Christ. It stands forth in contrast to "Man's Day" (1 Cor. 4:3) which began with Adam's fall and will carry on till Christ begins His universal reign.

Must all Christians be raised when Christ returns to earth as post-tribulation rapturists assert? Such a claim cannot be too easily substantiated in the light of what Scripture clearly states about some that have been raised already. Matthew says, "The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Ch. 27:52-53). Whatever else happened to those saints they assuredly experienced resurrection. That is beyond dispute.

Again, resurrection is seen as the event which will reunite all saints as they are translated together to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:16-17). There is no hint in this Thessalonian passage of Christ returning to the earth. This is the moment when the saints gather together unto Him (1 Thess. 5:9-10; 2 Thess. 2:1). It is the preparation for the grand display when Christ shall be revealed with all His saints (1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:8-10). It is evident that saints in the tribulation age, die for Jesus' sake according to the vision of the fifth seal (Rev. 6:9-11), also in the time of the Beast's kingdom (Ch. 13:7). These shall be raised at the inauguration of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:4). This is the first resurrection. It

extends from the resurrection of Jesus to the beginning of His reign. First, you have the saints that were raised when Jesus rose; second, there is the resurrection of the Church saints when He comes into the air; and lastly, the tribulation saints that die for Christ's sake, are raised when He comes back to earth to reign. There shall be no more death for Christians, after Christ sets up His everlasting kingdom.

### **SOUNDING THE SEVENTH TRUMPET**

Post tribulation Rapturists stress that it is at the sounding of the seventh trumpet that all saints are raised and the kingdom is established. The entire passage runs thus: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.' And the four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, 'We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy Name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth'" (Rev. 11:15-18).

It must be remembered that when the seventh angel sounds the trumpet it is heavenly intelligencies that announce "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ." Actually, however, the kingdom is not inaugurated, nor will it be, until the seven bowls of wrath are poured upon a godless world.

If the seventh trumpet follows the sixth—and that is quite logical—then we may believe it is sounded at, or shortly after, the middle of Daniel's seventieth week begins.

Then, it is obvious that it is the twenty-four elders that worship God and speak of things upon their hearts. These twenty-four elders represent—not angelic beings, for they are never said to sit upon thrones or to have crowns on their heads—but the saints raptured to heaven prior to God entering into relationship with Israel. Note the content of their worship:—

(1) "Thou didst reign." To what do they refer? Certainly not to any occasion in past history as far as Christ is concerned. He has not reigned to date. Surely they speak of things which are not as though they were. They speak of His millennial reign as if it were history.

(2) "The nations were wrath." When will this take place? It is the fulfilment of the Psalmist's prediction when both Jewish and Gentile nations say, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psa. 2:3).

(3) "Thy wrath is come." When did the wrath of God come upon the world? Surely, at the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of God (Rev. 16). That takes place sometime *after* the seventh trumpet sounds and *before* the kingdom is introduced.

(4) "The time of the dead, that they should be judged." What dead? Saved or unsaved? Unquestionably the unsaved dead. And this resurrection and judgment takes place 1000 years after the kingdom is established (Rev. 20:11-15).

(5) "Thou shouldest give rewards." There will be prophets, saints, those that fear God's Name in tribulation

times as well as in every age. Rewards are seen given to the saints at the Bema, after they meet Christ in the air (1 Cor. 3:9-15); and when the King comes back to set up His kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 19:11-27).

(6) "Thou shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." Here is what the King will do as He enters upon His glorious reign. All offenders shall be removed from His kingdom.

It must be perfectly evident that the sounding of the seventh trumpet, sometime around the middle of Daniel's seventieth week, causes the heavenly denizens to visualize the program of God, even to the assumption of the world kingdom, which enables them to worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

To pin-point the seventh trumpet to the manifestation of Christ, and to make it coincide with the sounding of the trump of God to raise and rapture the saints according to 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 is to do violent injustice to its otherwise simple meaning. It destroys the harmony of the prophetic plan and makes impossible the realization of all that God has promised.

First on the agenda, without question, is the return of Christ to rapture the saints, then sometime later to return with them to begin His universal reign. That allows the Church to share His heavenly glory; and Israel to assume leadership of the Gentile nations under the sway of their Messiah.

### **THE PAROUSIA OF CHRIST**

Finally, we must consider briefly the three words used in the New Testament which bring into relief the Second Advent of Christ. The three words are "parousia," "apokulupsis," and "epiphaneia." Post Tribulation Rapturists ad-

vocate that the Holy Spirit's usage of the words, in connection with both the rapture and the revelation, forbid any interval of time between the events.

The leading proponent of the above theory declares in regard to the parousia of Christ that "far from being a prolonged period it is a single crisis breaking with the utmost suddenness." He dogmatically denies that the word could mean the sustained presence of Christ with His saints after He meets them in the air and before He is revealed with them in all His glory. The word is taken to mean "the arrival or visit of the king or emperor." However, in all deference to this interpretation of the word, an honest inquiry into its Scriptural meaning will show something entirely different.

This word "parousia," used sixteen times in the New Testament, definitely means, in places, presence as the opposite of absence. For instance Paul says "ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence (parousia) only, but much more in my absence (apousia—opposite word)" (Phil. 2:12). Then the word is used about the coming (parousia) of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus for the refreshment of Paul (1 Cor. 16:17, 18); the coming (parousia) of Titus to inform Paul about the spiritual condition of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:6, 7); and the coming (parousia) of Paul to help the Philippians in the things of God (Phil. 1:25, 26). These instances alone should suffice to prove to any unbiased mind that the word parousia does not always mean "a single crisis breaking with the utmost suddenness" but entails a prolonged period.

Scripture certainly insists that the word is used in connection with Christ's meeting the saints in the air (1 Thess. 4:15), "our gathering together unto Him" (2 Thess. 2:1), the Judgment Seat of Christ where the saints shall be re-

warded (1 Thess. 2:19), and the personal presence of Christ to set up His earthly kingdom (Matt. 24:3).

Actually the basic reason for accepting the Post Tribulation Rapturist's viewpoint is failure to distinguish between Israel and the Church, and the difference between the "Day of Christ" and the "Day of the Lord." The same exponent of the theory that the Church will pass through the great tribulation says, "the Day," "in that Day," "the Day of the Lord," and "Messiah's Day," are synonymous expressions for the day of the Parousia, which closes the present age, and ushers in the Age to Come; it is the day of Resurrection, of reward, of rest for the saints, but of judgment and condemnation for the impenitent." In yet another place he speaks of the Parousia as "the day when Messiah comes forth in glory to set up His kingdom on earth."

The terminology being different, however, proves that there must be a difference. Elsewhere God speaks of "the kingdom of heaven," "the kingdom of God," "the kingdom of the Son of Man," and "the kingdom of the Father." These are four different aspects of the same kingdom. In like manner God sets forth four distinct epochs when He speaks of "Man's Day," "the Day of Christ," "the Day of the Lord," and "the Day of God." "Man's Day (1 Cor. 4:3) covers the period of his rebellion against God—around six thousand years; 'the Day of Christ,' specifies the time between the rapture and revelation of the saints—at least seven years, or Daniel's seventieth week; "the Day of the Lord," is always seen related to the millennial, or one thousand year, reign of Christ; and "the Day of God" is definitely the eternal day. And, it must be observed that the Day of Christ is vitally linked with the Church and never

with Israel, whereas the Day of the Lord is always linked with Israel and the Gentile nations. The former anticipates blessing and rewards for the saints of the Church age; the latter predicates blessing for the saints that shall inherit the earthly kingdom but judgment for all unbelievers.

### **THE APOKULUPSIS OF CHRIST**

The second word is "apokulupsis" which simply means the revelation, or the public manifestation of Christ in His glory (see Rev. 1:1; I Cor. 1:7; Col. 3:4).

That Christ will return for His Church and not reveal Himself in all His glory is unthinkable. She shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). And His description is given throughout "The Apocalypse" to indicate how we shall see Him. Our meeting Him in the air necessarily precedes His manifestation to Israel and the world at large. How blessed and comforting to know that we shall see "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11), the Lord Himself (1 Thess. 4:16), even "the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20, 21).

### **THE EPIPHANEIA OF CHRIST**

The last word before us is "epiphaneia" which advances the idea of "shining forth," or the "break of day." The word occurs six times in the New Testament, each with a distinctly different truth emphasized, and looks forward to the appearing in glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Scripture speaks of this present age as "the night" (Rom. 13:12) which shall be followed by the morning, or the break of a new day. For the saints that belong to the Church after the midnight hour, there shall arise "the Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). It is Christ breaking forth in light to rapture us into His presence and introduce us to the eternal day. For us, the darkness shall be for

ever past, for, "there shall be no night there" (Rev. 22:5).

Israel's midnight hour, however, is the great tribulation. A "horror of great darkness" (Gen. 15:12) shall fall upon the nation. The darkness shall be more intense than that experienced under either Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar, Titus, or Hitler. In her extremity, when extermination seems inevitable, the "Sun of Righteousness" shall arise to dispel the darkness and usher in the millennial day (Mal. 4:2). Then shall Isaiah's word be gloriously fulfilled, "Arise, shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is upon thee—And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and the kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Ch. 60:1-3).

Now for a quick glance at the six portions where the word "epiphaneia" occurs. In the usage of the word the Holy Spirit presents a chronological sequence of events which begin with the rapture and carries through to the kingdom age, and even beyond, to the eternal state.

The appearing of the Lord will be the full and final unveiling of the grace of God as evidenced in our rapture. This is the blessed hope (Tit. 2:11-13). At this moment there shall be, for us, the abolition of death in favor of life and incorruptibility (2 Tim. 1:10). Life shall be imparted to mortal bodies, or the saints alive when Christ comes (Rom. 8:11. 2 Cor. 5:4.), and incorruptibility to those that shall be raised from amongst the dead (I Cor. 15:52). Then, at the public manifestation both living nations, blessed by the Son of Man for their good treatment of His brethren (Matt. 25:46), and the Jewish remnant, or the 144,000, the true Israel of God (Ezek. 37:1-10. Dan. 12:2), shall receive eternal life in their bodies; and the martyred saints in the tribulation era shall be raised to receive bodies incorruptible (Isa. 25:8). Then comes the Bema, after the rapture, where awards shall be given those that have

keenly anticipated, and loved, His appearing shall be rewarded immediately upon His return. Thus, places of administration shall be given the saints as the universal kingdom begins.

Paul indicates that the appearing of Christ will bring about the total overthrow of the "man of Sin" (2 Thess. 2:8) to be followed by the judgment of the "quick," or living Nations (Matt. 25:31-46), and after one thousand years the judgment of the "dead" at the great white throne (2 Tim. 4:1. Rev. 20:11-15).

The appearing of our Lord will demonstrate, once for all, His absolute authority over all created intelligencies, for "in His times He shall shew who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting" (1 Tim. 6:14-16).

This array of events in no wise interferes with the program of God being worked out with the Church in the heavens before it is worked out with Israel on the earth. In the working out of the divine purpose there is perfect harmony when the Church is seen raptured to heaven before the great prophetic age dawns for Israel and the nations. So, with Israel coming into the forefront of national and international events today, we may well believe that God is about to materialize His program for her as well as through her. The hindrance at the moment to the full realization of all this is the Church's presence on earth. Evidently, the appearing of Christ to rapture us home is upon us. In view of this glorious event let us devote ourselves untiringly to the propagation of the gospel and so live that we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming (1 John 2:28).

## *CHAPTER VIII*

### **THE GREAT TRIBULATION IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION (Part I)**

The Book of the Revelation gives the clearest and most comprehensive treatment of the great tribulation. It is here that the Spirit of God gathers together in one all the symbols, numerals, colors and allegories from the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles, to present a full-orbed view of this coming world travail. He employs fifteen chapters (6 to 20) to detail the movements in heaven and on earth which converge on this prophetic period. At the same time He leaves us in no doubt as to the principal actors in the drama.

#### **MAIN DIVISIONS OF THE REVELATION**

The Book has three main divisions. John is commissioned to "write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Ch. 1:19). The vision of Christ, as the Son of Man, in His personal, relative, and official glories, walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands covers "The things seen" in chapter one. Then we have Church history, from century one until the Second Advent of Christ, witnessed to in the seven churches between Ephesus and Laodicea, described in "the things which are" given in chapters two and three. The third section is prophetic, noted in "the

things which shall be hereafter" and begins at chapter four and carries on to the end of the Book.

### **APPEARANCE OF HEAVEN**

John's translation, in spirit, to heaven provides him with a new view-point. From here he sees the unfolding drama of coming world events (Ch. 4:1-2). It might well be that God is teaching us that the only way to understand prophecy is to live in the heavenly places, or to seek the things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, to set our affections on things above, not on the things on the earth (see Col. 3:1-2). Of this we may be certain that when we are where John was then we shall know, even as also we are known. All God's purposes are crystal clear to heaven's redeemed inhabitants.

The appearance of heaven insists that a change has taken place. It is not now the Throne of the Father with the Son sharing it (Ch. 3:21); nor is it the Throne of Grace where men find grace and mercy (Heb. 4:16); it is the Throne of judgment. "Out of the Throne proceedeth lightnings, and thunderings, and voices" (Ch. 4:5) which indicates that it is preparing to punish the world for its rejection of God's Christ.

You will note that the symbol for the Holy Spirit is changed. He is not seen as "the Dove," so expressive of Him as the meek and lowly One (Matt. 3:16, 17; 11:28-30): nor is He presented as "cloven tongues like as of fire" indicative of the holiness of Him who has come to bring conviction of sin to men (Acts 2:3; John 16:8-11). He is before us as "seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne," for, He is the Prosecuting Attorney for the Throne (Ch. 4:5). Next comes a sight peculiar to this

Book. Four and twenty elders are seen seated upon Thrones with golden vials in their hands. Their appearance at this point in the Revelation coincides with the rapture of both Old and New Testament saints who occupy the place of observers as the trial of the world begins. You might think of them in the capacity of the jury.

A description of the four living creatures, not beasts, follows. They are full of eyes before and behind. These living creatures are symbols of power in the lion-like one; firmness in the ox-like one; intelligence in the one that has the face as a man; and rapidity of action in the eagle-like one. They closely resemble Ezekiel's cherubim (Ch. 1) but incorporate the qualities of the seraphim described by Isaiah (Ch. 6). They concern themselves mainly with the affairs of the earth.

The reason why heaven's appearance has changed is because the Church is no longer on earth. For centuries she had been the vessel of the Divine pleasure on earth but her Bridegroom has brought her to Himself. Now the situation is different. The time has come for God to arise and visit men in judgment. That is why in the next scene, the Worthy One, earth's rejected Savior, takes the seven-sealed book out of the hand of uncreated Deity. It is God committing all judgment into the hands of the Son of Man (Ch. 5:1-7, John 5:27).

### **SEALS ARE OPENED**

The opening of the Seals takes place immediately subsequent to the rapture. Men will smart for their rejection of Jesus the Lord. The first Seal brings in the white horse and its rider, or a false peace; the second Seal shows a red horse and its rider, or revolution and bloodshed;

the third Seal reveals a black horse and its rider with famine in their wake; the fourth Seal introduces the pale horse and its rider with devastating judgments accompanying them (Ch. 6:1-8).

Now note the content of the fifth Seal. "And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'how long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Ch. 6:9-11).

This is the first mention of saints on earth since the rapture. Naturally questions arise in our minds. We ask, "who are they? How, when, and why were they saved?" Let us answer these questions individually from the passage before us.

Who are these saints? Obviously, they are saints that have been martyred for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. You will discover who they are if you listen carefully to their prayer. This prayer for vengeance on their enemies would lead you at least to believe that they do not belong to this age of grace, that they are not members of the Body of Christ, for no Christian today would pray like that—that is if he knew His Lord and the character of the age. This prayer closely resembles that of an Old Testament saint. Actually, the prayer identifies the company as Jewish saints, or Jews that will believe in Christ after the Church is glorified. The language em-

ployed is utterly foreign to that which we would use under similar conditions. We would pray as Jesus prayed; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34), or with Stephen who said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). Our ministry, from first to last, is one of forgiveness.

Any Jew, previous to, or after, the Day of Grace is within his rights to pray this prayer. And that is the essential difference between the dispensations of law and grace. Under law the Jew was the administrator of justice; but under grace, the Christian, is the administrator of blessing. That is why Elijah called fire down from heaven to consume the two companies of fifty each (2 Kings 1); but, it was entirely out of order for John and James to do likewise (Luke 9:54). Jesus rebuked them saying, "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." They were, as we are, under grace (Rom. 6:15).

How are these men saved? They are saved in exactly the same way as anyone else is saved. "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). There never has been, and there never will be, any other way of salvation. These Jews will believe in Jesus as their Messiah and accept the benefits of His sacrificial work. And to their hearts He will indeed be precious.

When are these people saved? They are saved immediately *after* the rapture. Our God shall never be without a witness on earth. "A seed shall serve Him" (Psa. 22:30). Remember the Holy Spirit will be here to convict and convert to God in the same way then as He was in Old Testament times. It seems that He will take the Word sown in their hearts in the day of grace to produce fruit for the glory of God.

Why are they saved? This is a most important question. They are saved as part of the election of grace. Our God is duty bound to resume relations with Israel after the removal of the Church to make good His manifold promises, as yet unfulfilled, to them. And these dear saints under the fifth Seal are first in the line of blessing.

### **THE 144,000 ISRAELITES**

Next on the prophetic agenda are the 144,000. This is a symbolic number for "All Israel" or the saved Jews in the tribulation era. It suggests divine completeness in an administrative way. God will use this people to administer His grace to men in the day when His judgments are in the earth, and He will use them to administer His righteousness to all the nations throughout millennial times (see Isa. 2 & 4).

The divine record says, "I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the East, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, 'hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.' And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed one hundred forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (Rev. 7:1-4).

The sealing, you will observe, is a pre-tribulation event. It concerns only Jews saved by the grace of God. So that no difficulty might arise as to their identity God names each of the twelve tribes by name. All Gentiles are

excluded. The reason given for the sealing is that these saints might be preserved throughout the great tribulation.

### **JEWISH ELECT DISTINGUISHED**

Do not confuse this company with the election according to grace in this present dispensation (Rom. 9-11). They are not the same, though both companies are saved Jews. Today, the remnant forms part of the Church and is a heavenly people. The 144,000 represent the remnant nation of Israel in the tribulation era, a people with an earthly hope that will be perfectly realized when they share Messiah's kingdom on earth.

All through the Church age saved Jews are not sealed for preservation throughout the great tribulation. They are like us; "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13-14). Moreover, all saved Jews now are waiting to be raptured to heaven at the return of Christ. It is so different with the 144,000. They will go through the great tribulation then occupy Palestine during the millennium. Nowhere are we told that they experience rapture to heaven.

### **GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM**

It is a perfectly legitimate deduction that this 144,000 will make known the Gospel of the kingdom to earth's millions. Jesus definitely states in His Olivet discourse that "this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end—the end of the age—come" (Matt. 24:14). The results are tabulated thus: "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and

kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes . . ." (Rev. 7:14-15).

"The Gospel of the kingdom," says C. I. Scofield, "is the good news that God purposes to set up on the earth, in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:16) a kingdom, political, spiritual, Israelitish, universal, over which God's Son, David's heir, shall be king, and which shall be for one thousand years, the manifestation of the righteousness of God in human affairs." This is the Gospel the remnant will proclaim—the Gospel the innumerable host of Gentiles will believe.

There is an idea prevalent that those who have definitely refused Christ in this age of grace, will be given an opportunity to accept Him in the tribulation period. Paul seems to take care of the problem in these words: "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

### **INGATHERING OF GENTILES**

This great ingathering of Gentiles will come in large measure, from parts that have never heard the message. Then in the course of the tribulation age many children alive at the rapture, and many born afterwards, will hear and believe the Gospel story. We must believe what God says when He states that they shall come from "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues." It is our business today to relieve ourselves of our responsibility of presenting the Gospel to every creature. That means we must tell our friends, neighbors, and all we meet about Christ. Let us not think our task accomplished when we

help send forth missionaries to the heathen. We must personally witness.

It should be observed that these saved Gentiles are distinguished from the 144,000, the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures. God never confuses His people's identity. He has many families in heaven and on the earth (Eph. 3:15).

This company is said to go through the great tribulation. "These are they," said the elder to John, "which came out of the great tribulation" (Rev. 7:14). That immediately cancels out the Old Testament saints. By the same token it cancels out the Church of God. Nowhere in Holy Writ is there a solitary hint that the great tribulation will extend over the entire Church-age. Contrariwise, it pin-points it as taking place at the end of the age, or more precisely, during the latter half of Daniel's seventieth week.

### **VISION EXCLUDES CHURCH**

One thing more in this distinguishing line of thought. It would seem strange indeed, and contrary to God's present dealings with men, if He separated the sealed Israelites and the saved Gentiles at a time when He positively states He has made them one in Christ (see Eph. 2:13-18). This vision definitely excludes the Church. Both the 144,000 and the innumerable saved Gentile host go into the millennial kingdom on earth. Both are an earthly people. Another writes, "never have we God dealing with the Jew and with the Gentile as such, and forming the Church at the same time: for then God would have at least two, if not three, objects—not various only but opposed objects—of special affection on the earth at the same time, with quite different modes and aims of action.

"Suppose there were two persons whom the Lord was bringing to Himself. If He were dealing with a Jew, He would have to acknowledge an earthly temple, priesthood and worship. The Lord Jesus recognized the Jews as such when He was on earth, and in a still more blessed way He will do so in the day that is coming. But as long as the Lord is occupied with forming the Church, Jewish order ceases to have any claim. Thus then suppose God were blessing the Jews as Jews, and at the same time forming the Church on earth, if two persons were converted, the one might say, 'I must have my priest and go to the temple,' while another would exclaim, 'there is no priest but Christ, and the temple is in heaven.' See the confusion that would spring from God owning an earthly and a heavenly people at the same time here below."

### **THE ANGEL PRIEST**

Following the sealing of God's Israel and the vision of the saved Gentile host the seventh Seal is opened which brings "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" (Rev. 8:1). It is the calm before the storm. You can sense ominous things in the offing as the seven angels that stand in the presence of God, prepare to sound the Trumpets. Ere they do so, however, the Angel-Priest is seen in attendance at the altar with the prayers of the saints (Ch. 8:3). The Angel-Priest is Christ. This is another evidence that Christ is not seen in relation to the Church here. To us He is always presented as the Man "Jesus, the Son of God, our Great High Priest" (Heb. 4:14-16). When seen in Angelic form He is always in relationship with Israel.

Already we have met the martyred saints under the fifth Seal as well as spiritual Israel and the saved Gen-

tiles. These saints have spiritual exercises, so they pray. It is these prayers the Angel-Priest concerns Himself with. As He answers them, judgment falls upon the earth. Yet another proof that Israel is in view.

"The Lord Jesus standing at the altar," says C. A. Coates in his book on *The Revelation*, "suggests that the time has come when His death will have its answer in a public way. There has been a long period of divine testimony during which men have had the opportunity of repenting in the light of what has been displayed in Christ and in His death, and of being delivered from lawlessness in the way of infinite grace. But if lawlessness does not yield to the testimony of divine grace in Christ it must go out in judgment. Its judgment in the coming day is as distinctly the answer to the Cross as all the wealth of blessing is today. It is not possible in God's universe that lawlessness can escape destruction. His people are being "salted with fire" now: grace is reigning in the way of bringing men to self-judgment in the light of Christ and of His death. The fire of the altar is being cast out into men's souls now that they may yield themselves, and turn to God in repentance, and find that He is a Savior-God. But Revelation 8 speaks of a time when the fire of the altar will be cast upon earth, and all that is lawless will come under judgment."

### **THE SEVEN TRUMPETS**

The Trumpet judgments follow. They provide God's answer to the prayers of the saints. And the impact of the judgments shall be felt mostly in the Western world where apostasy prevails and where persecution is experienced by the saints. Quickly then, let us glance at the seven Trumpets.

The first Trumpet introduces us to the divine displeasure in the political dignitaries (trees) and the common people (grass) in the empire. Judgment descends upon one third of the men in high governmental circles, also upon the entire populace (Rev. 8:7).

The second Trumpet involves some nation in the Roman sphere that will burn with revolutionary fires and create tremendous havoc in her near by neighbor nations. The collapse of Germany at the end of World War 2 might serve as an illustration of what is before the mind of God here (Ch. 8:8-9).

The third Trumpet invites us to view an "Ecclesiastical Dignitary" fall from his high office. Some Christians have suggested that this "Star" might be the "Pope" of that day. In any event he is one looked up to by the people. His fall may denote his blatant denial of divine truth, that which he is supposed to uphold, which will bring disappointment and bitterness to many (Ch. 8:10-11).

The fourth Trumpet insists upon statesmen in supreme (sun), derivative (moon), and subordinate (stars) governmental positions that fail completely to give the people the guidance and counsel necessary to enjoy a measure of peace and prosperity. The darkness, like that experienced both in Egypt and at Calvary, will be felt (Ch. 8:12).

The fifth Trumpet instructs us as to the first woe, or God judgment, on apostate Israel. By the time this judgment descends Israel will have entered into a league with the apostate Roman empire and willingly accepted Anti-christ as king (see Dan. 9:27; John 5:43). Indeed, they will have received the mark of the beast, the Anti-christ. For this cause the locusts will be released, with

their darkening and tormenting influence, to bereave them of every vestige of hope either in this life or the life to come (Ch. 9:1-11).

The sixth Trumpet invites the Eastern, or Asiatic nations to launch their attack against both Palestine and the Western Powers to bring retribution to them for their apostasy. Almost intolerable suffering will be experienced by the apostate peoples. Our smug complacency will leave us defenceless against such overwhelming numbers, 200 million Asiatics. At this writing the Orientals are being prepared psychologically, and militarily for world conquest (Ch. 9:13-21).

The seventh Trumpet anticipates the glorious kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. At once the elders in heaven worship God as the great transactions on the role of prophecy come before their vision. And worship we will, here and now, as we look forward to the accomplishment of all God's purposes for men and nations, for Israel, the Gentiles and the Church of God (see Ch. 11:15-18).

### **CREATION CLAIMED BY CHRIST**

It is somewhat of a relief, and very refreshing indeed, to catch a glimpse of the Lord Jesus Christ, between the sixth and seventh Trumpets, laying claim to the creation (Ch. 10:1-7). He is the "Mighty Angel clothed with a cloud (Shekinah glory), and a rainbow was upon His head (symbol of mercy for creatures and creation), and His face was as it were the sun (supreme authority), and His feet as pillars of fire (irresistible judgment)." The little book in His hand is open, not closed as in Daniel's prophecy (Ch. 12:4), or sealed as in an earlier scene in this Book (Ch. 5:1-6). It contains prophecies in connec-

tion with Israel which are easy to understand.

An incidental proof of Christ's Deity is announced in that "He sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever . . ." (v. 6). No One but God can swear. "To take on oath is to swear, by the Name of God, that you will do something whether you know you can do it or not. God does not permit that nor does He permit an angel to do that, yet strange to say He Himself does it. 'When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself' " (Heb. 6:14). The oath is taken here that there shall be no longer delay. This means that God is now going to expedite events upon earth to bring in the kingdom.

When the seventh Trumpet sounds the "mystery of God" is finished, according as God hath "declared to His servants the prophets" (v. 7). It is an announcement that "Man's Day" is ended and the Day of the Lord begun. Then shall we see why God allowed human suffering and all of His seemingly mysterious dealings with men. Even now faith knows that He works all things together for our good and for His glory (Rom. 8:28). He works all things after the counsel of His own will. In the coming day He will put Jesus upon His Throne, deliver creation from its groaning and bondage, and bring in a scene for His own peculiar pleasure (Eph. 1:13-14; Rom. 8:19-22).

In concluding part one, we have observed that the saints in this Church age have been in heaven since the beginning of the fourth chapter. Other saints have taken our place as God's witnesses. These have testified and suffered for Christ throughout the entire tribulation era and been on hand at the return of the Messiah to begin His Davidic kingdom to share in that glorious administration. Thus shall the heavenly hope of the Church and the earthly hope of Israel find consummation at the appearing in glory of Jesus our Lord.

## *CHAPTER IX*

### **THE GREAT TRIBULATION IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION (Part 2)**

Momentous events meet us as we travel along the highway of prophetic truth in the latter part of the Revelation. Here we come face to face with the great tribulation in its awful fury and witness God's total displeasure of man's lawlessness as he resolutely refuses to repent of his sins. Here the final issue between good and evil is decided as God's Christ descends from heaven with His angels of might and His glorified saints. He will expel from His kingdom all things that offend that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let it be understood, once for all, that the Church is not God's answer to the world's problems, nor can it deliver the world from its chaos. She is God's peculiar people, chosen from among the nations. Once her number is complete, and her mission on earth is finished, she will be raptured to heaven. Then, and then only, shall God resume relations with Israel. With the Jews in Palestine today it shall be easy for Him then to expedite His purposes for men and nations. His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to their seed, will then be fulfilled. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29).

### **ISRAEL PROMINENT AGAIN**

The previous chapter brought us to the place where Christ assumes world sovereignty (Ch. 10). From here until we reach the fifteenth chapter Israel takes the spotlight. The eating of "the little book" is prophetic. It is bitter in the Seer's stomach, sweet in his mouth (Ch. 10:8-10). The bitterness of the great tribulation followed by the sweetness of the kingdom glorious is seen in symbol form. And this experience is not exceptional but general. Jesus Himself declared that He must first suffer then enter into His glory (Luke 24:26). We also "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Creation too, has its travail before its deliverance (Rom. 8:20-23). So will it be with the Israel of God in the coming day.

Immediately Israel is mentioned both the holy city and the temple of God come into view: "rise, and measure the temple of God . . . and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months" (Ch. 11:1-2). The fact that God is at this time acknowledging an earthly temple means that He has removed His Church, the temple of God, from earth to heaven. Otherwise He would have two dwelling places on earth; one His Church composed of all believers; the other, the Jerusalem temple. That would be total confusion.

### **JERUSALEM TEMPLE REBUILT**

"When the Jews are once more masters in their own promised land," says Dr. A. C. Gaebelain, "they will erect another temple and then restore the Levitical worship as far as it is possible. Such a temple must be built in Jerusalem (see Isa. 66:1-4). In that temple the personal Anti-

christ, the beast out of the land of whom we shall read in chapter 13, will appear and claim divine worship (see 2 Thess. 2:3-4). Apostate Israel in corrupt alliance with equally apostate Gentiles is seen in the opening verses of this eleventh chapter, as the court without the temple. But in the midst of this corrupt mass, which will follow the delusion of the Anti-christ and accept Satan's man as their Messiah, there will be the God-fearing remnant. This remnant is here divinely recognized as worshippers. Therefore that coming temple is called "the temple of God" because the Lord owns the true worshippers found in the midst of the unbelieving mass. These godly Jews form an inner circle. The inner place is symbolical of the faithful remnant of worshippers; the outer court is a symbol of apostate Israel.

"The forty two months are now mentioned in Revelation for the first time. They are identical with the 1260 days, for forty two months make this number of days, the times, time, and half a time in the prophecy of Daniel, the last three and a half years of the seventieth week of Daniel. To make these forty two months 1260 years, as it has been done by many expositors, is a mere invention and lacks Scriptural support. These 1260 days are the time of the great tribulation. Then apostate Israel will be in the worst condition, demon-possessed and idolatrous (Matt. 12:43-45). Then the Gentiles will do their final devastation of Jerusalem and her worst history will come to pass. She will have to drink the cup of the Lord's fury to the very dregs."

### **THE TWO WITNESSES**

We have considered God's witnesses in the previous article from chapters one to ten of the Revelation. The

Church had the testimony in chapters one to three; then the martyred saints of chapter six followed by the 144,000 and the Gentile host in chapter seven. These saints we saw in the exercise of prayer, and how the Angel-Priest answered their prayers (Ch. 8). Now we come to the two witnesses (Ch. 11).

"I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy one thousand two hundred and three-score days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth . . ." (Ch. 11:3-4).

Speculation has run high as to the identity of these two men. Some favor Enoch and Elijah because they never experienced death. Others favor Moses and Elijah by reason of the miracles they work, for Moses-like they turn water into blood, and Elijah-like they call fire down from heaven and have power to shut up the heavens. Another group believes they represent the godly Jewish remnant of the end-time. "Thus the regular meaning of "two," if figuratively used, is competent testimony—enough and not more than enough. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." According to Jewish law a case could not be decided by one witness: there must be two for valid proof and judgment."

One writer remarks, "The miracles of Moses when Israel was in subjection to the Gentiles (Ex. 7-12), and of Elijah (1 Kings 17 & 18) when Israel was apostate from God, are again to be witnessed in like character. Jerusalem will be the center of these miraculous signs of a public kind. What a testimony to the apostate nation of that day! The miracles of Moses repeated, at least in character, will remind them of their ancient slavery to Egypt, and

a token to Gentile rule once again; while the miracles of Elijah, re-enacted before the public gaze, will surely lead their thoughts back to their former state of apostasy from God to Baal. Jehovah, the Lord of the earth, has again to assert His claims before His apostate people. Thus the condition of Israel, at least of Judah and in Jerusalem, is similar to that in the days of Moses and Elijah—slavery and apostasy, necessitating on the part of Jehovah a ministry adapted to both states with their corresponding momentous signs. A Moses and Elias character of ministry is predicted of the two witnesses.”

### **CHRISTIAN OR JEWISH**

It has been suggested by some that these two men are specially selected ones for that particular hour—two chosen from the godly remnant. However, it may be as well for us to leave their identity with God. In due time He will make clear who they really are. Our interest meantime is to look at the character of ministry they exercise whether it is Christian or Jewish.

The witnesses are set forth as olive trees and candlesticks. It is another way of telling us that they are Spirit-filled and diffusing divine light in a dark world. And, without question, these are the two requisites for every one that claims to be a servant of God irrespective of dispensation. All service must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit so that divine light might shine before a blinded race.

Obviously, their ministry is one of judgment. That is why they are able to turn water into blood, to shut up heaven, and call fire down from heaven. That is why they are able to injure, and even kill, men that seek their hurt.

But our ministry stands forth in sharp contrast. It is summed up in these words of Paul to the jailer in Philippi, "Do thyself no harm" (Acts 16:28). We preach the sovereign grace of God to our hearers, even our persecutors. At no time, and under no consideration, do we invoke the judgment of God upon our fellows.

### **TIME-LIMIT SET**

A time-limit is set for their testimony. It is timed to last throughout the great tribulation period, 1260 days. And here again we differ from these tribulation witnesses. There is no time-table in connection with the Church. This is God's undated, parenthetical period in His ways with men. Dates belong exclusively to Israel. These men are peculiarly Jewish.

It is helpful and encouraging to note that these men are both invincible and immortal until their work is done. God protects them in the midst of their enemies, no doubt by those ministering angels sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). Then permission is given the enemy to kill them. For 3 1/2 days they lie in the public gaze when God intervenes by raising and rapturing them from earth to glory in the presence of their foes. Every movement is under the perfect control of our God. We may serve Him with all our might and carry the battle to the gates of the enemy with the full confidence that He will care for us till our work is accomplished. We need never be afraid what man shall do unto us.

No such demonstrations are linked with the resurrection and rapture of Church saints. The accounts given in 1 Corinthians 15 and in 1 Thessalonians 4 strongly sug-

gest that we are removed silently and secretly from earth to heaven. There is no mention at the rapture of judgment falling upon Jerusalem, and a little later upon the beast who instigates the death of the two witnesses. The entire passage is definitely Jewish in character; first Jewish witnesses, then judgment on apostate Jewry in Palestine.

It is utterly impossible to fit the two witnesses into the Church program. They live in an age entirely different from this age of grace, an age which savors of Judaism rather than Christianity.

### **THE THIRD WOE—SEVENTH TRUMPET**

The world-wide kingdom of Christ is anticipated as the seventh angel sounds the trumpet and brings in the third woe. Many voices utter "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms (or kingdom) of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever (Ch. 11:15).

The twenty four elders upon hearing this announcement worship the Lord and envisage the whole outreach of the divine purpose. They see beyond the kingdom age to the judgment of the dead (see Ch. 11:16-18). Who said prophecy was dry, uninteresting, not practical? Let us remember that prophecy is not merely a succession of events on earth but the out-working of God's purposes for the glory of His Christ. It always magnifies and glorifies Christ. And this produces worship within the heart to Him who is the Object of the Father's pleasure.

### **THE MOTHER OF THE MANCHILD**

John next beholds "a great wonder in heaven" though the events take place upon earth (Ch. 12:1). A moment

before he had heard the announcement about the kingdom (Ch. 11:15), now he is introduced to the mother of Him who shall reign. The Man-Child is seen entering the world by way of Israel, described as "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." The mother of our Lord is not the Church, but Israel (Rom. 9:1-5). His entrance into human life and history aroused the enmity of the "Great Red Dragon" who employed and empowered the Roman Empire, represented in Herod, to seek His life as a child (Matt. 2). It was this Gentile power that eventually was responsible for His crucifixion but God raised Him from the dead and seated Him upon His Throne (Ch. 12:5).

It must not be overlooked that we are taken from the ascension and glorification of Christ directly to the great tribulation in this passage. There is a gap of almost two thousand years between verses five and six. The Church age, and all that God is doing now, is passed over in silence. This should emphasize again to our hearts that the Church age forms no part of God's prophetic program. It also discloses that when Christ ascended to heaven the Church ascended with Him. Our rapture is hereby inferred. Surely the ways of God are infinitely perfect!

The woman is the Dragon's special target. He must dispose of her to secure victory and offset the purposes of God. It is perfectly true that he persecutes the Church but he knows, and so should we, that it is Israel that holds the key to the future world-wide kingdom of Christ. Our God vouchsafes Israel's protection. "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days" (v. 6). No weapon formed against her will prosper (Isa. 54:17).

**WAR IN THE HEAVENS**

God now rends the veil to show us what goes on behind the scenes. He has already shown us what took place at the Messiah's birth when Herod sought the young child's life; He will discover to us what will take place between Michael and his angels when they meet the Dragon and his angels. This is the last war in the heavens when the Dragon and his satellites are cast down to the earth. They come down with great wrath and grim determination to exterminate the woman, Israel. Two men are raised up to negotiate his nefarious work. The first beast is the supreme dictator of the revived Roman Empire (Ch. 13:1-10); the second beast is the personal Antichrist, the crowned king of apostate Israel (Ch. 13:11-18). Both men unite in untiring efforts to wipe out the woman.

Two figures of speech are used to set forth spiritual Israel in this Book. We have seen her in the 144,000 (Ch. 7): here she is shown as a mother. The beast will "make war with the saints, and overcome them" (Ch. 13:7). Many of God's dear ones will suffer martyrdom: many more will suffer the loss of all things. But God will work miraculously for the woman just as He works miraculously for the Church today. Whilst Satan has persecuted the saints all through the Church-age, and probably more today than at any other time in her history, the Church remains intact. "The gates of hell shall not prevail" (Matt. 16:18).

Failure to exterminate Israel is evidenced in the vision of the 144,000 that stand upon Mount Zion, or Jerusalem, with their Messiah as He returns to take over world sovereignty (Ch. 14). God sealed them before the tribulation began (Ch. 7): now His promise to preserve them

is fully realized. God keeps His promises. We may trust Him fully. He never changes.

In the days when the godly remnant is experiencing its greatest suffering there will be much comfort for them as they read this vision. Indeed, most of this Book will be better understood by them, and bring more blessing to them, than it has been understood by us and given us comfort and blessing. They will rejoice in the final outreach of God's purpose for them. At the same time they will be warned by the seven-fold warning given here.

### **SEVEN-FOLD WARNING**

These saints will live in days of fearful impiety. The Anti-christ will be publicly acknowledged by apostate Israel and Christendom as God. With this in mind the saints will warn men to "Fear God, and give glory to Him" (Ch. 14:6, 7). They will make an urgent appeal to cease from worshipping the creature and to worship the Creator. This is the message of "the everlasting Gospel." The issue will be "Christ or Anti-christ."

To hear Babylon's doom announced will be an added stimulus to the saints. They will be encouraged to stand true to Him. Babylon will be removed: they will remain to share the kingdom reign with their Messiah (Ch. 14:8).

God's total displeasure in those Jews that receive the mark of the beast with His announcement of their coming eternal doom will inspire confidence in the hearts of those that have refused his mark. They will realize how they are before God as the vessels of His pleasure. Pity the Christ-rejector who will be left behind at the rapture to take the mark of the beast and to suffer at the hands of an angry God. This is the grimmest and gravest language

ever penned about the Christ rejector's future (Ch. 14:9-11).

It is exquisitely beautiful to see how God takes care of His own especially in times of severest trials. He knows how they are subjected to the Tempter and his wiles and how liable they are to succumb. So He sets before them a glorious promise: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Ch. 14:12-13).

Next on the agenda is judgment upon apostate mankind seen in the harvest being reaped (Ch. 14:14-16), and upon apostate Israel portrayed in the vintage (Ch. 14:17-20). Armageddon is envisaged graphically and grimly here.

The section which deals with Israel (Chs. 10-15) ends in grand, dramatic fashion. The martyred saints of the tribulation era are both raised and raptured to share the glory of their Messiah in the eternal city (Ch. 15:1-4). This is God's reward to them for their sacrificial service for Him. He is no man's debtor. As elsewhere stated, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed towards His Name" (Heb. 6:10).

### **SEVEN VIALS OF JUDGMENT**

The patience of God is now exhausted. Man's day is about to end and the day of the Lord begin. Divine judgments poured out upon men in the Seals and Trumpets have but hardened them against God. They defy Him, rage against Him, and resist every overture of grace. Now the seven vials are released which will affect every sphere occupied by Satan and man. Never in history have judg-

ments been so severe. The first vial is directed against the earth (Ch. 16:2); the second against the sea (v. 3); the third against the rivers and fountains of waters (v. 4); the fourth against the sun (vv. 8-9); the fifth against the Roman Empire (vv. 10-11); the sixth against the river Euphrates (vv. 12-16); and the seventh against the atmospheric heavens (vv. 17-21). Everything is in readiness for the public manifestation of Christ who shall subjugate men under His authority and exercise sovereign sway universally.

### **BABYLON THE GREAT—THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS**

Prior to the appearing in glory of Christ and His New Testament Church a vision of the judgment of the "false church" is given. It is seen as a religious system (Ch. 17) and a political power (Ch. 18). Its answer will be found in apostate Christendom headed up under the Vatican. The description given is too obvious to misunderstand. Rome's colors are purple and scarlet; she has gold, precious stones and pearls; multitudes are under her authority, seen in her sitting upon the many waters; she is built on seven mountains; she persecutes the saints; she will head up the revived Roman Empire in its final ten kingdom form; she practices idolatry and is the hold of every foul spirit.

The Romish system is the most diabolical of all religious systems. It merits, and will yet receive, the just judgment of the Eternal God. He will cause the kings she places in power to rise up against her for her total overthrow. The entire Papal hierarchy will disappear from the earth in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week to make way for the Anti-christ's program. The devotees of

the Romish system will find it easy to leave off worshipping dumb idols to worship a living man and an image to which he will impart breath (Ch. 13:15). Because of the wickedness of this system today, as well as in the days ahead, the voice of the Spirit is ever calling to true born-again saints, "Come out of her, My people" (Ch. 18:4).

### **THE BRIDE—THE LAMBS'S WIFE**

Quickly the Patmos Seer is transferred from earth to heaven to see the Bride, the Lamb's wife. The voice of a great multitude is heard saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he said unto me, 'Write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb' " (Ch. 19:7-9).

Two companies are distinguishable here—the "Bride," and the "Called." The first is the New Testament Church; the other the Old Testament saints. Hitherto in the Book both companies have been represented by the twenty four elders and a little later in this chapter 19 they will be seen as "the armies of heaven" (v. 14). All saints, irrespective of dispensation are elders, or kings and priests unto God; also they are soldiers, that form the armies of heaven, of the Lord.

The Bride takes her rightful place at the wedding. She stands by the side of her Lover, the Heavenly Bridegroom, to be united with Him in marriage. He loves her with a love infinite, unchangeable, and unquenchable. He rejoices over her with joy, He rests in His love, and He

joys over her with singing. But He is not alone in these things. The Bride shares all. He is her all in all. Now John is hastened from the marriage of the Lamb to the manifestation of Him as the Man of War (Ch. 19:11-21). Every enemy is laid low before His devastating blows. Within a comparatively short time the Gentile empires shall be reduced to powder, Satan bound in the bottomless pit, and the kingdom glorious be underway (Ch. 20:1-6).

The millennium will end disastrously. Man, tried in every conceivable way—in innocence, under conscience, human government, promise, law, grace and now glory or righteousness—is an utter failure. The final outbreak of rebellious man will be put down with the passing of the heavens and the earth. The unconverted dead will be raised, brought to the great white Throne, and consigned to the Lake of Fire (Ch. 20:11-15). Then comes the new heaven and the new earth where righteousness will dwell and God will be all in all (2 Pet. 3:13; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 21:1-7).

### **THE BRIDAL CITY**

A vision in retrospect is given John. He beholds the Church, as the Bridal City, as she appears at the beginning of the millennium. He is taken to a great and high mountain where he sees "That great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Ch. 21:9-11).

"Here we have to guard against a prevalent error. The holy city shown to the prophet is declared to be, not the abode of the Bride, but the Bride herself, viewed here in a governmental point of view, the metropolis of the kingdom to come and indeed of all creation, still with special reference to the kings and the nations of the earth.

Earthly Jerusalem, so prominent everywhere in the Old Testament prophets, is not seen here, but the holy city that comes down from God out of heaven; and she is the Bride of the Lamb. It is still in a governmental aspect. For the city is seen now as a holy vessel of divine power coming down out of heaven from God for governing the earth during the millennium, 'having the glory of God; and her light bearing as like a stone most precious, as jasper stone like crystal,' which naturally jasper is not, any more than gold is like pure glass. It is intentionally supernatural and symbolic."

### **BOOK ENDS IMPRESSIVELY**

The Book ends impressively. It corroborates the essential difference between the Christian hope and the realization of the kingdom under the Davidic covenant. "I am the Root and the Offspring of David," says Jesus, "and the Bright and Morning Star" (Ch. 22:16). To Israel He presents Himself as the Root and Offspring of David to assure that His promises and her hope shall be made good: but to us He is the Bright and Morning Star to assure us that at His coming He will introduce us to that day without an evening, that eternal day of God.

"None can be so prejudiced as to think that all this can unroll into facts before the Lord comes, though the unbelief of man approaches such an extreme. Yet many saints contend, as we know, for a certain part to intervene before He comes for us. This however is what none can show on any legitimate grounds of Scriptural evidence. Proof on the contrary has already been given, that the only consistent point for the removal of the saints to heaven is when the churches are no longer seen or heard

of on earth, and a new symbolic company is presented in heaven. After this the steps are revealed by which God chastises the guilty world. In the midst of the great tribulation He calls, and forms, not in one Body as now, but separately, a twofold nucleus of blessed men, Jews and Gentiles, for the earth under the Lord's future reign; as He had already taken to Himself on high those destined to reign with Him when that glorious time arrives, as we see in Revelation 20:-22:5.

The fulfilment of the prophecy awaits its sure and varied application when the time arrives for the earthly question to be answered. Now the Lord is occupied with a heavenly work, wherein is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is the all, and in all, quite independently of earthly change, because the end of that work is to be with Him where He is. And thus He concludes, "He that testifies these things saith, 'Yea, I come quickly!' Amen, come, Lord Jesus," is the divinely supplied reply. The constant waiting, apart from times and seasons, is kept up to the last for him that has an ear to hear.

THE END