

Christ as the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness

together with a sketch of the interval between the rapture and the appearing of Christ in glory.

E. Dennett.

Contents

CHAPTER 1. THE MORNING STAR.	1
THE MORNING STAR.	1
CHAPTER 2. THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE MORNING STAR AND THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.	12
CHAPTER 3. THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.	20
(MALACHI 4).....	20

CHAPTER 1. THE MORNING STAR.

IN this paper we desire to consider, in some little detail, the scriptural instruction upon the Morning Star and the Sun of righteousness. All, we are quite sure, will admit that, inasmuch as the writers of scripture were led by the Holy Ghost to give to our Lord His several titles, not one of them can be without significance. It is therefore of the first importance that we should seek to understand them, and thus to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Lord Himself in the apprehension of the mind of the Spirit. For what is needed to establish our souls is a larger acquaintance with the thoughts of God concerning His beloved Son, and thereby to be brought into fellowship with His own heart. It is only thus indeed that we can occupy our true place in this world as His representatives while awaiting His return. In this first chapter then we propose to adduce the teaching of the scriptures upon -

THE MORNING STAR.

It is only three times that we find this appellation given to our Lord in scripture — once in 2 Peter 1, once in Revelation 2, and again in Revelation 22. In Peter it is rendered in our translation "day star"; and indeed the word is not the same as that found in Revelation. But the word used by Peter is the proper name of the morning star, and means the "light-bringer," while that used by John, equally applying to the morning star, indicates rather the time of its

appearance in the early morning. Whether one or the other therefore, both alike refer to the same thing, and both alike apply to Christ in the same character. This will be fully seen if we consider the presentation of this symbol in the several scriptures where it is employed.

It may be first pointed out, however, that the symbol could only mean one thing naturally — namely, that the morning star not only precedes, but that it is also the presage or the harbinger of the day. This being so, it is easy to gather the sense of its application to Christ. That is, when used of Him, it must likewise signify that He, as so set forth, is the herald of the day; that just as the watcher during the night is assured when he beholds the morning star that the night is passing away, and that the sun will soon arise and flood the world with its brilliant rays, so when the Morning Star has arisen in our hearts, we have the certain knowledge that "the night is far spent" and "the day is at hand," that He, in a word, welcomed by us as the Morning Star, will speedily appear as the Sun of righteousness, who will be "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." (Ps. 19: 5, 6.)

As we pursue our meditations we propose to take the passages in the order in which they occur, for we cannot doubt that there is a divine reason in this order, and consequently a development in the teaching connected with the subject. It will help if the passage from Peter is given in full. He says: "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy [or "the prophetic word made surer"]; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts," etc. (2 Peter 1: 15-19.)

There are several points to be noticed in this striking scripture if the mind of the Spirit is to be apprehended. The first is that the subject which the apostle is desirous of establishing in the souls of these believers to whom he is writing (and also in ours) is that of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. To certify them of this, he reminds them that he had been an eye-witness of this on the mount of transfiguration, and that he had heard the voice from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In one word, he had seen and heard, and this is the qualification of a competent witness. (1 John 1: 3.) This accords, moreover, with the historical accounts of this event in the gospels. The Lord had said to them on the eve of taking them up with Him into the "holy mount," "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16: 28); and we also read, that the three chosen disciples for this privilege "saw his glory." (Luke 9: 32.) Peter was therefore, we repeat, a competent witness of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the scene in the holy mount was, as the Lord Himself has said, an anticipative display of that glorious event — a sample of what will be manifested when the Lord will come, as Son of man, in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. (Luke 9: 26.)

The next point to be observed is that the prophetic word, which had told of the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, was made surer, or confirmed (for this is undoubtedly the sense of the apostle's words), by what was seen when the Lord was transfigured before the eyes of His disciples. No careful reader of the Old Testament could fail to notice the glowing predictions and descriptions of the coming Messiah's kingdom. Thus, for example, David speaks: "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." (Ps. 72: 7-11; see also Isa. 9 - 12, Isa. 25 - 27, Isa. 51 - 59, Isa. 60 - 62, and many other passages in the prophets.) Now the purport of Peter's statement is, as already said, that all these prophecies were confirmed to the three chosen eye-witnesses of the glory of Christ, and to those who received their testimony, by the honour and glory which our Lord received from God the Father, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The testimony of the prophets was, and is, sufficient as a foundation for faith; but just as God was pleased, out of regard to the weakness of His servant, to add an oath to confirm His promise to Abraham (see Heb. 6), so, considering the weakness of Peter, James and John, and the weakness of His people, He allowed them to behold the Lord in His transfigured condition, and to hear the expression of God's delight in His beloved Son, together with the proclamation that all authority was entrusted to Him, that they might be established in the certainty of the future display of the glory of Christ in His kingdom.

Remark also, that the light of prophecy was, anterior to this, the only guide as to the kingdom in display; and indeed the only light as to it now, *unless the day has dawned, and the Morning Star has arisen in our hearts*. It is on this account that Peter says that, until this has taken place, we do well to take heed to prophecy as to a light that shineth in a dark place.

This brings us at once to the question as to what it is to have the Morning Star arisen in our hearts. In the first place we know on the authority of the Lord Himself that He is the bright and morning star. (Rev. 22: 17.) This gives us at once the key to the interpretation. It does not therefore mean that this is true of every believer, although it should be so, for it cannot signify less than that Christ has been admitted, yea, welcomed, into the heart, enshrined there in the heart's affections, *and that He has been so enthroned in the light of the day of His glory — in the light, that is, of the world to come, or of the display of His kingdom in power*.

These statements need to be well weighed as much hangs upon their import. First, however, we should challenge ourselves as to whether we have really thus received Christ into our hearts, whether by grace we have yielded, and continue to yield, to Him the undisputed sway on this throne which He claims, whether we desire our hearts to be a place

"Where only Christ is heard to speak,

Where Jesus reigns alone."

This question answered, it still remains to enquire whether we regard Christ in our hearts in this character, as the pledge and guarantee of the coming day of His glory. If so, the kingdom of His glory is not only certified to us, but it is also established — established in our hearts as the sure precursor of that time when all things will be subjected to His glorious sway. The consequence will be that, while we still rest in undoubted confidence upon every statement of the prophetic writings, we are in a way independent of their light, because the Morning Star has arisen in our hearts, and the day has already dawned. We thus live, for faith is ever the substantiating of things hoped for, in the light of the Lord's coming glory; and in our measure we can say with the Apostle Paul, The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in (or "to") us.

A few words may be necessary concerning a common misconception of the arising of the Morning Star. This misconception may be illustrated from two lines of a well known hymn:

"In hope we lift our wistful, longing eyes,

Waiting to see the Morning Star arise."

It is evident from the language here employed that the rising of the morning star is regarded as taking place objectively, that is, without, outside the soul. And indeed the thought probably is that the Lord descending from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, to fetch His redeemed, whether sleeping or waking, is the rising of the Morning Star. It is never to be forgotten, as already explained, that Christ Himself is the Morning Star, but it cannot be too earnestly insisted upon that in the only scripture which speaks of His arising in this character, the reference is not to the return of Christ for His people, but to His arising in our hearts, and viewed, as so arisen, in the light, and as the guarantee, of the day of His glory. It may also be said with confidence that, until this is true of us of which Peter speaks, there could be no real waiting for the advent of Christ. To look for Him, with eager expectation, is heart work, and hence it is of all importance that we should begin in the experience of our souls with the teaching of Peter on the subject. If we do not, we may believe in the coming of Christ as a sound doctrine, and have the prophetic writings at our finger-ends, while, at the same time, Christ, as in Laodicea, may be vainly seeking for admission into our hearts. There is a divine reason therefore for the way which God has been pleased to present the subject in scripture, an order which cannot be neglected without spiritual loss and detriment.

The apostle concludes this part of his theme with a caution. He warns us that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, inasmuch as the will of man had nothing to do with its production, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is not therefore by single statements, as if they were man's sentences, or even by the study of a single book, that the mind of the Spirit in the prophets can be ascertained. It was one Spirit speaking through many channels; and as a consequence the scope of all their writings, for one was chosen to communicate one aspect and one another, must be apprehended before we can embrace the object God had in view. The same thing is seen in the New Testament. There are four gospels to present Christ, and not one of these may be neglected if we would have God's thoughts concerning His Son, the Man Christ Jesus, as He was here in the world. In like manner all that the prophets teach concerning Christ in a future day must be considered if we would

understand the divine idea of His coming kingdom in the day of His glory. But, as has been shown, the moment Christ has arisen as the Morning Star in our hearts, the day for us has dawned, and knowing ourselves as the children of the day, we live in the light of its glory, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5: 2.)

We will now pass on to the consideration of the second passage in which the same symbol occurs. It is found in the letter to Thyatira and again, for the convenience of the reader, we will give it in full: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. *And I will give him the morning star.*" (Rev. 2: 26, 28.)

The reader will observe, in the first place, that these words are not addressed to all the believers in Thyatira, but only to the overcomer. The significance of this will be readily grasped if a few remarks are made upon the general character of Thyatira. The three previous assemblies — Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos — represent successive phases of the church which have passed away; but Thyatira, as may be seen from verse 25, reaches down and continues to the end. It exists therefore today, and it is consequently of great moment that we should understand her character and heed the instruction contained in this address to the angel. There can be no manner of doubt that Thyatira represents one of the two antagonistic forces against Christianity of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Colossians 2 — that is, Ritualism, whether exemplified in Romanism or in other so-called "churches." It should be noticed, however, that if Romanism and her allies are bore indicated, they are the product of the teaching of Jezebel. The angel was responsible, and his guilt lay in the fact that he suffered that woman (or his "wife," according to another reading), who called herself a prophetess, "to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." The doctrines allowed to be held by some in Pergamos had now been formally adopted, and they characterised the assembly. The effect was that the true nature of Christianity was subverted, legal rites were re-enacted, and thus the end of the man in the flesh was refused. And whence came these bitter waters of corruption which spread desolation wherever they flowed? The fount and source of all is seen in Ephesus having left her first love. Well therefore might the wise man lay upon us this injunction: Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Another thing claims our attention. There is found for the Lord's own refreshment and joy a little oasis in the moral desert of Thyatira. Standing apart from the abounding corruption on every hand, a remnant, like the remnant in Malachi, sought to maintain fidelity to Christ. In so doing they were slandered by Jezebel and her followers as having commerce with Satan and his iniquities. The Lord saw all this, and He stepped in with special words of encouragement to His poor and afflicted people and sheltered them from the accusations of the enemy. "But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira,* as many as have not this doctrine [the doctrine of Jezebel], and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak [as they say you have]; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have [already] hold fast till I come." (Vers. 24, 25.)

*The words "and unto" should be omitted, as the Lord is speaking to a faithful remnant. It should read simply, "But unto you I say, the rest in Thyatira."

There are therefore four classes plainly distinguished in Thyatira, the angel — composed of elders and teachers — who had failed to maintain the authority of Christ over His people; corrupt Jezebel and her followers; a feeble remnant who were seeking to keep the word of Christ, and thus to maintain separation; and, lastly, those who might be overcomers, though these would come from the godly remnant which has been specified. It is with this last class that we shall now be concerned, as the promises, and especially that of the morning star, are made to those who by the grace of God should win this title of overcomer, and thereby gain the Lord's approbation.

It will be necessary therefore to explain what will constitute an overcomer, and all the more so in that the question is often put, whether all Christians will not inherit these special promises. To put the question thus is to miss its purport. An overcomer then is one, we judge, who, in the midst of the corruptions indicated as existing in the assembly, maintains in the energy of the Spirit faithfulness to the Lord in holiness of walk and conduct. Realising the supremacy of the Lord's claims he seeks at all cost to acquire a Nazarite condition, and he pursues this end whatever the obloquy, reproach or persecution he may have to encounter. It is as the Lord Himself says, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end." There is therefore, on the one hand, absolute separation from the evils allowed in the assembly; and on the other hand, there is the pressing on, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to keep "the works of Christ," to surrender in fact oneself to Him as the instrument of His will. Such is, we deem, an overcomer, even as the Simeons and Annas were overcomers in their day.

Now it is to such, and to such alone, that these promises are given, and they are given to encourage their hearts, to stimulate their energy and to incite their increasing devotedness in the path of separation on which they had entered. They are given also as a token of the Lord's approbation, and to produce in their hearts the holy purpose to win the victor's crown. In this way all whose hearts are true to the Lord are reminded that His eye is upon them, and that nothing delights Him more than fidelity to Himself in an evil day. Surely then it is not according to His mind that in supineness and indifference we should settle down here with the deceitful thought that all these things will be ours in a future day, and thereby lose the great and *present gain* of the sunshine of the Lord's favour and blessing. It is quite true that we cannot stem the tide of corruption which has desolated the whole of Christendom; but it is open to us, naming the name of the Lord, to depart from iniquity, and to follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And to do this is to tread the path of an overcomer.

We may now proceed to consider the special promises with which is associated the gift of the morning star: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star." (Vers. 26-28.) If we turn for a moment to Psalm 2, we shall at once understand the nature of the first part of these promises. There we read: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen [nations] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Vers. 8, 9.) Very clearly the Lord refers to this scripture, and this helps us to comprehend the meaning of His promise to the overcomer. It is really the bestowal of His own power as given to Him of the Father; that is, association with Himself when He comes forth to deal in judgment with the

nations of the earth, and to subdue them unto Himself, in connection with the establishment of His kingdom.

Such is the prospect which the Lord holds out to His people to encourage them to hold fast until He should come, and thus to be overcomers. And how strikingly does He thereby reveal the grace and love which He has for His own in that He will share with them His own exaltation and glory, not only before the Father's face (John 17: 22, 23), but also (as indeed the scripture in John contemplates) in the display of His glory in His kingdom. And the words, "Even as I received of my Father," are to be much observed. It will be remembered that in His temptation in the wilderness, the devil, having shown Him all the kingdoms of the world, said, All this power will I give thee and the glory of them. . . . If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. But He answered, It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. (Luke 4: 5-8.) He thus overcame the tempter by maintaining fidelity to Him whose will He had come to do, by refusing everything from the hand of Satan, and receiving only from the Father. The path to His exaltation lay through the cross, and there having glorified God in all that God is, victorious over death and the grave, He has for ever set aside the claim and power of Satan, and has established the rights of God, which He will vindicate in due time when He assumes His power, and asserts His sovereign sway over all the nations of the earth.

But for this association with Christ in His glorious reign, the overcomer will have to wait. In the meantime, is he to have nothing? Yea, saith the Lord, during this time of patience I will give him the morning star. That is to be the overcomer's *present portion* while anticipating the day when the Lord will come forth to put down all rule and all authority and power; for He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. (1 Cor. 15: 24, 25.) It will be seen therefore that the overcomer possesses two present blessings as his stay and support, while waging conflict with the powers of evil and corruption around and holding fast what he has in expectation of the Lord's return. The first is, the light of the coming sovereignty of our Lord over the kingdoms of this world (see Rev. 11: 15), and of his own association with Christ in that day; and, secondly, the gift of the morning star.

It has yet to be inquired, In what way does he possess the morning star? Let it be repeated that Christ Himself is the morning star, and Christ Himself in a certain character; that is, Christ in relation to, and as the pledge of, the day of His glory. The morning star is the herald of the coming day, and when it is seen the watcher knows that the darkness of the night will soon pass away. In like manner the overcomer who has the Morning Star is certified that the day is at hand. The question then returns, How does he possess it? There is only one possible answer, and that is, *in his heart*. It is there he holds the precious gift, and hence he is superior to all the power of the enemy which besets him around, for his heart is flooded with the light of the day for which he waits. The darkness of the night for him has passed; he lives in the sunlight of the day. (See 1 Thess. 5: 5.)

The difference therefore between this scripture and that in Peter is this: in the latter, when the morning star has arisen in our hearts, the light of prophecy, rendered surer by what took place on the holy mount where the Lord was transfigured, is in a certain way superseded, because we have within us Christ as the Morning Star, the guarantee of all that the prophets predicted. In one word, for those in whose hearts the day has dawned and the morning star has arisen all prophecy

concerning the universal kingdom of our Lord has already been fulfilled. In the passage in Revelation the Morning Star is given also in relation to the glory of Christ, but as the present sustenance in conflict, and as the assurance that the overcomer will share with Christ in the exaltation of that day, and in His judgment of, and in His sway over the nations. As the Psalmist sings (and only those who have the gift of the morning star could now join in the song): "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen [nations], and punishments upon the people [peoples]; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord. [Hallelujah.]" (Ps. 149: 5-9.) That this in its application refers especially to the earthly people is undoubted, but it is a most vivid illustration of the Lord's promise to the overcomer in Thyatira as far as power over the nations is concerned. And it is as the harbinger and pledge of this that the Lord gives to the overcomer the morning star for present support and enjoyment.

The final scripture in which the Morning Star is presented is in the last chapter of the same book — Revelation 22: 16. The Lord Himself is the speaker: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, [and] the bright and* morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

*Many authorities omit the conjunction: it would then read, "the bright morning star."

Before entering upon the presentation of Christ, as here given, it will be necessary in order to apprehend its significance to touch upon the context. Twice, in the previous part of the chapter, the Lord announces His speedy return (verses 7, 12); and it is essential for us to understand the period to which He refers. Let it then be distinctly said that the rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ has no place in this book, unless indeed it is seen representatively in the Man Child who was caught up to God and His throne in Revelation 12. The church will be rapt away from this scene before the awful judgments, connected with the breaking of the seals, with the trumpets and the vials, are poured forth; for the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven before the Lord comes out of heaven, together with the armies which were in heaven, as described in Revelation 19. There is no doubt whatsoever of this, however ingeniously men may reason to the contrary; but it is of the utmost importance to observe that the coming of Christ in this book, in accordance with its teaching throughout, relates to the appearing in glory of our blessed Lord. Thus in regard to the announcement of His coming quickly in verse 7, another has said, "Those that keep them" (the sayings of the prophecy of this book) "are those concerned in the book who are warned that Christ will soon be there. No doubt we can all profit by it, but we are not in the scenes it speaks of." And again, "Verse 7 was a warning, in form of blessing, to those in the circumstances referred to, to keep the sayings of the book, but this verse 12 is the record of Christ's coming to the general judgment of the quick." This makes all plain, and if we have entered into it, we shall be the better prepared to consider our special scripture.

There is, however, a remark or two more to be made. It will be noticed that the Lord affirms the solemn statement of His coming by the truth of what He is as the eternally self-existent One: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Then we have a short parenthesis in which is described the blessedness of those who will have the title to the tree of life and to enter in through the gates into the city; and also the several moral characters or classes are specified who will be for ever excluded from that abode of perfection and bliss. The everlasting difference between good and evil (although this will not be finally declared until the session of the great white throne) having been made, the Lord again speaks, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

A few words must first be said upon the first character given — the root and the offspring of David. Two or three scriptures will unfold this to us. In the prophet Micah we read, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5: 2.) Here are manifestly the same two aspects as in the words of Christ Himself. Again, in the language of Gabriel, when announcing to Mary the birth of Jesus, he says, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," etc. (Luke 1: 32.) And finally, the Lord Himself said to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22: 42-45.) The answer to these questions is found in our scripture, as also in Micah and Luke, for in all alike it is abundantly manifest that He who was to be ruler over Israel, He who was to sit upon the throne of His father, David, was also David's Lord. As in our scripture, He was the root, the origin of David, as well as his offspring. Herein lies the mystery of God manifest in flesh, which lies at the basis of redemption, whether for Israel or for Christians. Observe moreover that this presentation of Himself determines the character of His coming in this chapter. It shows beyond a doubt that the Lord has in view the establishment of the kingdom, first over Israel and then over the nations of the earth; and that, in His universal sway, He will make good in His government all that God is. Hence the cry of the Psalmist, "Say among the heathen [nations] that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people [peoples] righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people [peoples] with his truth." (Ps. 96: 10-13.) It is then that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth from pole to pole, for it will be a time of universal blessing under the sway of the Root and Offspring of David.

But it is with Christ as the bright and morning star that we are more especially concerned; only it greatly helps us to comprehend the significance of this emblem when we consider the effects of the introduction of the day of Christ. As also in regard to the promise to the overcomer in Thyatira, the kingdom, at least as contained in the character of the Root and Offspring of David, comes first into view. And it is precisely this fact that definitely fixes the import of the morning star, teaching, as it does, that, as in the natural heavens, so here, it is the presage of the

coming glorious day. There is, however, one difference to be noted between the scripture now before us and those already considered. Both in Peter and in Revelation 2 the morning star is looked upon as a present possession; in the former as the possible possession of all believers, in the latter as a gift to the overcomer. In the scripture before us it is simply the presentation of Christ in this character *to the assembly - and to the assembly as the bride*. That the bride will and does cherish the Bridegroom in her affections is undoubted, and all the more in that the church is here seen in her normal condition. Still Christ calls attention to Himself under this symbol in this place, we judge, to draw forth the affections of her heart which He knows to be there, to encourage her to maintain the constant attitude of expectancy of His return, and to cheer her heart amidst the increasing darkness and gloom on earth with occupation with Himself in this character, as giving the assurance that very soon the clouds will be all dispersed when He breaks forth through them all as the Sun of righteousness.

It must again be remarked that there is no question here of *the rising* of the morning star. Christ has so arisen, and the bride, standing as it were upon the edge of the night, beholds Him, and, while beholding, is entranced with His beauty, as well as convinced, at the same time, that the night is far spent and that the day is at hand when, sharing in His exaltation and throne, He will display her as robed in His own glory and beauty. Two events will, we know, precede this: first, the private presentation of the bride to Himself, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5: 27), and the public celebration of the marriage of the Lamb in heaven as described in Revelation 19: but what is contemplated here, in connection with the coming quickly of Christ, is what is revealed to John by one of the seven angels who said, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." (Rev. 21: 9-11.)

The subject would be incomplete without a few words upon the effect of the presentation of Christ to the bride. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." How simple! And yet it was the suited response. It could not be otherwise inasmuch as it is the language of the Spirit *and* the bride. But how the language of both? Because it was produced by the Spirit in the heart of the bride. It was His words, though uttered by herself. (Cp. Romans 8: 26, 27.) The response therefore was the one which the Lord desired to bear, and the only one suited to the moment. And it is much to be observed that it was elicited by the presentation of Himself to the heart of the bride, and if as a consequence her heart overflowed in the one word, "Come," it was the effect of the mighty working of the Spirit. What a lesson to all who seek to minister to God's beloved people? Is it desired to lead them into fuller blessing by awakening in them more fervent affection to Christ? Behold then the Lord's own way. *It is to minister Himself in the aspect suited to the need*. But for this the one who ministers must himself be in communion with the heart of Christ about His people, and he must be near enough to Him to apprehend His mind for them at that particular moment. Oh! that many such servants may be found labouring amongst the saints of God.

"And let him that heareth say, Come." It is not only the bride therefore who turns upward in the power of the Spirit, as she gazes upon the face of the Bridegroom, and says, with

unutterable longing, Come; but the Lord would have every one of His people, wherever he may be, who hears the cry to join in it individually. What could more plainly reveal the Lord's mind for His own, that He would have every saint of God maintaining the expectation of His return. Not one is excepted, and this very fact constitutes a challenge as to our state of soul in view of seeing the Lord face to face; a prospect, when cherished, which constitutes the one great motive to holiness, as the apostle teaches that every one who looks for Christ and being like Him, will purify himself, even as Christ is pure. (1 John 3: 2, 3.)

The circle is now widened. The church is in a sense the depository of grace; and hence the Spirit of God, speaking through her, or through His servants, thinking upon the multitude of needy, thirsty souls scattered throughout the world, remembering that the day of grace will be closed when the Lord does come, utters the yearning appeal, Let him that is athirst come, As the Lord said when He was upon earth, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink, so now the Spirit repeats the invitation. Oh! that weary souls everywhere, souls who have been attempting to slake their thirst at human cisterns, might have their ears opened to hear this pleading invitation; and as they hear it, may they remember the words of the Lord Himself, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well [fountain] of water springing up into everlasting life."

There is yet more. Every person upon the face of the earth is thought of, for it is added, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Nothing could more fully show that the living water which Christ has secured through His death and resurrection is "towards all," that is, that all that is in the heart of God is for man, and consequently that the gospel is to be proclaimed to all, for God has been pleased to assume the attitude of a Saviour God; and since Christ died for all, He would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2) Let this gracious invitation therefore be proclaimed throughout the wide world, and with all the more urgency because of the imminence of the Lord's return.

Finally, attention may be called to the fact, often mentioned, that the presentation of the Lord in this twofold way, as the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star, becomes the occasion for the description of the whole circle of the church's affections. She, as the true bride, begins with the Bridegroom; she then thinks of, for indeed she includes, all who are His; next she remembers all anxious and thirsty ones; and lastly she travels out, and thus becomes the interpreter of her Lord's mind, to all men of every country and clime. Let us then seek grace that we may move in no narrower circle. And mark it well, that the bride begins with Christ, and not with souls, however precious they may be. In the same way, if we are to become in any measure the expression of the heart of Christ, we must begin with Himself. If, forgetting this, we commence first with saints or sinners, our hearts will become contracted and narrow, and we shall no longer be the exponents of His blessed heart and will. Give Him the first place in our affections and we shall be His faithful representatives towards all.

CHAPTER 2. THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE MORNING STAR AND THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THERE is no interval indicated between the Morning Star and the Sun of righteousness shining forth in His strength. As the beautiful rays of the morning star can be often discerned in the heavens even while the sun is arising above the eastern horizon, so might it have been concluded, from the adoption of these emblems, that the glory of the Sun of righteousness would follow immediately upon the shining of the morning star. But it is not so, for it is apparent that in each of the three cases of the employment of the symbol of the morning star, it is for the comfort and encouragement of the saints of this period, in one word, for the consolation of Christians. But these, as we know from the teaching of scripture, will not be left on the earth at the darkest time of its history, but, as in the promise to Philadelphia, in the words of the Lord Himself, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from ["out of "] the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world [the habitable world], to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3: 10.)

Seeing therefore that there is a space of time between these two characters of Christ, we shall all the more intelligently comprehend the whole subject if we consider how this interval of time will be occupied, at least as far as believers are concerned. If now we turn to the first Epistle to the Thessalonians we shall find the most explicit teaching upon this subject. In chapter 1 we are taught that these believers were "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus;" and Jesus, the apostle tells them, was their Deliverer from the wrath to come. (Vers. 9, 10.) Now our view of the latter part of this passage will entirely depend upon our interpretation of the words, "the wrath to come." What is this? Popularly explained, it is hell, the lake of fire, which will be the doom of all whose names are not found in the book of life, at the session of the great white throne. (Rev. 20: 15.) But when 1 Thessalonians 5 is examined it will be seen that, true as it is that all who have rejected God's testimony in any age will be cast in the lake of fire, the "wrath to come" does not contemplate this final issue, but means rather the judgments which in a future day will be poured out upon this world — the wrath connected with the coming of the day of the Lord. It is in contrast with this that the apostle says to the Thessalonians, God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, moreover, it is to be remembered that before the day of the Lord the desolating judgments, of which we have the record in Revelation, will be visited upon the habitable world in its apostasy from God. It is from this wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, from which Christ is the deliverer of His people.

If now it be inquired as to how, or in what manner He vouchsafes this deliverance, the answer is found in 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-14. To correct a misapprehension into which the Thessalonians had fallen, the apostle says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Now it is evident that, if God is to bring back His saints with Jesus, they must in some way be with Him before He returns. It is this very thing that Paul, having received a special revelation upon the subject (for he speaks "by the word of the Lord"), proceeds to explain. He says, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto

the coming of the Lord shall not prevent ["anticipate," or "go before"] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and 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." (Vers. 15-17.) The truth then is, that before the day of the Lord, with its attendant judgments, the believers who compose the church of God on earth, together with those who have fallen asleep, will be caught away from the scene, caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and that they in this manner will be delivered from the wrath to come, and obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. So great is the tenderness of our blessed Lord, and so unspeakable His love, that He will not allow the church for which He died to be exposed to the coming wrath, or to that great tribulation which will precede the day of the Lord! Blessed be His name for ever and ever. Amen.

It is, however, alleged, while the foregoing statements are admitted, that if the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air as described by the apostle, it is to return *immediately* with Him when He will break forth through the clouds, which have darkened the earth, as the Sun of righteousness. Can this allegation be accepted? It is impossible, as it allows no room for the three events which in scripture follow upon the rapture of the saints before the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The first of these is the introduction of the saints into the Father's house. If it be true, as it undoubtedly is, that the *character* of His coming is not before our Lord's mind in John 14, it yet cannot be contested that the *object* of it is very distinctly. And what do we read of this? "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Nothing short of this, of being with Himself, and to be with Him in the Father's house, could satisfy His own heart; and surely it may be added that nothing less than this could suit the Father to bestow upon the many sons whom He has purposed for glory through the One who had glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He had given Him to do. Nay, we may go further back: every believer was given to Christ by the Father, and every one is drawn to Him by the Father. There is therefore full communion between the Father and the Son concerning His people, and doubtless we may see the expression of this in the Lord's message to His own through Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Such is the place which Christ has won for us according to the Father's eternal counsels for the glory of His beloved Son; and hence, if we are now in the realisation of our heavenly relationship and place, in association with Christ, as sons with Him before the Father's face, it could only be to the end that we shall be for ever with Him in the Father's house. What joy then will it be to the Lord Himself to introduce His own into that scene

"Where all those deep affections,

Which fill the Father's heart,

Shall find their satisfaction,

Their joy to us impart;

Where we His throne surrounding,

Shall Abba, Father say,
Within those many mansions —
Prepared for that day."

In a still deeper sense He will surely say again, "Here am I and the children which Thou hast given me."

The next event will be the judgment-seat of Christ. There is very distinct evidence that this will take place before the appearing of Christ, for we read in Revelation 19 that the armies in heaven that followed Christ out of heaven, as there set forth, were "clothed in fine linen, white and clean," and referring back to verse 8 we find that the fine linen, clean and white, is the righteousness ("righteousnesses") of saints. Now this would be impossible before the judgment-seat of Christ, because it is at this tribunal, before which we are all to be manifested (2 Cor. 5: 10), that we shall receive the things done in our bodies, according to that we have done, whether good or bad. Christ Himself is our righteousness before God, or we could have no title to be in His presence, but the righteousnesses of the saints could not be known or declared until the things done in our bodies had been reviewed and appraised according to the unerring estimate of Christ Himself. The whole of our past lives, the significance of every act, its motive as well as its object, will be made clear to us — clear as to the source of all, whether our activities sprang from the energy of the flesh or were produced by the Spirit of God, and how much of mixture there had often been in what seemed to be our most devoted service. All this will be manifested to us at that time in the patient grace of our blessed Lord, to us individually, not necessarily to others in public.

The effect will be that we shall magnify as never before the grace of our God, that grace which will impute to His people as their own righteousness what that same grace had wrought in and through His people. They will be constrained to acknowledge, as the Apostle Paul has said, that it was not they but the grace of God which was with them, that gave both the privilege and the capacity to do anything in His service; but it will, on the other hand, be the delight of Christ in that day to attribute every good work done, good according to His perfect estimate, to His beloved people. Should any one, however, inquire how it will be possible to endure the exposures which must necessarily be made, however tenderly, in the perfect light of that day, let such an one remember that when we are manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ we are already conformed to His image. We shall therefore be in full communion with His own mind, and as such we shall seal with our hearty "Amens" every condemnation which He may be compelled to pass upon any act of the flesh which we had done. Nay, more, we shall rejoice before Him because the issue of our manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ will but intensify our conceptions of the grace of our God, and enlarge our thoughts of His eternal love which He has revealed to us in and through His beloved Son.

If now for a moment we consider the object which the judgment-seat of Christ has in view, it will confirm us in the conclusion that it must precede His coming forth as the Sun of righteousness. From the parable in Luke 19: 11-27, as well as from other scriptures, we learn that there will be differences in the position of the saints in the kingdom according to the measure of

their fidelity in service during the period of the Lord's absence. This will not be so in eternity, because, as the result of the purpose of God, every redeemed one will be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. As indeed it is scripturally put in the familiar lines:

"Thou gav'st us, in eternal love,
To Him, to bring us home to Thee,
Suited to Thine own thought above,
As sons like Him, with Him to be."

But in the kingdom, in its ordering and government, some, to use the language of the parable, may be over ten cities and others over five, and the place of each will follow upon the faithful diligence exercised in the use of that which had been entrusted to them to "trade" with while waiting for the Lord's return. In like manner, the Lord said to His disciples, to those who by His grace had continued with Him in His temptations, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22: 29, 30.)

Now it will be at the judgment-seat of Christ that the service of each will be appraised; it will be then to borrow the language of the parable, that He will reckon with His servants, ascertain how much every one has gained by trading, in order to assign to each his respective place in His kingdom. Other things will be transacted before this solemn tribunal, but we are only concerned at present with that which will form the foundation of the awards in the glorious kingdom of Christ. At least, however, it may be remarked that it will be a great gain to us to live constantly in the prospect of the manifestation of that day, to use diligence that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to the Lord. The apostle was enabled to say, We are made manifest unto God; and if we daily walk in the light as God is in the light, it will be true also of us, and in this way we shall anticipate the judgment-seat of Christ, as well as qualify ourselves for the position which the Lord, in His grace, may assign to us when He comes forth to take His rights and to establish His universal dominion.

The third, and last thing to take place, as preparatory to the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the marriage supper of the Lamb, as recorded in Revelation 19. With this, however, must be conjoined, as connected with it, an event of which there is, we think, no mention except in Ephesians 5. We read there of Christ's presentation *to Himself* of His bride, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ver. 27) The words in italics — *to Himself* — reveal most fully the character of this event, that it is a private and not a public thing, that it expresses the joy of Christ in claiming His bride as His own, that bride which ravished His heart when He beheld her as the pearl of great price, in all her beauty according to the counsels of God, the church He loved and for which He gave Himself. Her wilderness sojourn will then be over, the days of her widowhood and mourning will be ended, she will have passed through all needful discipline until, through having been sanctified and cleansed with the washing of the water by

the word, she has been made morally suitable to Christ. And then it is that He claims her in the joy of His heart, and presents her to Himself arrayed in all the beauty wherewith He has robed her, that she may be His companion for ever. This, we repeat, is a private transaction, and no "stranger" will intermeddle with the joy of Christ in that day. It will be wholly for His own satisfaction and pleasure; for then in very deed, if we may borrow the language, He will bring His bride into the banqueting house, and His banner over her will be love.

After this private presentation of the bride to Himself, there will be the public celebration of the marriage in heaven. We find a full account of this in Revelation 19, and we give the whole passage: "And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and 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 the righteousness ["righteousnesses"] of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." (Vers. 5-9.) The connection in which this scripture is found adds greatly to its significance. The great harlot who had corrupted the earth with her fornication, the false bride, had received her judgment from God and had been for ever set aside, adjudged to be, as she was, the murderess of prophets and saints, for in her, says the Spirit of God, was found their blood, "and the blood of all that were slain upon the earth." This avenging judgment was the cause of mourning and lamentation (for so far had men departed from the living God) in all classes of the inhabitants of the earth. But in heaven (and nothing could more completely show the antagonism of man to God) it was the occasion of an outburst of universal joy. And wherefore this overflowing gladness which could only find adequate expression in praise and adoration? It sprang from the fact that God, having judged Babylon the great corruptress of the earth, was about to establish His sovereignty throughout the wide world. Nay, viewing this as already effected, the voice of a great multitude filled heaven with their ecstatic thunderings of praise as they cried, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The heart in which Christ is already enthroned will understand this exultant celebration, as it apprehends that the time had now arrived when God was about to glorify publicly His beloved Son in the face of the universe, when He would exalt even here on earth the One who had once been rejected and crucified, and cause all the nations of the world to own His blessed sway. For then will come to pass the saying written, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations." (Ps. 22: 27, 28.)

But, and this is the point in this heavenly scene, He will not be alone in the day of His glory. His bride, the church, who has been identified with Him in the day of His rejection will, out of His great love to her, be displayed in glory with Him in the day of His exaltation. The marriage of the Lamb is the preparation for this, and hence it is in order that the bride may be a companion for her exalted Lord and Bridegroom that she makes herself ready, and is arrayed before all heaven in her garments of fine linen, pure and white. It is this union of the Bridegroom with His bride that elicits the admiring praise of the heavenly hosts; and so privileged are those who behold it that John is commanded to write, "Blessed are they which are called unto the

marriage supper of the Lamb." It will be indeed a scene never more repeated, and the joy of the bride in the consummation of all her longing hopes, in the possession for ever of the Object of her affections, will only be surpassed by the joy of the Bridegroom in taking into union with Himself the bride for whom He had already proved His love to the uttermost when He died upon the cross. And the love He showed there was but the measure of the love He had borne for her through every step of her pilgrim way, and indeed of the love expressed in this scene before all the heavenly hosts in the public celebration of His marriage. It was, and is, and ever will be, an everlasting, infinite and perfect love, a love which passeth knowledge — and language will ever fail to convey its fulness and intensity.

It must, however, be again repeated that the marriage supper of the Lamb is but preparatory to His coming out of heaven, when He will break through the dark clouds of earth as the Sun of righteousness. This will be dealt with in the next chapter; but we still have to call attention, if briefly, to what will follow upon the earth while these events, which have been described, are taking place in heaven. There will scarcely be a single ray of light to illumine the darkness which will enshroud the habitable world on the eve of the Lord's appearing, that is, during the last half-week of Daniel's prophecy. To enter into the detail of what will transpire during these twelve hundred and sixty days, or forty and two months, is beyond the scope of our present purpose; but if the reader should desire to do so, he can study, reminding himself as he reads that it is only through the teaching of the Holy Ghost that the mind of God can be apprehended, Revelation 6 - 18. In this portion of the scriptures he will find a full account of the state of things which will prevail before the Lord returns. We propose simply to sketch the main features of this terrible time, concerning which the Lord Himself said, "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: 22.)

The first thing then we may refer to is the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. The Apostle Paul tells us that this event will be consequent upon the departure of the Holy Ghost in the church. He says, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [hinders or restrains] will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed." (2 Thess. 2: 7, 8.) This is manifestly the Antichrist, for the apostle describes this man of sin as the one "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." (Ver. 4.) It is he of whom John says that he will deny the Father and the Son; and in Revelation 13 we have other details of this incarnation of sin and iniquity, this embodiment of human progress, intellect, and achievement in contrast with, and in opposition to, all that God is as set forth in Christ. And what Paul teaches in 2 Thessalonians 2 is, that the only thing which restrains the manifestation of this monster of iniquity at the present moment is the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth in the church. This is for the comfort of the children of God. The signs of apostasy may be visible on every hand, the corruptions of Thyatira through the teaching of Jezebel may abound, and infidelity, owing to a growing Laodiceanism, may rear its head and boast of enlightenment from human sources in its self-complacent lukewarmness and indifference; but the Antichrist cannot appear above the surface until after the church has been rapt away from the scene, "for greater is he that is in you," writes the apostle, "than he that is in the world. "

It should also be said that before the uprising of Antichrist, as may be seen from Revelation 8, the first beast, the head of the Roman empire, consisting of the ten federated kingdoms, will have astonished the world by his appearance. And it is through his power that Antichrist will be strengthened and sustained; for we read that Antichrist will exercise "all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." (Rev. 13: 12 — see also following verses.)

We do not, however, pursue this further, but we may point out that the time of "Jacob's trouble" and "the great tribulation" will coincide with this period. The former relates to the terrible ordeal of fiery persecution through which the Jews who are in the land will have to undergo — at least those who will compose the faithful remnant of that day — during the domination of Antichrist in Jerusalem; and the latter refers to a similar, and probably a coincident, period of the exercise of tyrannical oppression and its attendant persecutions which will extend throughout the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire. It is this which the Lord terms, in His message to the angel of Philadelphia, "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Both alike will probably spring from the edict, after that Antichrist has impiously dared to set up the image of the first beast ("the abomination of desolation") in the temple, that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed, that all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, that is, every subject of the Roman empire should receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads (as a sign of allegiance to the existing blasphemous authorities), and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. (Rev. 13: 15-17.) It will be a despotism, animated by devilish power as well as untempered by any legal restraints, such as the world has never witnessed, fierce as have been the persecutions of the early centuries of Christianity and of the Middle Ages; and since God never leaves the world without witnesses (Rev. 11), martyrs will abound amongst those who will be tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; while others, as in the early days, will have trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments, and others again will be stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, and slain with the sword. (See Heb. 11: 35-38; Rev. 20: 4.)

The question, however, may be asked, Will not the saints of that day, as now, be under the obligation of obedience to the "powers that be," the existing authorities? The answer is twofold. Whenever, in the first place, an earthly monarch intrudes his supremacy into God's domain, and commands for himself what is due only to God, as Nebuchadnezzar did, then men are justified in refusing compliance to the monarch's decrees, as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the king's image. But, secondly, during the interval between the rapture of the church and the appearing of Christ, *there will be no authority owned of God*. The powers of that day will not, as at the present time, be ordained of God. The reason is, as we read in Revelation 13, that the dragon (Satan) will give to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority." (Ver. 2.) It will therefore be a time of the unrestrained exercise of Satanic power, except in so far as the judgments of God, falling with increasing violence and intensity upon the scene, may alarm the minds of those who wield the authority. But even so there will be no repentance, only an ever-deepening hostility to God and to His people. Altogether there will be, as in the words already cited, such a great tribulation as has not been since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be.

We said in an earlier part of the chapter that the darkness of this day will scarcely be relieved by a single ray of light. There are, however, rays of light discernible by those who have been enlightened by the Spirit, for the curtain has been lifted, and our sketch would not be complete if these were not mentioned. In Revelation 7 we find a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. . . . 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 unto me, These are they which came out of *the* ["the" should be inserted] great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, etc. (Vers. 9-17.) This immense company is not elsewhere mentioned in the scriptures; but what we learn is that they all are brought through that awful time of trial which will affect the Gentiles during the despotic sway of the head of the revived Roman empire; that, having received the testimony of God for that time, which has reached them in some unrevealed manner, they came under the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, and maintained holiness of walk and conversation, and that, in the same grace which met them at first, the blessed recompense is bestowed upon them of being before the throne of God, and of serving Him day and night in His temple, and of having God dwelling among them. It is another illustration of the fact that no power of evil can hinder the accomplishment of the purposes of God; that just as the Lord, when on earth, found His sheep and led them out, spite of the opposition of the Jewish authorities, so in this coming day, when Satan to the outward eye will seem to hold the field, and to reign unchecked, every one whose name has been written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world will be brought out of his hiding place and be made a recipient of God's grace and eternal blessing. Man energised by Satan may do his worst, but he cannot interfere with the counsels of God. We may well therefore take heart in the darkest day as we remember that, whatever the appearance of things, God is silently and surely working, and irresistibly working, towards His goal. Thus He will make the wrath of man to praise Him, while He will restrain the remainder.

Passing now to Revelation 14 we are introduced to another company who have been snatched out of the fiery furnace into which they had been cast, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of old. It would take us too far to enter minutely upon the subject of this hundred forty and four thousand who were redeemed ("bought") from the earth. It will therefore suffice to say that these firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb will be saved out of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, who will be in the land when their cruel adversary, the Antichrist, rages, as against Christ, so also against His people. But not one of this complete typical number, 12,000 x 12, will be found lacking. As when the Lord in the Gospel of John said, "All that the Father hath given to me shall come unto me" — so in that day all the chosen ones will be brought to own and confess the Lamb of God; and every one of this company will have, not the mark of the beast, but the Lamb's name and His Father's name [for so it should be read] written upon their foreheads having suffered in their measure, as the Lord Himself suffered in His rejection. Hence they receive this special mark of favour, and moreover they will stand with the Lamb upon Mount Sion as well as follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

It is a great encouragement to be permitted to know these blessed alleviations of the unparalleled sorrows of that day of Satan's apparent triumph; and to see, we may repeat, how

completely God controls, even if He do not manifest Himself, all the powers of evil for the working out of His own ends, whether in judgment upon His enemies or in the salvation of His people. When Israel has learned this lesson, they will be able with full hearts to adopt the language already written for their use: The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

It may be remarked, finally, that this whole interval will be marked by much seeming progress and prosperity. The arts and sciences, as well as trade and commerce, will flourish in an unexampled manner. If any should hesitate to receive this statement, let them read Isaiah 2 and Revelation 18. The reason is twofold: first, the earth will then witness the development of man, and man's powers in an extraordinary measure; unchecked, and under the inspiration of Satan, man will display what is termed genius in a way never before seen. In one word. the man in the flesh will at that time reach his highest altitude and perfection. Secondly, worshipping the god of this world, as all outside of God's elect will, Satan will grant them the desires of their hearts. (Compare Luke 4: 5-7.) Combined with this there will be a pervading sense, under the seductive influences of the evil one, of peace and security. As the apostle writes, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. 5: 3.) Or as the Lord said, "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17: 26, 27.) Not that there will be no forebodings. In all crises of the world's history there have been in the minds of many some anticipations of impending remarkable occurrences. And of this time the Lord has explicitly said, "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." And yet the Lord warns His disciples to take heed to themselves, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." (Luke 21: 25, 26; 34, 35.)

Such then will be the prevailing state of things after the church has been removed from the scene, and until the sudden revelation of the glory of the Lord when all flesh shall see it together. As Peter teaches, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. It is at His appearing in this way, as will be seen from the next chapter, that He shines forth in the heavens as the Sun of Righteousness when He will be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

CHAPTER 3. THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

(MALACHI 4)

IT is only once in scripture that we find this appellation of Christ; but what is signified by it comes out in numberless places, as we hope to see while we pursue our meditations. If, however, this emblem is only once explicitly employed, its meaning, especially when taken in the connection of this scripture, is so apparent that it cannot be mistaken. This will be

immediately apprehended if we cite the words of the prophet. In the previous chapter, he describes a God-fearing remnant in the midst of abounding wickedness and corruption. All alike were nominally the people of God, but the mass were, if not actual apostates yet characterised by almost every feature of moral corruption, even while cloaking themselves with the garb of a loud profession. (See chapters 1, 2, 3.) In contrast to all this Malachi speaks of those that feared the Lord and spake often to one another, and tells us of the Lord's delight in this faithful residue, and how He would claim them as His own in that day when He made up His jewels, and that, at that time, all should behold the distinction He would make between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. "For, behold," he proceeds, "the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name" (the remnant of the preceding chapter) "shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." (Mal. 4: 1, 2.)

Now it is abundantly evident from this scripture that, just as the morning star is used in its proper sense as the herald of the dawn, so the Sun of Righteousness is brought in to set forth the introduction of the day, that is the day of Christ's glory consequent upon His appearing. As, however, Malachi is writing to the Jews, he confines the application of the symbol to the earthly people; but just as the sun in the heavens is the centre of the whole solar system, and dispenses light and blessing for all, so the Sun of Righteousness must be the centre of God's universe of blessing which, in accordance with His eternal purposes, He will establish on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ; for He has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation ("for the administration") of the fulness of the times He might gather together in one ("head up") all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth. The term all things comprises, indeed means, the universe, and we are thus taught that Christ is the Head and Centre of the whole universe of God, that universe which God even now is engaged in establishing, and which will be the result of His making all things new. (See Rev. 21: 5.)

There is another passage in Ephesians which presents this in another aspect. It says, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, *that he might fill all things.*" (Eph. 4: 9, 10.) Here we learn two additional things; first, that all the glory that accrues to Christ now, and in the ages to come, is the result of His redemptive work, of His incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension; and, secondly, that He will fill the universe with His glory. Under the eye of God all this is already accomplished; to the eye of faith old things have passed away, and all things have become new; but for the actual realisation of it, we have still to wait until the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings, and flood the whole universe with His blessed rays of light and glory.

Before considering what will be effected by the arising of the Sun of righteousness we may call attention to two other scriptures which bear upon the subject. In Isaiah 60 we read, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the

brightness of thy rising." (Vers. 1-3.) Again, further on in the same chapter, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." (Vers. 19-20.) It is almost needless to point out that we have here brought before us the same event as described in Malachi as the arising of the Sun of righteousness. The only difference is that Isaiah shows us the effect of His arising on Jerusalem, the earthly bride; and the pathetic statement, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended, tells us most truly that all her wounds will then be healed.

The other scripture is connected with the transfiguration of our blessed Lord, concerning which we read, "And his face did shine as the sun" (Matt. 17), with which the reader may compare the statement in the vision vouchsafed to John, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (Rev. 1: 16.) These are cited as the indubitable proof that it is Christ Himself who is the Sun of righteousness, even as we have also seen in Isaiah, "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light." This is a great thing for our souls, because it fixes our eyes upon the coming glory of the One who, as our Redeemer and Lord, has already enshrined Himself in our hearts. Where this is the case, there can be no subject so attractive and engrossing as His exaltation and glory; and this will be increasingly the case the more we perceive that He is the centre of all the thoughts of God, the One in whom all God's glory is secured, whether in heaven or upon the earth, and that this glory will soon flood the universe.

From what has been before us, it has then been abundantly shown that the Lord Himself is the Sun of righteousness, that this title has been given Him in connection with the introduction of the day of His manifestation and glory in this world, and that as such He will shine on with increasing lustre and splendour until before the effulgence of His glory all darkness will be forever dispelled. But so far it is only as the SUN that we have considered Him; and hence we must also take into account what is added to this, namely, that He is the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. It is indeed this term that determines the character of this heavenly Luminary. What marks the present moment is lawlessness, and this will wax more and more apparent until finally, after the church has been caught away from this scene, it will culminate, in the man of sin, who will defy both God and Christ during the little moment of his continuance. But the Lord will consume this lawless antagonist with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming; and then together with this He will bring all lawlessness to an end by the establishment of His righteous throne, whose authority will extend throughout the whole universe. This was the prospect that sustained and enchanted the saints of old in their darkest days; it was the subject of the songs of their prophets; and the psalms are full of the anticipation of the time as they call, for example, upon the floods to clap their hands, and the hills to be joyful together before the Lord, "for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people [peoples] with equity." Or, to give another citation, as we find it in Psalm 45, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Vers. 6,7.)

If now we understand God's righteousness to be His rights, to secure which it was first necessary to lay the foundation in the death of Christ (Rom. 3: 21-26), because He must for ever

act in consistency with what He is, we shall see that not only will righteousness be the foundation of the throne of Christ, and not only will He judge the world in righteousness, but that He will also establish and maintain the rights of God in every corner of the universe. All lawlessness will therefore be forever abolished, for at length, on the ground of His sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, He will take away for ever the sin of the world, by bringing God into the scene and maintaining His rights. All this blessed work will be preparatory to the new heaven and the new earth wherein righteousness will dwell. He is thus the Sun of righteousness, inasmuch as the establishment of righteousness flows from Him; and this will be readily apprehended if it is understood that light and life and righteousness are bound up together in scripture. (John 1: 4; Rom. 5: 17-21.)

A further remark may be added to point out that the stability of the universe will depend upon the establishment of righteousness; for nothing could be secure where God had not His rights. It might indeed be said that righteousness is the bond that will unite every creature in heaven and upon earth to the immutable throne of God, and bring every heart into willing subjection to Him who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen. Hence it is that, to borrow the language of the prophet, the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

If now we pause for a moment to draw a contrast between man's system, the world of which Satan is prince, and that which will prevail, God's system, when once the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, it cannot fail to be instructive. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that God's system of things, of which Christ is the Head, is already established, though it will not be manifested until after the appearing in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment Christ was exalted and glorified at God's right hand, the immutable foundation of all having been laid in the cross, in the precious blood of Christ wherein God's righteousness was declared, God had established the Head and Centre of that universe of blessing which He had purposed before the foundation of the world. Faith lays hold of this, even as Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ and was glad, and already expatiates amidst its bright and blessed scenes; but we have still to wait for the time when the whole universe will be actually filled with the glory of Christ.

"O love supreme and bright,

Good to the feeblest heart,

That gives us now as heavenly light

What soon shall be our part."

What then are the features of man's system, of that great organisation termed the world? The Apostle John has summed up its unholy principles very briefly; they are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Pause for one moment and reflect upon what would happen if these three things were suddenly removed, blotted out. Why the world would perish of *inanition*. Its enterprise, its pleasures, its political conflicts, its wars of conquest, its love of place and power would vanish for ever. If the earth were suddenly to stop in its revolution round the

sun it would bring death and destruction upon every living thing, and in like manner, if the moral elements of the world — objects presented to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life — were taken out of the way the sustenance of the flesh, of the natural man, being what he is, would be for ever gone. Then, to complete the picture, it must also be pointed out that Satan has founded his throne upon the lusts of men, and upon their fear of death, and also that upon the whole scene lies the judgment of God; for it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment — the judgment of the great white throne, and the lake of fire, which is the second death. Could there be, by any possibility, a darker picture? And yet no human hand could paint it dark enough. What a mercy for man that the whole truth may be discovered in the scriptures!

Turning now to the other side, to God's system, His world, what, let us inquire, are its principles. Three may be at once given: they are righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There are its moral elements in contrast with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. These are, in fact, the moral elements of the kingdom of God at the present moment as described by the Apostle Paul. (Rom. 5: 1, 2; Rom. 14: 17.) Nor can the order in which they are given be changed. Righteousness is, and ever must be, the only basis of peace, whether for the individual soul or for God's government. We thus read, Having made peace by the blood of the cross by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. God declared, as before said, His righteousness in the blood of Christ, and in it He laid the immutable basis of peace for ever. Thereupon, when peace is secured and enjoyed, joy in the Holy Ghost will spring up and, possessing the soul, will continually overflow in praise and adoration. This, we do not forget, may be the present experience of the redeemed; but it cannot be too much insisted upon that every moral or spiritual principle abides, and that consequently what we enjoy now we shall enjoy throughout eternity.

Take another contrast. In Satan's system of things or circle, HATE is the atmosphere. He hates God, Christ, and men alike; and those that are under his dominion hate God, and hate one another. (See Titus 3: 3.) In God's system of things, of which Christ is Head, love is the law that governs all. Christ loves His people with an undying love, having proved it to the uttermost in His death on the cross; they love Him because He first loved them, and He has enjoined upon them to love one another according to His own standard. Dwelling thus in love we dwell in God and God in us. Is any higher blessedness conceivable? And is it any wonder that the one is denominated by the term darkness, and the other by that of light? And remember, in answering the question, that darkness is always associated with death, as light is with life. As we read in John's Gospel, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1: 4, 5.) Again, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (Chap. 8: 12.) Hence it is also that we read in Colossians of believers being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and of being delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. (Col. 1: 12, 13.) Who could doubt then where bliss and eternal joys are to be found? This contrast might be put in another very simple way. Eternal life will be, during the reign of Christ, in full display, for, as the Psalmist says of Mount Zion in that day, "There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." But in Satan's dominion darkness, death and judgment will hold undisputed sway.

The final, and greatest contrast of all is found in the respective heads and centres of these circles. Satan, as the prince and god of the world, is that of the first circle, and Christ is the Head, Centre and Sun of the second. All evil is comprised in the first, and he is dominated, as we have seen, in all his activity by enmity to God, to Christ, and to man. The object therefore he has in view is to secure the everlasting misery and destruction of the poor slaves who accept his rule and bondage. All good is centred in Christ, and love to His Father, and to man is the mainspring of that mighty work of redemption wherein He has glorified God in all that God is, and secured eternal blessedness for all who put their trust in Him. Every form of evil is expressed in the former, and all the glory of God is displayed in the face of Jesus Christ.

One other thing may be specified. The basis of Satan's throne is laid in the lusts of men, and the world (the circle of Satan's dominion) will pass away and the lust thereof, and pass away under the eternal judgment of God. In another aspect, it may be said that the foundation of Satan's kingdom is laid in death, and it, as we know, together with hades, is to be cast into the lake of fire, where Satan himself is to have his eternal home. But the foundation of Christ's kingdom has been laid on the other side of death, in resurrection; and hence it is that everything He establishes is on that ground, and is therefore imperishable. As He said to Peter when the latter, as taught of the Father, had confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock [the truth of Christ as the Son of the living God — and He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16) The consequence is that everything, since redemption, whether in Christianity or in the world to come, proceeds upon the principle of resurrection. This is brought out in a most striking way in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first chapter we learn that among the many glories that cluster around the Person of the Son of God, He is also the One by whom God made the worlds — that the Son is the Creator. And yet, in the same chapter, we are taught that both the heavens and the earth will perish. The responsible man, Adam, having sinned, defiled the first creation, and thus both he and it had to pass away from under the eye of God in judgment. This creation suited the first man, but it could not be suited to the second Man who is out of heaven, and therefore could not be allowed to continue in existence although the handiwork of the Son. But as we read on in the epistle we discover that everything which Christ has touched in redemption is eternal. It is eternal salvation, eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, and an eternal covenant. The reason is that already given — that all that Christ now builds, all that He touches is on the ground of resurrection, and it is on this account that everything even in the millennium will proceed upon that principle.

If the significance of this contrast is rightly perceived, it will at once be accepted that Christ must displace (as He already has displaced for God) man, and man's scene which is under the rule of Satan. There will be no room for any one in that new system of things which God has established in Christ but Christ Himself. It therefore says that, Christ has ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. But will not all His redeemed be associated with Him in the glories of that scene? Most surely they will be, but every one of these countless myriads will be, according to God's eternal purposes, conformed to the image of His Son. It is therefore all Christ and what is of Christ, and nothing which is not of Christ will, or could, enter the scene. We speak now of the final issue of the administration committed to His hands, for He must reign, till He hath put all things under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He

hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL. Then for ever will Christ be the Head and Centre of all the redeemed, and the Firstborn among many brethren, Himself expressed in and through all, and His glory filling the whole scent..

"Yet it must be, Thy love had not its rest
Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest.
That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs.
Nor I alone, Thy loved ones all, complete
In glory round Thee there shall meet,
All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord,
Object supreme of all, by all adored."

It will be felt perhaps that we have travelled beyond our immediate subject, and it may be that we have traced, in our meditations, the glories of Christ far beyond the time to which the title of the Sun of righteousness is applicable. This is undoubtedly so, if we confine it to the time of which Malachi speaks; yet we cannot but believe that Christ will be the Sun of His redeemed, of every family named of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, throughout eternity. We now return, however, and will indicate some of the characteristics of Christ as the Sun of righteousness in the world to come.

The first we take from Malachi, where the title is found. He says, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." By the expression — with healing in His wings — we understand that all (the promise is specially addressed to the faithful remnant) who come under the influence of Christ in that day will be the subjects of divine healing, and that this will be effected by the communication of a fuller life. There is a remarkable illustration of this given in the prophet Ezekiel. After the vision of the waters which issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward ' and the description of their ever-increasing volume as they flowed onward in their blessed mission, the angel said to the prophet, "These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, *the waters shall be healed*. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; *and everything shall live whither the river cometh*." (Ezek. 47: 8, 9.) Thus life and healing are explicitly connected; and we learn moreover from the Book of Revelation that the leaves of the tree of life (and this is

Christ risen) will be for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22: 3.) When we read therefore that the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings, what is it but that He will be the source of life for all that are drawn to seek blessing under His protection? And receiving of His abundant life, sickness and disease will be banished, even as Isaiah says, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick:" and again, "As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." (Isa. 33: and 45) This will enable the reader to comprehend a little of the force and beauty of the expression.

Nor let it be forgotten that we may even now morally anticipate something of this blessedness. Is it not true that our spiritual weakness and "diseases" are to be traced back to defective spiritual life? Christ came that we might have life, and have it abundantly; and if this abundance of life is not expressed by us, it is because we are not completely under His influence, because some part of our life here is excluded from the rays of His blessed sunshine. Let us listen to His own words, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me," as the scripture hath said, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." If this were but true of us, we should indeed present every mark of spiritual health, and thereby it would be proved that no part of our hearts was shut off from the shining of Christ. Paul thus calls upon the Ephesians to remember the word, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (shine upon thee). And just as we can in this way enjoy now in anticipation this action of Christ, so will those who fear His name in that day enter in large measure into the eternal blessedness of relief from everything which might cause Borrow and distress here, as described of the eternal state in Revelation, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21: 4.)

Moreover, Christ, as the Sun of righteousness, will be the source of light and heat. We name these two features together because of their relation to life. Even a plant cannot live without light and heat, and much less the people of God, whatever the character of the period in which their lot is cast. Hence John says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1: 5-7.) As without light a plant could not appropriate its suited nutriment, and without heat it could not grow, so the Christian must be in the light in order to receive, and he needs warmth if he would daily grow in the likeness of Christ. These two essentials he finds in the company of Christ, and in the enjoyment of His love, that love which, proved to the uttermost in His death, He is ever ready to minister to us when we are walking in the light of His blessed presence. So will it be when He shines forth with undimmed lustre as the Sun of righteousness. As the Psalmist says, speaking of the sun in the heavens, but doubtless with a veiled allusion to Christ, "His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof;" so when Christ shines forth in the day of His glory all nature even will break forth into song, for then it will be that creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. His light will penetrate into the remotest corners of the earth, scattering all the mists and clouds which have gathered over and darkened the souls of men

during their bondage to the evil one, and wherever His light falls the warmth of His rays will be felt, for nothing will be hid from the heat thereof. It is in view of this that the prophet, describing the effect of the arising of the Sun of righteousness upon Jerusalem, says, "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." In this way men of every clime and nation will be drawn out of their dark hiding-places that they also may share in the blessedness of the light and warmth of that heavenly Luminary which has appeared in the heavens.

It may be permissible to draw one practical lesson of present application. We have spoken of the necessary association of light and heat in the shining forth of the Sun of righteousness, and these two things are always connected in Christ. The snare which besets many of us is to rejoice in the light while we do not admit the heat into our hearts. We do this when we pursue the knowledge of the truth as *truth* apart from the knowledge of Him who is the truth. This is no uncommon evil, and the consequence is that, priding ourselves upon knowledge, we are, as the apostle speaks, puffed up, and on this very account it is that he proceeds to remind us that it is love, that is, *heat*, which edifies. So too in another place he exhorts the Ephesian (saints we give another translation) to hold the truth in love that we may grow up to Him in all things who is the Head, the Christ. (Eph. 4: 15.) This is a very distinct illustration of the need of warmth (as in the case of plants) for growth. Whatever the light therefore we may have, it will always be winter in the soul unless we are at the same time nourished and cherished by the love of Christ. The importance of this lesson cannot be unduly magnified, and it is largely to the defect of its apprehension that we may trace our low spiritual condition.

The last characteristic to be named, the chief one in fact, but reserved for consideration in the last place, is that of RULE. The natural sun, we read, was created to rule the day; and the Sun of righteousness will rule the day that is coming in the introduction and manifestation of His kingdom. Now, as He sits at God's right hand as Lord, the administration of all God's authority is committed into His hands, even as He said to His disciples, after His resurrection, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. But it is still the day of grace, and He waits while the gospel is being proclaimed until the moment, ordained of the Father, when, after having descended from heaven to receive His people unto Himself, He will appear and establish His righteous sway of grace throughout the whole world. No one indeed can read the prophetic descriptions of this period in the Old Testament without perceiving that righteousness is the main characteristic of the sovereignty of Christ. As Isaiah has written, "A king shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32: 1); and again, "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth . . . and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." (Isa. 11: 4, 5.) David's testimony (and indeed that of all the prophets) is of like character, "Give the king," he says, "thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." (Ps. 72: 1-3.)

It could not in truth be otherwise, inasmuch as when Christ comes, He will make good in government all that God is; and hence the first thing will be to lay the foundation of His throne in righteousness. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed

thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Ps. 45: 6, 7.) His first work therefore, when He comes out as the Sun of righteousness, will be to establish God's rights, whether in the deliverance of His people, or in the destruction of His enemies. This principle has been exemplified in this period of grace. Until God's rights were secured in the cross of Christ, until, that is, His righteousness had been declared in the blood of Christ, God could not, consistently with all that He is, accomplish the purposes of His own heart in the salvation of His redeemed from the hand of the enemy. This will enable the reader to understand that the first thing which Christ will do, on His return, is to assert, and maintain, the rights of God. The whole universe must indeed, according to what God is, be governed upon the principle of righteousness. If only one planet were to wander from its appointed orbit it would bring confusion into the whole of the solar system. So also in God's universe of bliss - every part of it must be dominated by its Centre and Sun, as otherwise there could be neither permanence nor stability of blessing.

But when once righteousness has been secured, peace will follow. As Isaiah testifies: the work of righteousness will be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. Again it follows the same order as in the gospel. As Paul teaches — being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is on this account that the Lord is termed the Prince of Peace. In the character of David He will establish His throne in righteousness, and then He will reign in the character of Solomon, as the Prince of Peace — of the increase of whose government and peace, as Isaiah speaks, there shall be no end. And again, as he assures Jerusalem, in the name of Jehovah, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee . . . and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." (Isa. 44: 10-13.) Thus as the true Melchizedek, He will be first, King of Righteousness, and afterwards, King of Peace. Such passages might be multiplied indefinitely, and we read moreover that He who will establish His throne in righteousness will also speak peace to the nations, and thus peace will characterise the sway of the Sun of righteousness throughout the whole world. As the hymn expresses it:

"He shall come down like showers
Upon the new-mown grass,
And joy and hope, like flowers,
Spring up where He doth pass.
Before Him on the mountains,
Shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness, in fountains,
From hill to valley flow."

Another feature may be mentioned. Righteousness having been established, and peace following as the work of righteousness, grace will have its unhindered sway from pole to pole. Hence it is that the Psalmist, in celebrating this period, says, "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." (Ps. 145)

The effect of all this will be that, as the Lord said to Moses, the whole earth will be filled with His glory. (See also Habakkuk 2: 14.) What a chain of ineffable blessing, righteousness, peace, grace, and glory! And what joy will thus be brought to the whole earth when the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings! It is for this glorious day that the weary hearts of men, although they knew not what they needed, have sighed in every age, but there is only One who can introduce it, and this He will do when the glory of the Lord (the display of all that He is) shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. Happy are they upon whose souls the light of this glory has already dawned, those of whom Paul speaks as rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; for then they are able, in their measure, to say with him, The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in (in respect to) us.

All this, blessed as it is, is but the earthly side of the day of Christ's glory. Before, however, we pass to the other side, a few words must be said upon God's delight in the whole scene. When He created the earth and all that is therein, we read that He saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. But His complacency in the works of His own hand was soon disturbed; Adam sinned and blighted the fair world which God had brought into existence, and He could no longer rest. From that day to this God has wrought for His own glory, after the failure of the responsible man, for the accomplishment of His eternal counsels in Christ. Hence it was that, when the Jews accused the Lord of breaking the Sabbath, He replied, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. For the end of God's purposes we still wait, but God has already glorified the Man of His counsels at His own right hand, and in Him He has established everything, "For all the promises of God in him [in the Son of God, Jesus Christ"] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1: 20.) Meanwhile God has given us in the Mount of Transfiguration a glimpse of the glorious kingdom of Christ. And it was then when the face of Christ did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light, while Moses and Elias appeared in glory and talked with Him concerning His death, the foundation of His accomplishment of the coming glory, that God proclaimed His delight in the words, which the disciples were permitted to hear, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So will it be when the Sun of righteousness appears and scatters all the mists and clouds which have concealed God from the eyes of men, when He shall have reduced everything to subjection to His sway, God will look down with joy and infinite complacency upon the whole scene. Thus in Zephaniah, although the prophet confines his view to the elect of Israel, we read, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." (Zeph. 3: 17.)

Surely also the same thought may be derived from the descent of that great city, the holy Jerusalem, out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. (Rev. 21: 10, 11.) For the glory of God is the expression of all that He is, and this glory can now, without a veil, shine forth

unhinderedly for the enlightenment of the earth, so that the nations will walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory and honour unto it.

We have dwelt somewhat at length upon the earthly side of the glory of that day, for indeed this is more fully revealed than the heavenly side. Still there are several features of this on which we may well meditate with profit to our souls. The first is the obvious one — that Christ Himself will be the centre of all the glory. This must needs be because of what He is, as well as because of what He wrought for the glory of God in His death upon the cross. None but He could bear and maintain the whole of the glory of God in government. We gather, moreover, that He will appear, when He comes, in a threefold circle of glory. He said to His disciples, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9: 26.) By His own glory, we understand that which is peculiar to Himself as the Man of God's counsels, that with which He is glorified at the right hand of God; by His Father's glory, that which is essential to Himself as God's beloved Son; and that of the holy angels will be that belonging to them in their high estate and perfection around the throne of God. We read, for example, that, when an angel came down from heaven to announce the fall of Babylon, the whole earth was lightened with his glory. (Rev. 18: 1.) This will help us, in a little measure, to understand the intensity of the angelic glory, when "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of these exalted beings will swell the train of the Son of man at His appearing. Such will be the threefold glory of Christ when He comes to establish His dominion throughout the universe.

There will be another glory in that day, for Christ will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed. Thus, as the apostle speaks in another place, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. 3: 4.) It is of this indeed that the Lord Himself speaks in John 17, when He says, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (Vers. 22, 23.) On such a theme more could not be said, for we have had no experience of glory. And yet it will further us in our meditations if it be again stated that divine glory is the display of divine perfections, even as the Lord's glory, as the glorified Man, is the manifestation of His moral excellencies or perfections; and in the same way angelic glory will be the revelation of the moral beauty of angels, while that of the redeemed will consist in their conformity to the image of God's Son that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.

It must also be remembered that all the glory of which we have spoken is connected, as to display, with the advent of the Sun of righteousness, who will soon burst into view and flood the whole universe with His blessed light and life. It was with some perception of this that a christian poet, addressing Christ in this character, wrote -

"Shine, till Thy glorious beams shall chase

The brooding cloud from every eye!

Till every earthly dwelling-place

Shall hail the Day-spring from on high.

Shine on, shine on eternal Sun!

Pour richer floods of life and light;

Till that bright Sabbath be begun,

That glorious day which knows no night."

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."