

The Lord will come.

- Papers on Prophecy

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Preface.

The volume now placed before the reader includes Nos. 1 to 6 of the "Papers on Prophecy" which have been appearing monthly. It was suggested that they should be published in this collected form, as being more convenient for readers in general. Nos. 7 to 12 will be published at intervals, if the Lord will, and afterwards be issued as a second volume.

May the Spirit of Truth abundantly bless these simple papers to all who read them. May they be used of Him to stir up affection for our absent Lord, and to deepen in many hearts an earnest desire for His coming again. Our object in writing them will then have been attained. W. W. F. May, 1898.

The Church's Heavenly Hope.

Every Christian looks to spend a glad eternity in heaven with the Lord Jesus. It is unquestionable that it is His desire and intention to have us there. In His wonderful prayer to the Father just before He suffered He thus expressed Himself, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, *be with Me where I am* that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world," (John 17: 24). Having said this, He went into death for us. The dread consequences of our sins fell on Him. He took up the cup of Divine wrath on our behalf that our souls might be delivered. All the work being done, every question having been settled, the Father raised Him up from among the dead, and glorified Him at His own right hand in heaven. He has gone up as Man into the glory; and thus, having previously accomplished redemption, has made out a title for all who believe in His Name to be there also. Glorious thought! All who trust in Him are "to live together with Him" in the Father's house for ever (1 Thess. 5: 9, 10).

As to all this no believer has any real doubt. But it is undeniable that serious uncertainty prevails in many minds as to how we shall be introduced into all this glory. Not a few think by death, fully expecting that all will close their earthly pilgrimage in this way, and thus pass one by one into the

enjoyment of our everlasting portion. But however ancient the idea, it is a profound mistake. Scripture states most emphatically "*we shall not all sleep*" (1 Cor. 15: 51). Indeed, nowhere in the New Testament is the believer told to look for death as the due end of his pathway here. If the cases of Peter and Paul be adduced as seeming to teach the contrary, the answer is that they were exceptional, and had Divine revelations that their labours would close by a violent death for Christ's sake (2 Peter 1: 14; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8). They do not touch the general principle.

For what, then, should the Christian prepare himself? *For the return of the Son of God from Heaven*. No unbiased reader can read through the Acts and the Epistles and deny that all the early converts to Christianity looked for the coming of the Lord Jesus. It animated their hearts, separated them from the world, enabled them to patiently suffer, and quickened them to marvellous zeal in the Lord's service. The Thessalonians are happy instances of this (1 Thess. 1).

But let it be distinctly understood what we mean by the coming of the Lord. Scripture speaks of *two events*, quite distinct in time and character, which it is of the utmost importance never to mix together. It is a wise word that the Apostle wrote to Timothy, "Rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2: 15). While this is always necessary, in no department of Scripture study is the neglect of it more serious than in the matter now before us. The Word of God speaks of two quite distinct things: (1) The return of the Lord Jesus for His heavenly saints; and (2) His appearing in public glory for the deliverance of His earthly people, and to reign in righteousness, subjugating all foes. If these are confounded very little headway will be made in the study of the prophetic word. The one is a descent into the air only for the removal of His own; the other is a descent to the earth, as we read, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east" (Zech. 14: 4). The one is characterised by deepest affection for the objects of His Divine favour; the other by terrible desolating judgments, upon His enemies (Rev. 1: 7).

Perhaps the reader will compare the last chapter of the New Testament with the last chapter of the Old. In Revelation 22: 16 we read, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and *the Bright and Morning Star*." But in Malachi 4: 2 we have, "Unto you that fear My Name shall *the Son of righteousness* arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith Jehovah of Hosts." Such are the different characters of hope set before the heavenly and the earthly people respectively. Who can fail to see that these Scriptures speak of two entirely different events? The morning star is visible (to those who watch) before the sun, as every one knows.

The public appearing of the Lord to judge and to reign has been the subject of prophecy almost since the world began. It has been used by the Holy Spirit for the comfort of the godly, and for the warning of the ungodly. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, told of it, as Jude shows: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all," etc. (Jude 14). But the heavenly hope of the Church of God, the coming of the Lord Jesus into the air to receive His own, was not revealed, as many other truths, till New Testament times.

The reason is not far to seek. The Old Testament is occupied with God's government of the earth, with Israel as His centre. Consequently the earthly aspect of the matter alone is brought out. But we find something very different when we come to the New Testament. There we see Israel tested, not by the Law, but by the presentation of the Messiah, and rejecting Him with scorn and hatred. He Whom they have abhorred and refused the heavens have received. They are now fugitives and vagabonds in the earth on account of their sins (though yet to be restored); and God is giving effect to another purpose — a purpose of a heavenly character. Souls are now being called out of the world by grace,

both Jews and Gentiles, to be the heavenly joint heirs of Jesus. Such have no portion in the earth, but are united to the risen Head by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12: 13). Our calling and portion being above, the heavenly hope of which we speak is set before us by the Holy Spirit. He has come out from the glory into which Christ has entered, and one of His gracious offices is to show us "things to come." (John 16: 13).

The Lord Jesus, before His departure from this scene, spoke of the hope to His beloved disciples. (Read John 14: 1-4.) Their hearts were filled with sorrow at the thought of His leaving them. He was everything to their hearts. They had left their nets at His call, they had followed Him in His patient service throughout the land; and now to be told that He was going away! But how did He comfort them? He promised to return and fetch them to be for ever with Himself in the Father's house. If they seemed to be losing the glory of the Messianic kingdom by His going away they should have a better portion, yea, a heavenly one. Henceforth they must believe in Him as unseen. This was hard for a Jew, with the Old Testament prophecies of a glorious kingdom before him. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Those who believe while He is hidden have the better portion (John 20: 29; 1 Peter 1: 8). But He went on to add, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." He had not made them His companions on earth to cast them aside now that He was returning to the Father. This were unlike Jesus. They should be His companions for ever; therefore He assures them that there was not only a place on high for Himself, the First Begotten, but for His beloved ones also, in the riches of His grace.

But how were they to enter that glory?" 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" (John 14: 3). The Lord added no more as to His coming; it was not a fitting moment; their hearts were surcharged with sorrow. For all details they must wait until the coming of the Comforter, Who would instruct their souls as they were able to bear it.

Strange that any should think that the Lord meant their death when He spoke thus! Yet it has been the general thought of the pious for centuries, If John 21: 22, 28 be pondered it will be seen that, however the disciples blundered in some things, they never imagined death and the coming of the Lord equivalent terms. If death (or sleep, as the Holy Spirit prefers to call it) meets the Christian he departs to be with Christ. This is quite a different thing from Christ coming for him. The saints who have gone to the Lord are in a disembodied state (though consciously enjoying His blessed presence), and are waiting as truly as we are, though in a different waiting-room, as it were, for the moment of the Lord's coming. They will be glorified at the same instant as those who are alive and remain. It is a hymn, not Scripture, that speaks of "glorified spirits in heaven."

Now for the details of this blessed event. They are furnished in 1 Thess. 4. The Thessalonians were but young believers — a few months old in the faith at most — when the epistles of Paul were addressed to them. A grave rebuke surely for those who say that such matters as the Lord's coming should not be brought before young or simple souls. In many respects the youthful Thessalonians set us all an example. They were characterised from the first by considerable fervour towards the Lord, by earnest service for Him, and above all by ardent expectation of His return. They are described thus: "Ye 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, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10). The Lord prizes more than everything this affectionate waiting for Himself. It is very precious in His sight, however lightly esteemed among men.

But the Thessalonians soon fell into a difficulty. They were but partially instructed souls, the

faithful Apostles having been hunted out of their town by the malicious Jews (Acts 17: 1-10). Presently some of their number fell asleep. This was a great surprise and Satan's opportunity. The adversary is always ready to disturb the peace and joy of the saints of God. What had become of the sleepers? Would they not lose considerably by not being here to welcome the Lord? Such were the questions which agitated their minds.

The Spirit of God soon made all plain by means of the Apostle. "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." Do not misunderstand these words. Saints are not forbidden to sorrow. By no means. God would not have His children stoical. He would have us feel the circumstances of the way, but would not have us swallowed up by them, as others. "*The Hope*" comes into the Christian's sorrow. It sweetens the most bitter cup and brightens the darkest hour. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him." This is wonderful! The sleeping saint, instead of being a loser, is only the more like his Lord. And what God did for Christ He will do for all who are His. He raised Him out of the cold tomb and placed Him in glory; He will do the very same at the appointed hour for all His beloved sleeping ones. "*Through Jesus*" is more correct in 1 Thess. 4: 14. "In Jesus" has no real meaning, not being a Scriptural phrase at all. "In Christ" expresses our standing before God in Him risen, as Rom. 8. shows; "in Jesus" is nowhere found that I am aware of. "*Through Jesus*" is very sweet here, and stills every rising murmur. When a loved one is called hence it is no mere accident or circumstance; it is the act of Jesus. "He doeth all things well."

The Apostle says, "them which sleep through Jesus will God bring with Him." This must be carefully noted. The Thessalonians had only heard in a general way of the Lord's coming. They knew He was coming back to reign, and they were assured of being associated with Him in His glory; but they knew not yet the distinction between His coming for and with His saints. Their perplexity gave the Spirit of God an opportunity of bringing this forward clearly. Obviously, if the saints are to come with Christ when He comes to set up His kingdom they must have been previously caught up to Him where He is. This is fully explained in 1 Thess. 4: 15-18, which verses are better read as a parenthesis.

The Apostle's statement has the authority of Divine revelation. Let our souls ever have the fullest confidence that all that is contained in the Scriptures has come to us from God." 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 (go before) them which are asleep." This was the word that was so sorely needed. They feared the sleepers would be inferior in some way or another. Notice the order. "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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." What can be simpler or more blessed! "The Lord Himself shall descend." It is the Heavenly Bridegroom coming for His blood purchased Bride. He will not send mere messengers, however glorious, but will come Himself."

He comes — for, oh! His yearning heart
No more can bear delay —
To scenes of full unmingled joy
To call His bride away."

It is the moment when the Divine Eliezer delivers up the true Rebekah to be the everlasting and beloved companion of the Son (Gen. 24). It has often been remarked that the word rendered "shout" in

this place implies a call, not of a promiscuous character, but to persons in relationship. His shout concerns not the world — at any rate, not just then; it is for His own. "The sheep hear His voice." "They know His voice" (John 10: 3, 4).

The sleeping saints will hear His call and come forth in incorruption and glory. All other dead persons will be left in their graves, as will be shown, if God permit, on another occasion. The living, wherever found, whether in England or China, Greenland or Cape Horn, will respond also, and will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and go up to meet the Lord. Mighty display of Divine power! It is the fruit of Divine love, the crown of His grace, the necessary result of Divine righteousness. Supreme moment! How one's heart longs for it as the words flow from the pen!

It will be observed that the Spirit of God speaks of two classes of saints — two only. "The dead in Christ" — "we which are alive and remain." All who come under these heads will be removed to glory. It is of moment to notice this, because of the notion, now painfully prevalent, that many of the Lord's own will be left behind at the rapture to pass through the great tribulation because of their faulty walk. Scripture lends no countenance to such an idea. Hebrews 9: 27, 28 is generally pressed into service for this, but if the verses be read with care it will be seen that the contrast is not between watchful and unwatchful believers, but between believers and the ungodly world. The prospect before the latter is death and judgment; before the former the coming of Christ apart from sin unto salvation. The idea springs from the principle of legalism, so deeply rooted in most minds, that our blessings depend upon our walk and behaviour. This is undoubtedly true as to rewards, but our removal to glory is not reward but the consummation of God's grace. Our title to share in it is not a becoming walk, but the precious blood of Christ. I have known some of the most devoted of God's saints completely under a cloud, and filled with uncertainty, through having imbibed such teaching.

Here another question may arise in some minds. "Scripture," it is said, "seems to speak of many things to be accomplished before the coming of the Lord." True, but not before His removal of His heavenly saints. Instead of a multitude of prophecies having to be fulfilled before the Church of God goes, *no prophecy can be fulfilled until it has gone*. Prophecy is connected with the earth and the people of Israel; our heavenly hope does not come into the scheme of prophecy at all. The whole Church period is a kind of parenthesis in the ways of God. While He is gathering out the heavenly people, Israel is scattered, and prophecy stands still; when His present purpose is completed, and the Church is all gathered home, Israel will again come into view, and prophecy will flow on from the point where it was broken off by the rejection of Christ. Many things must be accomplished ere Christ will be revealed from heaven to take to Himself His great power and reign; but the Spirit of God has placed nothing between us and His descent into the air to call us up.

O that all the Lord's own were looking for Him in simplicity of faith, yearning to see His face, and to be with Him in the Father's house! When in the early days of the Church of God the hope was held fast there was thorough separation from the world, and real devotedness to Christ. The well known parable of the ten virgins shows the original position as regards the coming of Christ. (See Matt. 25) "The kingdom of heaven" during this period, while the King is rejected, is the sphere of Christian profession. The Lord likens it to "ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom." They were "virgins." Such was the ground taken, and such was the character to be maintained. They took their place outside the world — they "*went forth*" Christianity does not leave a soul in the world, but detaches it, and sets it with its back upon the world and the face towards the glory. This was unquestionably the universal attitude of believers in the early days of the faith. None looked for death, as many now; all looked to see the Lord, and to be caught up to Him according to His promise. The Romans waited patiently for the glory, groaning meanwhile with the suffering creation

(Rom. 8: 17-25); the Corinthians came behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1: 7); to the Galatians the Apostle could say, "we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5: 5); the Philippians looked for the Saviour to come from the heavens to change the body of humiliation and fashion it like unto His own body of glory (Phil. 3: 20, 21); the Colossians expected to be displayed in glory with Christ at His manifestation (Col. 3: 4); and the Thessalonians, as we have already seen, were waiting with singular affection and earnestness for the Son of God from heaven.

In every way, at every turn, the Spirit of God brings forward the coming of the Lord in one or other of its aspects. It is the constant theme of the New Testament Scriptures, whatever some may say to the contrary. The hope sustained the early Christians in sorrow (1 Thess. 4: 13); it enabled them to be patient under oppression (James 5: 7, 8); it encouraged them to suffer loss and reproach for Christ (Heb. 10: 36-38), and led to thorough purification of the life and walk (1 John 3: 3); it cheered the Apostle in the course of his service for Christ, and enabled him to go patiently onward through evil report and good report (1 Thess. 2: 19, 20; 2 Cor. 4: 14).

Need we wonder at all the evil that came in when the hope faded from men's minds? Alas! it happened as the Lord warned — "while the Lord tarried they all slumbered and slept." Not only the foolish, but the wise virgins also. All were together in this sad departure from the Lord. It is a well-known fact that scarcely a trace of the heavenly hope of the Church of God can be found in writings for hundreds of years after the first century. It had leaked away. Not that the Lord's coming was never referred to in any way. It has always been held that He will come some day to deal with the world in judgment. But the proper hope of the Christian, the portion which His grace has set before us, of removal to heaven to be with Him before the judgments fall, was completely lost.

The result for the mass of Christian profession was worldliness. The word of the Lord to the Church has long been, "I know... where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is" (Rev. 2: 13). Satan's throne is in the world. He is its prince and god. Sad that the Church should ever have got into such a place. Her true path is that of a heavenly stranger passing through this scene, as Rebekah through the desert with Eliezer to meet her Lord at the appointed moment. It is her holy and solemn responsibility to bear testimony on the way, but not to settle here, nor to mingle in the affairs of this alien scene. Nothing can deliver the saints of God from the position of compromise in which so many are found but the laying hold in simple faith, in the power of the Holy Ghost, of the mighty yet simple truth that the Lord is at hand.

If the loss of the hope has been so serious for the general company of the saints, what shall we say of those who have assumed to be their leaders? Let Scripture speak: "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to eat and drink with the drunken: the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 24: 48-51). Sadly faithful picture of priestly domination and tyranny. But what is the root of it all? The saying in the heart, "My lord delayeth his coming." The surrender of the hope led on — by gradual stages, of course — to all the evils and enormities of which the pages of ecclesiastical historians are so full.

But a change has come. The Lord is waking up His own to their long-lost blessings. The Holy Spirit is actively at work in every direction in the hearts of believers. It has happened as the Lord said: "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom... go ye out to meet him" (Matt. 25: 6). The Lord would recall His own to their true attitude before the consummation. His word to each individual

saint is, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (or "shine upon thee") (Eph. 5: 14). The Christian is not dead (blessed be God!) being in possession of eternal life in His Son; but it is very possible to be found sleeping among the dead. Of what use is the believer in such a case? Where is his testimony? "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13: 11, 12). Do you know the time, beloved reader? Are you saying within yourself, "Time enough yet; my Lord delayeth His coming;" or does your heart leap within you at the prospect of soon seeing His face? We read of some of old that they had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12: 33). Would that this were true of all Christians in this day!

Do not allow the truth of the Lord's return to become a mere doctrine for the head, Let it be a vital reality in the heart. If really looking for Him, purge yourself from all your idols. Expel everything from you that is an offence to His Spirit. Cast off every bit of Egypt, which is even a greater reproach for the Christian than for Israel of old (Joshua 5: 9). Get on your watch-tower and cry from the depths of your soul, "Come, Lord Jesus!" He values this more than anything else. Service for Christ is good, and cannot be too abundant, and the Lord values it; but He prizes yet more watching for His return. We get the two things in Luke 12. In verses 43 and 44 we read, "Blessed is that *servant* whom his lord when he cometh shall find so *doing*. Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." Not a cup of cold water will be forgotten in the coming day; all is written in heaven. But He puts *watching before service*. See verses 35-38. The true attitude is first described. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately." Observe the striking illustration the Lord uses. It is that of a man-servant in expectation of his master's return from a wedding feast. In order not to keep him waiting he is standing in the entrance hall, with his hand upon the handle of the door, that when he hears the well-known knock he may open unto him without a moment's delay. Are we thus waiting for Christ? Now, observe what the Lord goes on to say. See how deeply He values simple-hearted watching for Himself. "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find *watching*: verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." Heavenly honours await those who long for the Lord's return.

Well, the wondrous moment is near! Soon will the whole Church of God hear the trumpet call and quit this vale of tears for ever. Of Enoch it is written, "He was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11: 15). The same will presently be true of all the millions who compose the Church of God. What an awful moment for the world! Those whom it has ever despised and persecuted for Christ's sake caught away from its midst never more to return! Never again will men be faithfully warned by them of coming danger, nor be lovingly appealed to believe in the Saviour — in the day of His long-suffering grace. An awful blank will be made! The salt removed, the light transferred to shine in other and more congenial spheres!

That moment will be peculiarly solemn for those who have professed the Lord's Name. "The Lord knoweth them that are His; "and He will make no mistakes (2 Tim. 2: 19). He will take to Himself His own, rejecting all others, however loud their claim. To many He has to say, "I know thy works, that *thou hast a Name that thou livest*, and art dead" (Rev. 3: 1). Better far never to have heard His Name than to go on with an empty profession of it. He will not remove souls to glory because they have maintained a profession of religion. By no means. But all who in simple faith have learned and owned their sinful state, and been washed from their sins by His blood, and sealed by His Spirit, however poor

and feeble, will be claimed as His, and caught up into His heavenly presence.

Inexpressibly solemn to hear Him say, as He will to many, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." The great separation is coming. The wise virgins will go in with Him to the marriage; all others will be left outside, to their eternal ruin. In which company will the reader be found?

"The night is far spent and the day is at hand

No sign to be looked for; the star's in the sky.

Rejoice, then, ye saints, 'tis your Lord's own command

Rejoice, for the coming of Jesus draws nigh."

The Resurrection of Life and the Resurrection of Judgment.

We have seen what the Lord has set before believers as the goal of their hopes — His own personal coming to receive them to Himself. It is now proposed to deal with the momentous connected theme of Resurrection. It is believed on all hands, save by men very far advanced in infidelity, that "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24: 15). But all are by no means clear as to the matter. It has long been thought that all, both saved and unsaved, will rise together in a general resurrection at the last day. This idea, however ancient, is a serious mistake. Scripture lends it no countenance whatever, but speaks in unmistakable terms of two resurrections, separated from each other by at least a thousand years.

Let us turn to Rev. 20. There we have the preparations for the millennial kingdom. The previous chapter gives the public appearing of the Lord Jesus, accompanied by His heavenly saints, and the overthrow and destruction of those who oppose His progress. Then we get Satan bound and consigned to the bottomless pit for a thousand years. What remains? Simply to point out those who are to share with Christ in the glory of that wonderful period. Hence we have "the first resurrection." The various classes of the heavenly saints are shown in their risen condition; and we read, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20: 4-6). Nothing can be plainer than this to a simple mind. It is not a resurrection of good principles, as some have strangely said, but of persons; and that prior to the millennium, and long before the last great judgment. There is no meaning in the term "the first resurrection" if there be but one; and what can be made of the words "the rest of the dead?"

When the Lord Jesus comes for His own every sleeping believer will be raised up in glory. We read, "Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15: 23). At the same moment that the living are changed the sleepers will be raised. They will hear the shout of their Lord and the trumpet call, and will come forth to be re-united with all their brethren in His presence. The bodies of the saints sown in corruption will be raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, will be raised in glory; sown in weakness, will be raised in power; sown as natural bodies, will be raised as spiritual bodies, conformed to Christ Himself (1 Cor. 15: 42-44). No others will be raised at that time. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." All who have despised Him, what ever their morality and religiousness in life, will be left in their graves for the judgment at the great day.

This mighty act will include all those who have died in faith from the earliest ages. The Old Testament believers, though forming no part of the Church, and therefore not coming into the heavenly Bride, will unquestionably be raised at the same moment as the Church of God. The expressions, "They that are Christ's," in 1 Cor. 15, and "The dead in Christ," in 1 Thess. 4, take them in beyond just controversy. Abel was the first believer to die; all from his day up to the moment of the rapture will be raised simultaneously to go with Christ into the Father's house.

The sleeping saints are as truly waiting for the coming of Christ as we who are alive and remain. They have not yet received all that they have looked for. They are at rest in heaven with Christ, which is far better than toiling and suffering here. They are enjoying His love in a fuller measure than we do, who have so much to hinder us. But they are in a disembodied state; their precious dust is still in the hand of the grave. This cannot satisfy either them or the Lord. The redemption price includes the body as well as the soul, and the Lord will raise up the bodies of all His own at the fitting time. The whole of 1 Cor. 15 should be carefully pondered as to this. The subject there is the resurrection of the body, which some at Corinth were disposed to deny. The apostle commences from the resurrection of Christ; and goes on, as regards the saints, until we bear the image of the heavenly at the coming of the Lord from heaven. The resurrection of the lost is not mentioned in the chapter at all; it was quite a different subject to the mind of the apostle, never to be confounded with it.

Ours will be a resurrection *from among* "the dead." This expression, so frequently used in the New Testament, escapes the notice of Bible readers too often. Look at Mark 9: 9, 10. As the Lord and His disciples came down from the Mount of Transfiguration "He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." Wherein do you suppose lay their difficulty? Not in the general fact of the resurrection, for they were orthodox Jews, not Sadducees, and believed thoroughly in it. But the Lord spoke of a resurrection, "*from*," or, more properly, "*from among*, the dead;" and of this they had never heard before. The Old Testament says nothing of a special resurrection for saints, not coming at all within its scope; and the disciples, at the moment, had no clearer light than it afforded. Christ's resurrection was "from among the dead." God came in on the third day and raised Him up. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades: neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 16: 10). It was not a general resurrection. The great mass of graves were left untouched. True, some saints arose, as an earnest of what is to come (Matt. 27: 52, 53).

Christ's resurrection was an act of Divine favour and love. He had glorified God; God could do no less than glorify Him at His own right hand in heaven. This gives us a title. He rose as the "firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15: 20). What God did for Him He will presently do for those that are His. He will make a marked distinction between such and the ungodly, not merging all in one, as so many suppose vaguely.

Some passages in Luke's Gospel may be profitably looked at in this connection. In Luke 14: 14 we read, "Thou shalt be recompensed at *the resurrection of the just*." What does this mean if all rise together? Is it not something special, something blessed, that the Lord holds out in this place? Look also at Luke 20: 35, 36. In the course of His reply to the cavil of the Sadducees the Lord said, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world (age), and the resurrection from (*from among*) the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Clearly this is not the mere general fact of resurrection. That cannot be a matter of attainment, for no one can shirk it. The most ungodly man must rise again and stand before the throne. Obviously the verse treats of the special

portion of the saved when the Lord claims His own. Such will then be raised *from among* the great mass of the dead and made equal in condition unto the angels. Our *calling* is superior, for we are children and sons, while angels are but servants; our *condition* until the Lord's coming is inferior, but this He will change then by His mighty power.

This is what Paul longed for so ardently in Phil. 3: 11. The Revised Version of the passage is to be preferred to the Authorised, which is quite a mistake: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection *from among* the dead." This does not imply doubt in any way. What he means is that the prospect to be attained at that blessed moment was so wonderful, so overwhelming, that he cared not how trying the path might be that lay between. The thought of the end sustained him on the road. It lifted him above all his sufferings, and energised him for service and conflict. Does it act thus with us?

Some of our readers may say at this point, "These passages seem to indicate very plainly that believers will have a special resurrection of their own at the Lord's return; but there are other passages that seem to teach with equal plainness a general resurrection;" and John 5: 28, 29, Dan. 12: 2, and John 6: 39, 40, are the Scriptures usually brought forward as objections.

Let every Christian reader be assured that there are not, nor can be, contradictions in the inspired word of God. It is of the highest importance, in this day of renegade thoughts and principles, to be very firm and decided as to this. If we meet with portions of Scripture at any time that seem to be contradictory the defect is with us, not with the Holy Spirit of God. Never let us surrender what is sure for that which may be doubtful. Rather let us hold fast what we have learnt from God, and wait patiently on Him for clearer light as to the difficulties, even if we have to wait for years.

Let us examine briefly John 5: 28, 29. The principal difficulty lies in the expression "the hour." "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (judgment)." Some think this shows all to take place simultaneously. Not so. The expression "the hour" is often used in Scripture in an extended way. Of course the context must always decide when we are to take it so. Here nothing can be more plain or simple. In this very context it is used in this way. In verse 25 the Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." These are unquestionably the spiritually dead — those who are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2: 1). Such heard the voice of the life-giving Son of God when He was present on earth and passed from death unto life; but is this work all over? Blessed be God, no! Sinners are still hearing His voice; "the hour" runs on still. This removes the difficulty with regard to verse 29. If "the hour" of verse 25 spreads itself over nearly two thousand years it is not hard to believe that the same expression may cover one thousand years. Moreover, the Lord speaks plainly of "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of judgment." He distinguishes them expressly. Surely He would not have spoken thus if all rise together. Consequently the passage, over which so many stumbled instead of being an insuperable difficulty, is really one of the simplest proofs of a special portion for those who have eternal life in the Son of God.

We will now turn to Dan. 12: 2. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This, I am fully convinced, has no reference to the resurrection of the body at all. The words "them that sleep in the dust of the earth" are not usual as applied to the dead. The whole context must be carefully looked into to get the mind of God in this place. Dan. 11: 36-45 speaks of the Antichrist and his doings in the glorious land. Dan. 12: 1 shows it to be the epoch of Israel's terrible tribulation followed by their final deliverance. Then we have the words I have quoted. I believe them to refer to the ten tribes of Israel.

The two tribes only will suffer in the land in the latter-day crisis, and are alluded to in the first verse. There will then be a movement among the ten tribes — a rising up from their long national humiliation — with a view to taking possession once more of the land of their fathers. But only some will enter into blessing. The rebels among them will be purged out, utterly rejected by God. This is what is before us in Dan. 12: 2. This national waking up is spoken of as a resurrection in several other places in Scripture. The following passages among others may be consulted: Ezek. 37: 1-14; Isa. 26: 19; Rom. 11: 15.

If the passage teaches a general resurrection at the end really, how can the words "many of them" be explained? Will not all rise again? Moreover, the epoch is a serious obstacle. It is the Lord's coming to put down the man of sin and deliver Israel in order to the setting up of the millennial kingdom. Consequently, if the resurrection of the dead, saved and lost, is shown here, then all will rise before the millennium — at least a thousand years — before the Great White Throne. This conclusion will not suit any school of interpretation so far as I know. If the verse be read as setting forth, in a figurative way, the national reviving of the tribes of Israel, all is simple and clear.

Now a word or two as to John 6: 39, 40, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up *at the last day*." This is often triumphantly urged as disproving any special portion for the saints of God. Let us look at it carefully. The Jews had in their minds two "ages," or dispensations — (1) that of the Law; (2) that of the Messiah's kingdom. They believed one would give place to the other in due time. This was what was in the Lord's mind in Matt. 12: 32 when in speaking of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, He said, "It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, neither in that to come." That is to say, neither in the age of the Law nor in that of the Messiah. This helps considerably to an understanding of John 6. The term "the last day" means not the last day in an absolute sense, when time will give place to eternity, but "the last day" of the period preceding the kingdom of the Messiah. Christianity is a kind of parenthesis in the age of the Law.

Now we must consider other matters. It is plain that at the Lord's descent into the air all sleeping believers will be raised in glory, and all living saints will be changed by His power. This is the first resurrection, but not the whole of it. The first resurrection is in three parts — (1) the resurrection of Christ; (2) of all sleeping saints at His coming; and (3) of those who will lose their lives during the great tribulation. Such are included in the first resurrection, and will be raised in time to share the blessings of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. We get these classes carefully distinguished in Rev. 20: 4, already referred to. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." Daniel saw the thrones, but no occupants (Dan. 7: 9). Who are meant by "they"? Those who are manifested with the Lord Jesus at His appearing. Such come forth as His armies, following Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean (Rev. 19: 14). These are the heavenly saints who are caught up, according to 1 Thess. 4: 14-18. God brings them now with Christ, that the world may know that the Father sent the Son, and that He loves us as He loves Him (1 Thess. 4: 14; John 17: 23). Christ will in that day be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that have believed (2 Thess. 1: 10).

All these will reign with Him, and will have judgment given unto them. Their places in the kingdom will be ordered according to their faithfulness on earth. Solemn consideration for all our hearts! Let us ponder it well, and look carefully to our walk and ways.

Then we have the two classes of saints who will be added to them. "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and those [This word has

unfortunately been omitted in our Authorised Version. See Revised Version. It is necessary to make the two classes clear.] which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20: 4). These are evidently raised just at the commencement of the millennial kingdom, for John describes them as "*souls*," and adds "*they lived*." They are added to those already raised, and thus complete the first resurrection.

A few words as to these saints may be helpful. They are not, as some have taught, unwatchful Christians who are left behind at the Lord's coming, and who have to suffer in consequence, and wait a while for their heavenly portion. The Word of God knows of no such thing. Our places in the kingdom depend, as I have said, on our walk and service now; but not our translation to heaven to be for ever with the Lord. That is the fruit of Divine grace alone. Who, then, are these two classes of saints? You will find the one in Rev. 6, the other in Rev. 15. In Rev. 6: 9 John saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for their testimony. This corresponds exactly with the first class of Rev. 20: 4. He heard them cry with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" These are evidently not Christians. Christians, as Stephen in Acts 7, the rather pray for their murderers and bless their persecutors; at least, we are taught to do so by our Lord Jesus. But the souls in Rev. 6. call for vengeance. Are they wrong in uttering such a cry? Impossible, especially when we consider that the seer saw them in a disembodied state *in heaven*! There, surely, all improper feelings have no place. These are Jewish sufferers, the early witnesses of the gospel of the kingdom after the removal of the Church of God to heaven. Their testimony has not been received, for they are seen as slain. They take their stand on the ground of earthly judicial righteousness — quite right for a Jew, but quite wrong for a Christian, who is always expected to manifest the spirit of grace. Their cry reminds us of the Psalms. They live in a different dispensation to Christianity. In answer to their cry "white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled," or completed (Rev. 6: 11). Here we have a reference to a further class of martyrs. Later in the same book we find them (see Rev. 15: 2-4). "I saw, as it were, a sea of glass, mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," &c. Here are the fellow servants of the martyrs of Rev. 6, the second class of raised saints, as in Rev. 20: 4. These are not necessarily preachers of the gospel of the kingdom. They are perhaps more passive. They lose their lives because they decline to receive the mark of the beast or to worship his image. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of old, they stand true in an evil day, confiding in the living God. At all cost to themselves they refuse to take part in so great wickedness and sin against God. There will be no middle ground in the day of Antichrist. All must declare plainly whom they serve. If the true God, then all the power of hell will be let loose upon them. Such will find comfort in the Lord's words, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5: 12). If they lose the earthly kingdom, through faithfulness, just when it is about to be set up, the Lord will give them a better portion in the heavens, though they are too late to form part of the Church. None are really the losers who suffer for His sake. His heart will take a great delight in dealing out to all such a full reward.

The raising up of these bands of latter-day martyrs completes the first resurrection — the resurrection of life. They will all reign with Christ. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath, no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20: 6). Happy souls! Wondrous the grace that will introduce us into such a place!

But what of the rest of the dead — the ungodly? Their tombs will be left untouched until the judgment of the Great White Throne. During the blessed period of Christ's beneficent reign over the earth they will remain in their graves, to be judged at the end. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." How awful to be found among them!

When the term of universal peace and blessing has run its course, we read, "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works" (Rev. 20: 11, 12). This is the final resurrection — the resurrection of judgment. There is no trace of saved persons in this throng. They are the lost, called up by the quickening voice of the Son of God to hear their righteous doom. They are "clothed," i.e., they resume their bodies, to be found, alas! "naked" before Him (2 Cor. 5: 3).

Man has a hereafter, either of bliss or woe. He does not and cannot perish like the beasts, though he may degrade himself morally to become like the beasts that perish (Ps. 49: 12, 20). Man has a life that is endless. He derived it by the direct inbreathing of God. The beasts have not this. They lived when made, but of the man two things are recorded. First, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2: 7). This refers to the body, which became mortal through the entrance of sin. Mortality is never spoken of in Scripture in connection with the soul.

"Dust thou art, to dust returnest

Was not spoken of the soul."

Secondly, we read — "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Such is the simple yet majestic language of Scripture. Having received such a life, man lives on, either in happiness or in woe. Many confound this with eternal life, which is very unintelligent. The latter is God's gift in Christ to believers only. It is life in association with the Son of God in His own sphere of blessedness above. Immortality is by no means synonymous with eternal life. The former, man had from the very beginning, before the fall; the latter is the gift of God, through grace. It cannot be earned by works of law or by fleshly effort of any kind; it is alone to be had through faith in the Son (1 John 5: 11, 12).

Has my reader received the gift of eternal life? If so, very soon God will apply the power of it to your poor body, and "mortality shall be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5: 4). Let the words of the Lord Jesus remain in the heart, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11: 25, 26). Thus He sets forth the power that resides in Himself. He will presently put it forth on behalf of all His own.

In view of our blessed portion and prospect, may all our steps be quickened; in view of the awful future awaiting the ungodly, may our zeal be deepened to win souls for Christ while we may.

The Coming Judgments.

It is a wonderful thing to be able to contemplate the judgments of God, and be altogether free from alarm; But such is the happy portion of the believer in Jesus. The accomplished work of Christ has turned judgment aside for all who believe- it will not, and cannot fall upon any of them. We have the sure word of the Lord Jesus for this — "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and

believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5: 24). Here faith rests, and takes up the triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. 8: 33, 31) Blessed certainty! Precious God-given assurance!

It is quite possible that some of our readers have been taught differently as to this. The confused idea has long prevailed in Christendom, that there is to be a great general judgment at the end of time, into which all, whether saved or lost, must come; and that there can be no real certainty as to one's eternal future until that day. This is a profound mistake, grievous in its results, and in plain defiance of the Lord's precious word in John 5: 24. If the believer walks thus uncertainly, what real affection can there be towards God? And how can there be the heavenly tone in the daily walk that God looks for in His own?

The truth is, that every believer is placed by God beyond judgment. We are no longer "in Adam" exposed to death and judgment, but "in Christ" where there is no condemnation (Rom. 8: 1). Not only so, but we are "clean every whit," "holy and without blame before Him in love," loved by the father with the same love wherewith He loves His Son (John 13: 10; Eph. 1: 4; John 17: 23, 26). As Christ is, so are we in this world. God can no more bring the believer into judgment for his sins, than Christ Himself. Perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4: 17-19).

It is of the first importance that the Scriptures should be rightly divided as to this solemn theme. For clearness' sake, we will consider the matter in the following order:

1. The Judgment Seat of Christ for Believers.
2. The Judgment of the Quick.
3. The Judgment of the Dead.
1. The Judgment Seat of Christ.

In 2 Cor. 5:10 we read, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Here the Apostle's language is very general. "We" includes every soul that has ever lived in this world. Believers are not to be exempt; all must be manifested before Christ. Not necessarily on the same day, as some affirm, nor with the same issues. Indeed there are two classes plainly shown in the Scripture: those who have done good, and those who have done evil. *Our* bad was dealt with at the cross of Christ, when the blessed One bowed His holy head beneath the righteous judgment of God, and nothing remains to be dealt with but the good which we have wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. The ungodly, on the contrary, when they stand before Christ at a later day, will have no good to show ("there is none that doeth good, no, not one"), and will be dealt with in righteousness for all their bad. The thought of this filled the heart of the Apostle with holy concern. The terrors of the coming day for those who know not God and have not believed the Gospel, were before him, and made him earnestly labour that souls might be delivered from the wrath to come. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5: 11).

It is a solemn, yet blessed, thought for the believer that everything is to come out before Christ. We need have no fear or alarm. We shall then be in a glorified state, as the earlier verses of 2 Cor. 5 show. We shall stand at the judgment seat in bodies fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus; for, prior to this manifestation, He will come for us and gather us out of this scene, and place us in the Father's house. When I read there the whole story of my life, I shall see fully the wonders of His Divine grace. We shall then know the full truth about ourselves, and shall adore and magnify the

precious grace that has made us what we are.

But how anxious this should make every saint to walk and serve day by day so as to please the Lord! Our service will all come out there. "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and *reckoneth with them*" (Matt. 25: 19). Those who have built on the foundation gold, silver, and precious stones will receive a reward. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" (1 Cor. 3: 8). Every little bit of faithful and true service for Christ will be fully recognised then. A cup of cold water will not lose its reward. All is written in heaven by the loving, yet holy hand of Him who notes every bit of good in His own, while not ignoring their evil.

How gracious of Him to reward any! Whatever fruit we have borne, whatever good we have done, has been really the action of His own indwelling Spirit. It is, as Augustine has said, "God crowns not our merits, but His own gifts. Because He makes them ours, He rewards them, just as if they were our own virtues." He will take real pleasure in saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant,... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25: 21-23).

But what if the Christian's service is bad? Thank God, it will not endanger his salvation, which depends not on service, but on the accomplished work of Christ. But he will be a loser, as we read, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3: 15). Solemn thought! The Lord may have to disown the toil of a lifetime because it has not been according to His revealed mind and will. It is not *quantity* the Lord looks at, but *quality*. That which flows from real love to His holy person, He values highly, as we may judge from His gracious words to her who lavished on Him her ointment of spikenard (Matt. 26: 6-13).

How true it is that "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16: 7). Man would be disposed to bestow the greatest reward where the greatest display has been, and the largest results (outwardly) have been obtained; but it may be found in the coming day that the best prizes will be carried off by those who have made but little stir in Christendom, and whose names have been but little known, but who have nevertheless served Christ loyally and faithfully according to their measure and opportunities. Not that it must be inferred from these remarks that only *service* for Christ will be reviewed at the judgment seat. The whole life will come out either for praise or blame. The Apostle brings this forward when exhorting slaves, in Col. 3: 24: 25. He comforts them by saying, "Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for we serve the Lord Christ." They might have unreasonable and unjust masters, but the Lord took notice of all, and will reward duly by-and-by. Then the Apostle throws out the word of warning, "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons."

Let every Christian therefore look well to his ways. In the light of all this, how are we living? How are we serving? Soon we shall stand before Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Soon will His holy eye look over all our record, and His holy lips will pronounce His mind as to it. Will our lives in the home, in business, and everywhere else bear His close inspection? Will our service bear the all-searching test of His holy Word? Is it pursued because we love Him and owe all to Him, or is it carried forward for mere self-exaltation and for the strengthening of party? Let us be real. Better far to have the examination now, while there is time to correct, than to let all go on to the judgment seat, where we may find ourselves eternal losers.

Such is the judgment seat of Christ for those who believe in His Name. It is no question of visiting sins upon them, but of manifestation. Rewards will be dealt out, and places in the millennial kingdom allotted, according to faithful service here below. Not that reward is the motive for service or godliness. That would be legalism. Love to Christ is the spring, the rewards come in as encouragements

for our souls by the way.

2. The Judgment of the Quick or Living.

Christ is ordained of God to be the Judge not only of the dead, but of the quick, as Peter declared to Cornelius and his company (Acts 10: 42). This is a large theme, and can only be dealt with briefly here. It is but little understood, though confessed as doctrine in all the Creeds of Christendom. It is quite the fashion to merge all into the judgment of the dead. The judgment of the living really covers a wide area. It commences with the judgments that will be poured out from heaven after the heavenly saints are removed, and which will go on until the public appearing of the Lord Jesus to put down all His foes. It will be continued more or less throughout the millennial reign, ending with the overthrow of the gathered hosts at the close (Rev. 20: 8, 9). Then will come "the time of the dead, that they should be judged" (Rev. 11: 18).

But we have space for a little detail. The Book of Revelation furnishes us with an outline. In Rev. 2 & Rev. 3, in the epistles to the seven Churches, we have a sketch of the history of the professing Church from beginning to end. It is Church history, viewed from the Divine standpoint. In Rev. 4 & Rev. 5, we see heaven preparing itself for judgment — God on His throne and the Lamb receiving the seven-sealed book. Grouped around the throne are the four-and-twenty crowned and enthroned elders representing symbolically the heavenly saints in their kingly and priestly character. These are all seen at home with the Lord before the judgments fall. Instead of being terrified by the judgments proceeding from the throne, they worship and adore. They know God, and they have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. In Rev. 6 the judgments begin to be poured out. All this is future. It is freely admitted that there may have been some sort of analogy in events that have already taken place; but strictly speaking, all this is to come. These are judgments on the living, not the dead. First we have the seven seals broken one by one by the Lamb, and judgments falling — mostly of a providential character. Then the trumpets are blown, and further strokes descend. The vials follow, and in them is filled up (or completed) the wrath of God. The manifestation of Christ and the heavenly armies takes place next, and the assembled hosts of His enemies are overthrown, the leaders — the beast and the false prophet — being consigned forthwith to the lake of fire (Rev. 19). All this is the judgment of the quick; it is Divine dealing with living men on the earth preparatory to Christ taking His throne in Zion.

There is one important incident in the judgment of the quick which must be looked at a little more fully, because it is so generally misunderstood and misapplied. I refer to the separation of the sheep from the goats, in Matt. 25: 31-46. This is often regarded as setting forth the final judgment of the dead. The page in the Bible now open before me is headed "Description of the last Judgment." This is a mistake, and by no means a small one. Look carefully at the whole prophecy of which these few verses form part. The Lord was with His disciples on the Mount of Olives, and in answer to their questions, opens out to them the things concerning His coming to establish His kingdom at the end of the age. The first few verses (Matt. 24: 1-14) are general, and describe the general circumstances of His servants until the end. In verse 15 He speaks of the idol (abomination) to be set up in the holy place by the Man of Sin, of the great tribulation to follow, and then of the sufferings of the elect in Judea in that day. This part is closed up (Matt. 24: 29-31) with His own appearing in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This is His manifestation to Israel, and subsequent to His removal of the heavenly saints. Then follows a long parenthesis in the prophecy, in which we observe six parables. Three are for the Jewish people, the fig tree (Matt. 24: 32-35), the days of Noah (Matt. 24: 36-41), and the thief in the night (Matt. 24: 42-44); the remaining three concern the professing Church, the faithful and evil servants (Matt. 24: 45-51), the ten virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13), and the talents (Matt. 24: 14-30). The thread of the prophecy is then resumed. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the

holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 24: 31, 32). The time and circumstances of this session are thus easily determined. It is immediately after the public appearing of the Lord Jesus and before the establishment of the kingdom. But is it the judgment of the dead, as so commonly supposed? By no means. It is at least a thousand years too early. The dead, i.e., the ungodly, will remain in their graves until the reign of Christ is over, and will then be called forth to stand before Him. How then can there be a general judgment before the millennium? But there is a more serious difficulty still in the passage — *there is no mention of any dead at all*. Nor is there one word about resurrection of either good or bad. Further, three classes are found — the sheep, the goats, and the brethren (the first two being dealt with according to their treatment of the third), which quite unfits the passage for the purpose for which so many seem to desire it.

It is the judgment of the quick. The throne is not "the Great White Throne," but "the throne of His glory." The Son of Man sits there in His character of King, and calls all the Gentiles before Him, and enters into, not the question of their sins in general, as later at the Great White Throne, but their treatment of those whom He graciously styles "My brethren." These are Jews, preachers of the gospel of the kingdom during the brief interval between the removal of the Church to glory and the revelation of Christ to judge and to reign. Some will treat them badly, thus showing out their deep hatred to God and His Christ. Those who lose their lives at that time are found under the altar, in Rev. 6: 9-11, crying for vengeance on their foes. Others will treat them kindly, bowing to their testimony, and receiving it as the Word of God, in blessed proof that the Spirit of God has been working in their hearts.

All this the King inquires into. The sheep He pronounces blessed of His Father, and invites them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. They shall enjoy all the blessings of His millennial reign. They are not a heavenly company, but an earthly; and their portion is not said to have been ordered *before* the foundation of the world, as ours (Eph. 1:4), but *from* its foundation. This distinction is of great importance.

The sheep seem astonished when the Lord commends them for having fed, clothed, and entertained Himself. They inquire, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee?" (Matt 25: 37-39.) They had shown such kindness to poor Jewish preachers of the gospel of the kingdom, but had not thought of their deeds at all as done to the Lord Himself. "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

It is most evident that we are not on Christian ground here. Christians are members of the body of Christ, constituted such by the baptism of the Holy Ghost; consequently, all that is done to them, whether it be kindness or otherwise, is accepted by the Lord as done to Himself (Acts 9: 4, 5; 1 Cor. 8: 12; 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13). This may not be quite understood now by all who believe, for many have no due understanding of their proper relationship to Christ, but all such ignorance will be dissipated in the glory. Christians will not then be surprised to hear the Lord speak of gracious acts done to His saints as done to Himself. *But the sheep are surprised!* They know nothing of such a principle. They form no part of the Church of God, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but are saved as Gentiles by Jewish preaching at the end (Col. 3: 11). Then the King will reckon with those on His left hand. To them He will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall

they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me" (Matt. 25: 41-45). Thus will He deal with those who have failed to show kindness to His poor Jewish brethren of the last days. It is a solemn thing to lift the hand against the Jew. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" (Isa. 54: 17).

But this does not complete the judgment of the quick. Many details are to be found in the Prophets, far too numerous to be reproduced here. Suffice it to say that when Israel reappears as a nation, her ancient enemies will reappear also, with hearts as bitter against them as ever in the past. The careful reader has only to examine the "burdens" of Isaiah and the other prophets to be convinced that none of them have been exhausted by the indications of long ago. Assyria will come up again, and be dealt with (Isa. 10: 12); the Philistines (Isa. 14: 29-32), Moab (Isa. 15: 16), Damascus (Isa. 17: 1, 2), and many others. Israel will be specially used for the punishment of Edom, Moab, and Ammon (Dan. 11: 41). These are all temporal judgments, for their implacable enmity to the chosen seed, and are all included in the judgment of the quick.

It may be urged against this, that most of the peoples named no longer exist. This presents no difficulty to faith. God has spoken in His word, and there faith rests. However apparently impossible to us, every sentence will be made good. Besides, who are we to say that Edom, Moab, etc., no longer exist? We no longer know these people by their old titles, but they are probably near our doors under other names. The same difficulty may be pressed with regard to the ten tribes of Israel. No one knows certainly where they are, nor by what name they are at present called (though many guesses have been made, especially of late years), but God has His eye upon them, and will bring them forward when the suited moment arrives. At the same epoch, their adversaries will show themselves, with the same sentiments as of old, to receive from Jehovah's righteous hand condign punishment for their hostility to the people of His choice. The judgment of the quick will go on more or less, throughout the millennial kingdom. "Behold, a king shall reign *in righteousness*, and princes shall rule *in judgment* (Isa. 32: 1). Long-suffering will not then be exercised with regard to sin, as now; every offence apparently being summarily dealt with (Isa. 45:20). We are apt to overlook this aspect of the Lord's glorious reign. We speak much of the blessedness of it, and of the peace and glory that will prevail, but are apt to forget the strict righteousness that will form the foundation of His rule. The true Melchizedec is first King of Righteousness, then King of Peace (Heb. 7: 1).

Another point to be remembered in considering the judgments of God soon to be poured out upon the world is that the heavenly saints are to be associated with the Lord Jesus in this solemn work. Daniel says, "Judgment was given to the saints of the Most High," or high places (Dan. 7: 22). This the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians of. They were so far forgetting their high calling and destiny as to carry their disputes into the courts of the world, before the unjust. Paul indignantly exclaims, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. 6: 2, 3).

This has been greatly overlooked in Christendom. Far from expecting to be the world's judges — yea, the judges of angels, too — not a few of those who really love the Lord Jesus quite expect to be brought into judgment themselves! This is serious — injurious to both peace and affection. As already shown, every believer is placed beyond judgment in the risen Christ, a standing in Divine righteousness being already his through His accomplished work. Nothing remains but eternal participation with Christ. Consequently in all He does we shall have a part; hence our future position as associated with

Him in the judgment of the world and of the angels.

The final act in the judgment of the quick is the overthrow of the vast hosts which will be gathered together by Satan after his release from the bottomless pit. It seems inconceivable that after such a season of blessedness, man will be found ready to revolt against the Lord; but so it will be. The heart of man is so incurably bad that neither grace nor glory displayed before it, touch or alter it in the slightest degree. Nothing avails but a new creation, and this is the work of the Spirit of God.

Hence, when Satan goes out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, he succeeds in gathering them together to battle, in number as the sand of the sea. "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Rev. 20: 7-9). Jerusalem is the object of their attack, for there the saints (i.e., the earthly saints) are congregated. Swift judgment falls upon them from heaven. Their deceiver and betrayer is then consigned to the lake of fire, his eternal place of suffering abode.

3: The Judgment of the Dead.

In pursuing our subject, we have now reached the end of time. Christ is the Judge of the dead, even as of the living. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5: 22, 23). How solemn that men should have to stand before *Him*! The One who died for sinners, and rose again: the One who has waited throughout this period of Divine long-suffering and grace, able and willing to save all who believe, however lost or vile! Then for men to have to stand before Him at the end! What shame and confusion of face! What speechlessness! Will men in Christendom be able to say that they never heard His Name, nor the sound of saving grace? Will they be able to plead that the Word of God, containing the record of His grace and truth, was never placed within their reach? Neither will nor can be urged in extenuation of their position. The sentence of God will be justified by each and all.

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God [or 'the throne'], and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell [Hades] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [Hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 11-15). It is a "great" throne, for the most momentous of all questions is to be settled there; "white" because of the holiness and righteousness of all that is there enacted. All who are not raised in the first resurrection must then rise, the mighty voice of the Son of God calling them from their tombs. The sea comes forward with its contingent, as Hades delivers up the spirits to be reunited with the bodies. The books tell their tale, all is faithfully recorded by! a holy God. The Word of God will be there, even as the Lord Jesus said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day" (John 12: 48). Every word heard, every chapter read, only increases responsibility, if not received by faith in the heart. How does the reader stand in view of all this? Has the reader been cleansed from his sins by the blood of Jesus? Is forgiveness yours, and justification and acceptance in the risen Christ?

If not, lose no time, we entreat you. The present period of grace and mercy is fast hastening to its close, and soon the Master of the house will rise up and shut to the door. Then all hope must flee, mercy will be no more. What a contrast! Eternal glory in the Father's house for all who believe in the

Son; a long eternity of woe in the lake of fire for all who avail not themselves of His wondrous grace.

"Jesus, the Lord our righteousness!

Our beauty Thou, our glorious dress!

'Midst flaming worlds, in this arrayed,

With joy shall we lift up the head.

"Bold shall we stand in that great day,

For who aught to our charge shall lay,

While by Thy blood absolved we are

From Sin's tremendous curse and fear?"

The Apostasy of Christendom and the Antichrist.

We will now consider the march of events in Christendom after the removal of the saints to glory. The coming of the Lord will by no means, alas! clear the field of Christian profession. To many thousands, it is feared, He will have to say, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matt. 25: 12). True, they carry the lamps of profession, but they are oil-less; they fear His name, but they have never come into living contact with Him; they Sing His praises with their lips, but have never known His love and grace in their hearts. All such will be left behind at the rapture, however loud their plea. What will be their future? This we now propose to consider.

Many have thought the era of the Gospel to be the final one, and that the millennium will be an outcome of it, brought about by diffusion of truth, and the spiritual subjugation of the whole world to Christ. But Scripture speaks very differently. The millennium will be brought in by desolating judgments, not by Gospel labour; and as for the present period of favour and privilege, instead of ending in universal glory, it will terminate in darkness and apostasy.

There is a sad consistency in all the history of man. Every dispensation has ended in gloom. Man has failed in whatever circumstances God has placed him. The period of innocence ended in the fall and the expulsion from the garden; the age of conscience resulted in the flood; the dispensation of the law terminated in the rejection and murder of the Messiah; and more might be added. The Church period will have no different ending, all New Testament Scripture being witness. We will quote a few proofs. In 2 Tim. 3 we read, "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come." Then follows a dark description, reminding us of heathen depravity as told out in Rom. 1. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." This is very solemn. Clearly there was no thought in the Apostle's mind of the professing Church and the world becoming better and more suitable for Christ. Look also at verse 13 of the same chapter. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Consider, too, the short Epistle of Jude. There the course of evil in the professing Church is traced from its first introduction by the enemy by means of certain men who crept in unawares, until the Lord's appearing in judgment. The evil is not eradicated, but goes on intensifying until the Lord Himself arises to deal with it. Recall also the Lord's parable of the wheat and the tares in Matt. 13: 24-30. The enemy sowed the tares soon after the wheat was sown, and they grow on together until the harvest, when the great and final separation comes.

With all this may be connected the warning in Rom. 11. There the Apostle shows that

Christendom has taken the place of Israel in the earth as regards the outward privileges and responsibility. The Jewish branches of the olive tree were cut off because of unfaithfulness, as every one knows. But what of the Gentiles, who have succeeded them as wild branches grafted in? "Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: *otherwise thou also shalt be cut off* (Rom. 11: 20-22). This does not touch the question of individual salvation, which is eternally secured in Christ; it is dispensational responsibility. Who will pretend that Christendom has continued in the goodness of God? Judgment, therefore, must fall, though not until the cup of iniquity is filled up by the apostasy of the last days.

To this we will now turn. Observe the way in which the solemn subject is introduced in 2 Thess. 2. The Thessalonians at the time of the writing of the Epistle were in deep distress. They were passing through sore tribulation. Paul alludes to "all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (2 Thess. 1: 4). The enemy had let loose his rage upon them, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus. He had wrought in another way also, which was much more serious. He had succeeded in instilling into their minds the idea that the day of the Lord had set in, and that the great tribulation connected with that solemn epoch was upon them. A letter even had been sent to them, pretending to be from the Apostle Paul, confirming them in the notion. All this wrought very sadly among them. The brightness of their hope, which the Spirit commends so warmly in the First Epistle, became clouded, and deep gloom settled down upon them.

Yet one simple consideration would have materially helped them. The Old Testament Scriptures, in speaking of the day of the Lord, speaks of it as judgment on the *ungodly*. In that day the tables will be turned. The Lord's friends will then be at rest in His blessed presence, while His foes will be in adversity. This thought would have assured the Thessalonians; but unfortunately our hearts are such, that often in a time of difficulty we forget what would prove real help and comfort to our souls.

Observe carefully the Apostle's words: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, *as that the day of the Lord is present.*" This is unquestionably the correct reading of this important verse. The Authorised Version is manifestly wrong here. How could the inspired Apostle write beseeching them not to believe that the day is at hand, when elsewhere he says, "The night is far spent, *the day is at hand!*" (Rom. 13: 12.) It would be flat contradiction, which can never be in the Scriptures, where all is of God.

On the contrary, he begs them not to be persuaded that the day of the Lord had come. But on what does he ground his exhortation? *On the coming of the Lord Jesus to gather together His own.* In no way could he have presented the distinctness of the two events more clearly. The coming of the Lord for His own is one thing; His day (introduced by His appearing in glory) quite another. The saints are to be removed to heaven before the last great crisis; but inasmuch as the whole Church of God was still on earth, how could the Thessalonians suppose that it had arrived? Such is the reasoning of the Apostle, at once simple and reassuring.

Another consideration is then presented. Before the day of the Lord sets in the apostasy must take place, and the man of sin run his course. "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away" (more properly "the apostasy") "first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (v. 3). This must not be confounded with other predictions. It is important to rightly divide the word of truth. In 1 Tim. 4: 1 the same Apostle writes, "Now the Spirit

speakech expressly that in latter times some shall depart from the faith." If the verses which follow be examined carefully, it will be seen that Popery is in view, with its Satanic hypocrisy and restrictions. The expression "latter times" therefore simply means times subsequent to the writing of the Epistle. 2 Tim. 3: 1 presents a further stage in the development of evil: "in the last days perilous times shall come." We do not here read of some departing from the faith; the evil is much more general. Who can read the Holy Spirit's language in 2 Tim. 3: 1-5, and fail to see that it is our own day that is so vividly described? "The last days" are running their course now.

But 2 Thess. 2 speaks of a later and more solemn period still. Grave as are the features of the "latter times" and the "last days," *the Apostasy* is immeasurably more serious. It means nothing less than a universal renunciation of all profession of Christianity. The Lord's true ones — the salt — having been removed, and the Holy Spirit having left the scene, what is to preserve the mass from headlong ruin? Not that the nominal profession of Christianity will necessarily be abandoned immediately the saints are taken away. It will doubtless be maintained for a time. Many a religious building will be opened as usual, many a Christless sermon will be delivered then, as, alas! too often at the present time. But it will not continue very long. Liberal-mindedness (so-called) will prevail. It will no longer be deemed necessary to contend for this truth or that; the union of Christendom (of which one hears so much even now) will then be more than possible, only to be followed, under Satanic leadership, by the throwing up of the very name and form of Christianity.

Many really sincere souls find this hard to believe. They have so long cherished the thought that the Gospel is destined to convert the whole world to God, that it seems inconceivable that Christendom itself will become more corrupt and evil than even the heathen world beyond. But the testimony of Scripture must be honestly faced. Nothing is to be gained, but the contrary, by buoying ourselves up with false hopes and expectations. We really thus give the enemy an advantage, because a measure of blindness must inevitably result as to our present pathway in the midst of growing darkness and evil.

It cannot be denied that things are rapidly moving onward to the apostasy. God forbid that one should present a gloomier picture than is just, but the facts are patent to all. On every hand the inspiration of the Scriptures is called in question or denied; many indulge in the loosest and gravest speculations concerning the person of Christ; the fundamental doctrine of the atonement is set aside by multitudes; the eternal punishment of the ungodly is widely repudiated; and many more sorrowful details might be added. This is a day of compromise and surrender. Truths that our fathers suffered for gladly are lightly yielded now, as if they were the merest trifles; and those who suffered for them in the past are regarded by not a few with a kind of compassion, as over scrupulous and narrow, which a little nineteenth century enlightenment would have helped!

If such is the condition of things while the saints of God are here, what will it be when we are all gone? Scripture answers, *Apostasy*. Arising out of this is the revelation of the Antichrist, the man of sin. Man is a religious being naturally, and must have an object of worship. If God is thrown off, a Satanic substitute is accepted. This we have long seen in heathendom; presently it will be witnessed in Christendom. Satan will bring forward his man when the suited moment arrives, and present him to his dupes. Let it be distinctly understood that the Antichrist is *a person*. Some have thought the Apostle's remarks in 2 Thess. 2 to refer to the Papacy, but this is a great mistake. It is not a system, nor a succession of men, but an individual. The Popes, however arrogant and evil, have never gone to the lengths described here. The man of sin sets himself up above all that is called God or that is worshipped. He sets aside all objects of worship, true and false, and claims sole Divine honour. His seat will be in Jerusalem. "He sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God." Only on Mount Moriah has God ever owned a temple of a material character. During the Church period the

temple of God is a spiritual thing. The saints themselves form His temple and the Spirit of God inhabits it (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17, 1 Peter 2: 5). But when the saints are removed to heaven, this is necessarily at an end. Then the material temple will come into view again. It will happen thus. A godly number of the Jews will be found in their own land at the end of the age (indeed, many are returning at the present time). They will set about to re-establish their old system of worship, with its sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifices. At the appointed moment the man of sin will introduce himself to them, claiming to be the long-expected Messiah. It will happen then as the Lord foretold, "I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, *him ye will receive*" (John 5:43). His pretensions will be admitted by the blinded mass, the godly remnant, on the contrary, saying within themselves, "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Ps. 55: 21). The elect are not deceived; a stranger will they not follow, for they know not his voice.

Antichrist will soon display himself in his true colours. At the first, he will form a covenant as the leader of the Jews, with the great power of the West for protection (Dan. 9: 27). The godless mass will glory in this, saying, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through" (referring to their powerful Northern foe), "it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves" (Isa. 28: 15). But this will not hold good long. In the midst of the week, i.e., the seven years of the covenant, the Antichrist, backed up by the Beast (the Roman head), will turn upon them, suppressing their worship, and will seek to force idolatry upon them. If it be asked, "How can this affect all Christendom?" the answer is, that Christendom's political chief and the evil one in Jerusalem are in league, consequently where the one has influence, the other has also. Christendom and the Jews will be together in apostasy, in the last days, strange as it may sound in some ears now. Has the reader ever weighed up 1 John 2: 22? "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." Here we get the two forms of evil distinctly connected; the first part of the verse being Jewish unbelief, the second part Christian, or, more properly, Antichristian apostasy. Solemn thought! Where the light has shone the brightest the darkness will be the most dense very shortly.

There is restraint at the present time, as the Apostle shows: "And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He Who now letteth will let, until He be taken out of the way" (2 Thess. 2: 6, 7). Evil intruded itself into the sphere of Christian profession very early, but though it is steadily but surely working, there is restraint, that it come not yet to a head. The "what" in verse 6, unnamed by the Apostle, is probably government. It is still true that "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13: 1); and while this is so there is at least a measure of check on human will. But presently Rom. 13: 1 will cease to be true, for the supreme power in Christendom will receive his throne and authority direct from the Dragon (Rev. 13: 1-4); then the way will be open for evil to show itself in its most extreme form.

"He" in verse 7 is the Holy Spirit. He dwells in the Church of God and in the individual Christian, and is here to guard the interests of Christ. He will not suffer the fearful impiety of which we are speaking to take place while He is present. But when the Church is removed He will quit the scene, and man will be left to the evil of his own heart, and to the devil.

Those will be days of fearful delusion. To help it on miracles will be performed, and these in great variety. Miracles are not necessarily proofs of Divine authority, whatever Papists may say; the devil can perform them, when God thinks proper to allow it. The coming of the man of sin is "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2: 9). Perhaps the most serious is the appearance of fire called down from heaven. This we find in Rev. 13:

13. This was Elijah's great sign that Jehovah was the true God, which caused the people to fall on their faces and own "Jehovah, He is the God; Jehovah, He is the God" (1 Kings 18: 38, 39).

The judicial hand of God will be put forth in that day, as well as the power of Satan. It is righteous retribution from Himself. Men in Christendom have had the truth, but have not loved it; instead of believing it they have had pleasure in unrighteousness. God will remember all this in the day to come. His hand will be upon them. He will send them a strong delusion, that they shall believe the lie of the enemy. The truth not having been received (though known), the lie shall be to their eternal ruin. Some find it hard to believe that the (so-called) enlightened men of this day will soon bow at the feet of the man of sin; but it is solemnly true. Men who affect to despise their ignorant ancestors for bowing down to stocks and stones will presently be found doing what is immeasurably worse. Probably the strictly religious Jews of the Lord's day did not care to be told that the unclean spirit of idolatry will return into their midst with sevenfold virulence (Matt. 12: 43-45). The last state of Judaism will be worse than the first, and Christendom will be in the same condition. The two systems, so opposed in principle, will be together in evil in the dark day that is at hand.

We will now turn from 2 Thess. 2 to some other portions of Scripture. Refer to Dan. 11: 36-45. A person is here very abruptly introduced as "the king." Who is he? If the whole chapter be examined carefully it will be found to be occupied with the contentions of the kings of the North and South (Syria and Egypt) about the glorious land. Down to verse 35 the chapter has been fulfilled. The exploits of the Maccabean times are spoken of, also the intervention of the Romans, under the title of the ships of Chittim, before the first coming into the world of our Lord Jesus. Then we observe a great chasm in the prophecy, so common in the prophetic word. This whole period is passed over in silence, and we are carried forward to the last days. "The king" of verse 36 is clearly a person reigning in the land, and quite distinct from the kings of the North and South, who both make war upon him (see verse 40). *It is Antichrist*, but viewed, not as the leader of Christendom's apostasy, as in 2 Thess. 2, but as the profane leader of the Jewish people. The language is too similar to that of 2 Thess. 2 to be misunderstood. "And the king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all" (Dan 11: 36, 37). Here we have the sadly familiar features, pride, willfulness, blasphemy, and usurpation of God's place and title. Verse 37 is plain that he will be a Jew. No Gentile could hope to be received by the Jewish people as Messiah, heir to the throne of David. It is strange that all interpreters of prophecy do not see this really simple point.

The man of sin is introduced as "the king" with equal abruptness in Isaiah's prophecy. "For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king also it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it" (Isa. 30: 33). See also Isa. 57: 9; Thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell." Both passages refer to the same solemn person, the one setting forth his doom, the other the extreme wickedness of the people of Israel in having to do with him.

Now a word or two as to Rev. 13. In the first half of the chapter we have the Satanic revival of the Roman empire, with the blasphemy of its head and his persecution of the saints of God. In verse 11 we read, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." This is very plain. The language of this and the following verses clearly identify him with the evil agent we have been considering. He is called here a beast because of his connection

with the political power. The first arises "out of the sea," i.e., out of the anarchy of the nations; the second comes up "out of the earth," the condition of things being more settled at the moment of his appearance. The second beast is the deceiver and miracle worker rather than the first. The one is characterised by great political power, the other by Satanic seduction.

How awful the end of both! They have lifted up their hands against the living God, and against His Christ, and they will feel the weight of Divine wrath in a peculiarly awful manner at the Lord's appearing. 2 Thess. 2: 8 speaks very solemnly of the Antichrist, "Whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." How full of meaning is his title, "Son of Perdition," as we read these words! "The breath of his mouth" is His word (see Isa. 11: 4; Isa. 30: 33). One word from the Lord, and the career of these messengers of Satan is over for ever. Their power is paralysed by His appearing in glory, however great their stoutness of heart in His absence. Rev. 19: 20 completes the solemn account: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These were both cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Pre-eminent in wickedness, they shall be pre-eminent in punishment. All other transgressors will pass through death, and be raised to stand before the Great White Throne, thence to be consigned to the lake of fire; these men are solemn exceptions. Without passing through death at all, they are cast in at least a thousand years before the mass of the ungodly.

In conclusion, a few words to the conscience of the reader. We have been considering an inexpressibly solemn theme. We have seen what will be the end of merely nominal profession of Christianity — apostasy, and the worship of the man of sin. How is it with the reader? Is Christianity with you a real thing, or a name only? If the latter, be warned in time! Do not rest satisfied with an oil-less lamp, which will avail you nothing in the great day, but acquaint yourself with the Christ of God while you may. The greatest sinner He will not refuse, nor the greatest professor, if the true state is owned before Him. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5: 12).

"See the Saviour, long expected,
Now in solemn pomp appear!
And His saints, by man rejected,
All His heavenly glory share:
Hallelujah!
See the Son of God appear!

The Coming Great Tribulation.

It is commonly understood by those who bear the Name of the Lord Jesus that the Scriptures speak of a period of unparalleled trial for the saints of God before the termination of the present age. Many are not a little exercised as to the matter, not being at all clear in their minds as to who the persons are who will suffer at that time. Some assert that the Church of God will be in the scene of conflict then, and that therefore the heavenly saints will be the sufferers during that terrible period; others affirm that the Church of God will be removed to glory ere that day begins, and that its trials will fall upon a different order of witnesses altogether. The question is manifestly far too grave and fraught with results much too serious, to be allowed to remain a mere matter of speculation or opinion. It

cannot be treated as a point of indifference. Time hastens, and the darkness deepens around us; every thoughtful Christian believes that we are drawing near to the fulfilment of all that the prophets have spoken. Hence the importance of knowing certainly the mind of the Lord. If the Church of God is indeed to pass through the terrible ordeal, it is of moment to know it, that we may prepare ourselves for it and not be taken unawares; while, on the other hand, if the Scriptures which speak of the great tribulation really contemplate an entirely different company of saints, it is well to be assured of it, that our hearts may be at rest about the matter.

All this we now propose to inquire into. The only standard of authority is the Word of God. What a mighty contrast there is between the ever-varying opinions of men and the inspired Word of our God! On the one hand there is no certainty, but frequently distress and doubt; on the other hand, there is solid ground for the feet to stand upon, and faith finds perfect rest. All doubts are there removed, all mists are dispelled; divine certainty is known and enjoyed in the soul.

We will first examine Matt. 24. This is admitted to be the most important passage dealing with the coming great tribulation. To have right thoughts as to this chapter is to get real help as to many other portions of Scripture. The general character of the Gospel of Matthew must be borne in mind. It is not in vain that the Spirit of God has given us four different accounts of the Lord Jesus in His walk and ways below. Each evangelist presents the Lord in a different aspect, as must be evident to every reader. In what character does Matthew present Him to our hearts? Unquestionably as the Messiah of Israel. Matt. 1 shows Him to be Abraham's true Seed, and David's Heir. The Gospel as a whole is the trial of the question whether or not Israel was prepared to receive Him. The result of the test we know. He was despised and rejected by men, and abhorred of His own nation. Consequently, in Matt. 16: 18, the Lord speaks of the Church — "Upon this rock I will build My Church" — a new work of grace to be performed consequent upon the final rejection of Himself by Israel. Warnings abound in Matthew's Gospel. Israel was not left in ignorance as to what would happen if the Messiah was not received. One of the Lord's most solemn statements concerning them is to be found in Matt. 23: 37-39, which immediately precedes the chapter now under consideration. Mark the sorrow of His blessed heart expressing itself: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." All this the disciples heard and pondered. Their minds were filled with the promised kingdom; they firmly believed that their Master was the long expected Deliverer, and they looked that He would soon set up the kingdom in power and glory. The following, among other passages, show what was in their thoughts: Matt. 20: 20-23; Luke 19: 11; Luke 24: 21; Acts 1: 6.

They did not as yet understand the cross, though the Lord frequently spoke to them of it. Deliverance from the Romans and all other oppressors, followed by glory in the land, was alone before their minds. But they might have gathered at least two things from the Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem: first, that there must be a period of desolation for Israel and the temple, because of their unbelief; and secondly, that there will be a future coming of the Blessed One, when He will be gladly welcomed by the very nation that once disowned and rejected Him.

However, in passing hence, they drew the Lord's attention to the beautiful buildings of the temple, and got in reply: "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24: 2). This was too plain to be misinterpreted. Accordingly they asked the Lord the three questions found in verse 3. "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" "Just a few

words on the expression "Thy coming." Let it be distinctly understood that they in no way referred to the heavenly hope of the Church of God, the coming of the Lord Jesus into the air to gather together His own. Of this they had absolutely no knowledge whatever. It was not yet revealed; indeed, they knew nothing at all about the Church itself beyond the brief word already referred to in Matt. 16. Could we have spoken to them on that day of accomplished redemption, and a rent veil, of Sonship to the Father, of the Holy Ghost's indwelling, of union with a glorified Man in heaven, or of translation to heaven to spend eternity with the First-begotten in the Father's house, they would not have understood a word. All these are privileges now known and enjoyed, being the inalienable portion of all who in this period believe in the Lord Jesus. But these things were not known by the disciples when with the Lord on the Mount of Olives. It will greatly help to the elucidation of Matt. 24 if all thoughts of the Church of God are promptly dismissed from the mind.

The questions raised by the disciples were not asked from the standpoint of the Church at all. They were merely Jewish believers who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and who were desirous of information concerning His earthly kingdom.* They are thus representatives of a similar company of saints who will be found in the land at a later day.

{*I am anxious that the above remarks should not be misunderstood. Though the eleven formed no part of the Church of God at the time of which we speak, they most assuredly did afterwards; indeed, they were its first members. But this was not true until the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended from heaven to form the body.}

At this juncture it may be well to compare Luke's account of the Lord's remarkable prophecy. He was led of the Spirit of God to dwell on the first of the three questions, with the Lord's answer. Hence we get there full information concerning the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans, with but few remarks concerning the crisis at the end of the age. Matthew, on the other hand, while naming all the questions, was guided to dwell on the answers to the second and third only. Through not noticing this, many interpreters have imagined that Matt. 24 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, because the parallel passage in Luke does! But this is a great mistake, and due to want of attention to the Spirit's use of the two writers. We may here observe the importance of inspiration. Merely human arrangements cannot account for such differences; but when we bear in mind that the Holy Ghost had different objects before His mind in taking up his chosen vessels, all is simple and plain.

Now let us glance down the Lord's words in Matt. 24. In verses 4-14 the general position during the Lord's absence is briefly described. His servants must expect to meet trial and suffering in their service, but must persevere to the end. These exhortations are of value to those who serve the Lord Jesus now; but will have their full application in the circumstances of the Jewish witnesses at the time of the end.

Then we get something more definite. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand): then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains" (verses 15, 16). Here we have a very important sign. What is meant by "the abomination of desolation"? "Abomination" is the Scripture title for an idol. Thus we read of "Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites," and "Chemosh the abomination of Moab" (1 Kings 11: 5-7). It is, therefore, an idol set up in the holy place at Jerusalem. This has never happened in the past. True, the temple was defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 11: 31), but this was long before the Lord's prophecy. The only event of note in connection with the temple since the Lord Jesus spoke was its destruction by the Roman armies under Titus in A.D. 70; consequently the Lord's prediction has yet to be fulfilled.

The explanation is as follows. In the closing crisis the Jews will receive the false Christ, as has been shown in a preceding paper. He will keep his word with them for a time, and will appear to be their guardian and friend. But he will change his tactics after a while, and in league with the power of the West will seek to force idolatry upon them. Not only will he himself sit in the temple of God, claiming to be divine, but he will place there the image of the Roman beast. This I believe to be the "abomination of desolation" to which our Lord Jesus here refers. There will be really three false objects of worship in that day — the dragon, the image of the beast, and the Antichrist (Rev. 12: 4-15; 2 Thess. 2: 4). The mass of the Jewish people will blindly accept all this. The Lord warned that wicked generation that the unclean spirit would return with sevenfold malignity at the end (Matt. 12: 43-45). The devil-possessed herd of swine furnish us with a solemn picture of them, rushing headlong to destruction (Matt. 8: 28-34).

They have kindled their own fire in accepting the false Messiah, and shall lie down in sorrow; this they shall have at Jehovah's righteous hand, as the prophet declares (Isa. 1: 11).

Those will be terrible times for such as fear God; fearful persecutions will break out more severe in character than anything yet known. The Lord bids them note the signs and take warning. When they behold this daring iniquity in the sanctuary in Jerusalem they are to flee. So urgent is the matter that "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes" (Matt. 24: 17, 18). They are to make for the mountains with all possible haste. All this instruction is plainly for persons living in Judea. Readers of Scripture who persist in seeing the Church of God in this chapter must find themselves beset with difficulties in every detail of the prophecy. Is the Church of God confined to one land that such signs should be of service? Is not the Church rather to be found in every quarter of the earth? When once it is perceived that the godly in Judea are in view, all is simple and clear.

The Lord bids them pray that they may not have to flee in the winter, or on the Sabbath day. How exceedingly gracious! He is ever-mindful of the circumstances of His beloved saints, however apparently trivial or small. He thought of the suffering involved in a winter flight without time to go into the house for an overcoat! And what a dilemma they would find themselves in if the image happened to be set up on the Sabbath day! Therefore He bids them cry to God that it may not so occur. In such a case they would not know what to do. If a journey of any length were undertaken on the Sabbath day (Acts 1: 12) it would involve a breach of the law; yet, if they stayed awhile, for conscience sake, they might lose their lives.

The introduction of the Sabbath day is an additional proof that we are on Jewish, rather than Church, ground in this chapter. Nowhere in the epistles of the New Testament is the Sabbath spoken of in connection with the Church of God save in Col. 2: 16, 17, where the apostle contends for liberty as to it. The Christian's day is not the seventh day, but the first of the week; which speaks to us of redemption accomplished, of victory won, and of a new creation where all things are of God. It is serious to confound the two days, though commonly done. The principles connected with them are entirely different, and even opposite. The Sabbath day is in abeyance during the present period of grace, but will come into view again then God resumes relations with the people of Israel.

To return. The tribulation will be an unparalleled one. Satan will just then have been cast out of heaven (never more to return), and will be full of fury, knowing that he has but a short time (Rev. 12: 7-13). All opposition to his schemes he will endeavour to stamp out by means of his principal tools, the Roman Beast and the man of sin. Still, God holds the reins. The enemy cannot exceed His limits. He has fixed the moment when the sorrow shall cease, and all the rage of Satan cannot prolong it one hour.

What comfort this is for the saints of God! "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (verse 22). For three years and a half the tribulation will rage. The period is variously described in Scripture, leaving no real doubt in the mind. In Rev. 11: 3, Rev. 12: 6, we read of "one thousand, two hundred and threescore days;" in Rev. 11: 2, of "forty-two months;" and in Dan. 7: 25, of "a time, and times and the dividing of time." Dan. 9:27 also confirms this.

Before speaking of the deliverance, the Lord gives another warning of a highly important character. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo! here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not" (verses 23-26). This word of counsel will doubtless prove to be of great value at that time. The fugitives might easily be duped. When fleeing for their lives, crying out of their agonised hearts, "Oh Lord, how long;" "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down" (Ps. 79: 5; Isa. 64: 1) , how easily might they be deceived by false reports. Suppose someone told them that Christ had come, and had arrived at Bethlehem or elsewhere, it might be believed. There is a vast difference in the hope of the Christian and the hope of the Jew in this respect. Our hope is not the coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth, but into the air. We shall meet Him there, and go with Him into the Father's house. This is our proper expectation; but it will be otherwise with the waiting Jews. He will come to them where they are, His feet first touching the Mount of Olives, the spot from which He went up (Zech. 14: 4; Acts 1: 9-12). But the point of the Lord's warning is that they will not need to be informed when He appears, for His manifestation will be a public display of glory, comparable to the lightning coming out of the east, and shining unto the west: "Every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1: 7).

His advent will bring the Great Tribulation to a close. The righteous Lord will deal with His adversaries, especially the Beast, and the Man of Sin (as we have already shown), and deliver and comfort His oppressed and suffering saints. Such is the testimony of Matt. 24.

We will now consider the testimony of the Old Testament prophets. Read Jer. 30: 4-9. The Prophet evidently speaks of the same time as the Lord Jesus in the chapter we have been examining. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it." This is plainly the well-known time of unparalleled trouble. But who are the sufferers contemplated? Not the Church, of which Jeremiah knew even less than the disciples who sat with the Lord on the Mount of Olives. "It is even the time of '*Jacob's trouble*.'" "These are the words which Jehovah spake *concerning Israel and concerning Judah*." All this is very simple and intelligible, save to those who are addicted to the habit of "spiritualizing" the prophecies of the Old Testament. Such a mode of interpretation is a grievous mistake, highly injurious in many cases to the soul, which finds itself appropriating as its own merely earthly blessings, when God would have the heart in the enjoyment of the heavenly portion, which He has made ours in the risen Christ. When God says "Israel" and "Judah," we may be assured that He means what He says. Hence, Jeremiah's prediction speaks of trouble for the earthly people, no others being before his mind. But deliverance shall follow, as Matt. 24 has shown us. Jacob shall be saved out of his tribulation, the yoke of the oppressors shall be broken for ever, and Israel shall serve Jehovah their God and the true David their king.

Turn now to Dan. 12: 1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." This exactly corresponds with what has already passed before us. It is the

same epoch, for if the preceding verses be examined (Dan. 11: 36-45) it will be seen that the Angel is speaking to the Prophet of the day of Antichrist's supremacy in the glorious land (Israel). With this is connected "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." This is the familiar period of unparalleled tribulation. But who are the sufferers? "*Thy people.*" Daniel's people are the Jews, as I need not stay to prove. Deliverance follows the trouble, at least for the elect — those written in God's book.

How harmonious is Scripture in all its parts! Though Jeremiah, Daniel, and the Lord Jesus wrote and spoke at different times, and under widely different circumstances, they exactly correspond in every little detail. The reverent mind cannot fail to see in this the guiding hand of the One Spirit. He it was Who inspired all the writers in the book of God, giving unity and harmony to the whole. May our confidence in the Spirit of God be deepened in this evil day, when so much unbelief and doubt is around us on every hand.

The next passage for consideration may present greater difficulties to some readers of Holy Scripture; I refer to Rev. 7: 9-17. There we read unquestionably of Gentiles, which has led many to suppose that the Church of God is intended. But attention to the place accorded to chapter 7. in the Book of Revelation will greatly help to solve the difficulty. Look back at the preceding chapters. In Rev. 1 we see the seven candlesticks, and the Son of Man walking in their midst; this is introductory. In Rev. 2 and Rev. 3, in the epistles to the seven Churches in Asia, we have a sketch of the outward history of the Church on earth from the days of the Apostles until the end. After this we hear nothing, more of Churches except in the postscript (Rev. 22: 16). Revelation 4, 5, show heaven preparing itself for the work of judgment, and the heavenly saints, under the figure of twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders, are seen at home with the Lord before the judgments commence. This is followed by the breaking of the seals (Rev. 6) and the outpouring of divine wrath. Then Revelation 7 comes in. It is a parenthesis really, coming between the sixth and seventh seals. It speaks of mercy in the midst of judgment. The heart of God loves mercy. Judgment is His strange work. He must execute it, in consistency with the holiness of His nature, and in order to maintain the majesty of His throne, but He does not delight in judgment. It gives Him real delight to bless and save men, as Luke 15 shows; He never takes delight in judging them.

Rev. 7, then, is a parenthesis of mercy. The judgments are restrained, while God draws aside the veil, as it were, to mark of His own. First we get 144,000 sealed Israelites. A defined number of all the tribes of Israel are sealed in order to be preserved during the terrors of the times. But is this all? No; there are saved Gentiles also. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (verses 9-14).

Some will say, "Surely these are the Church of God!" All such will do well to examine the verses very closely. Observe, this white-robed palm bearing throng are quite distinct from the elders, who, we have already remarked, represent the Church, though not the Church only. One of the elders raised the question with the Apostle as to this countless throng, and then explained that they had come out of the

great tribulation. The definite article should be inserted in verse 14. It helps to a better understanding of the elder's words. They are evidently persons who have heard the gospel of the kingdom from Jewish messengers and believed it. Suffering follows for them, though not necessarily loss of life. It must be remembered that the seductions and troubles of the last days will be very widespread. Though most severe in Judea, as is just, they will extend thence more or less over the whole civilised earth. The Man of Sin in the land, being in league with the Chief of the revived Roman Empire, will spread his poison, with its consequent suffering and sorrow, on every hand.

But these white-robed ones have by grace stood firm. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of old, they have refused to join in the universal idolatry. "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They are now seen victorious, about to enter into blessing. The terms of their blessing speak of earth, rather than heaven, the figures being borrowed principally from Isa. 49. "Before the throne" is probably a moral, rather than local, expression, as in Rev. 14: 3 (compare also Rev. 12:1). Their place and portion, I have no doubt, will be in the millennial earth under the peaceful reign of the Lord Jesus.

A few words as to Rev. 12 may be helpful to some of our readers. The great tribulation is not there referred to by name, but the allusion throughout is evidently to that period. The sun-clothed woman is seen persecuted by the Dragon, but preserved by God, and nourished in the wilderness during twelve hundred and sixty days (Rev. 12: 6-14). Who is this woman? Verse 5 is sufficient to answer the question. The man child is Christ beyond all just controversy, and Christ came of Israel, as the Apostle reminds us in Rom. 9: 5. The first verse of our chapter shows us Israel as viewed from God's standpoint, invested with all the symbols of authority over the earth. In the closing days, she is the object of Satan's enmity. He will stir up the powers against her, and do all that is in his power to destroy her. But he will not succeed. Israel is intended by God to have the supreme place in the earth; a remnant will therefore be preserved in mercy through all the horrors of the last scenes for this end. His word to His tried ones will be, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. 26: 20). He will provide for them a Zoar, even as for Lot in a former day (Gen. 19).

One more Scripture remains to be noticed — Rev. 3: 10: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

This word is undoubtedly for the Church of God. It is part of the Lord's address to the Church in Philadelphia. But how different the language of this passage to those we have been considering! We do not find here counsel as to what to do in the time of trial, nor any promise of preserving grace, but simply, "I will keep thee from the hour." There is surely a vast difference between being preserved through the trouble, and being kept from it altogether. Enoch and Noah naturally come to mind here. The one told of judgment to come, but was translated to heaven before it fell; the other likewise warned of coming wrath, but, instead of being removed from the scene of judgment, was preserved through it in a shelter provided for him and his house by God. Enoch is a type of the Church of God, Noah is rather a figure of the godly remnant of Israel.

"The hour of temptation" is a wider term than the "great tribulation." The latter, as we have seen, is of but three and a half years' duration, beginning only in the midst of Daniel's seventieth week, when the false Christ changes his front and demands worship; the "hour of temptation" commences when he first appears, and covers, therefore, the whole of the last prophetic week, and possibly more besides. From it all the Church of God is to be preserved. We look for the Bright and Morning Star. Ere the

judgments of God descend, we shall be taken out of this evil scene, and safely housed with Christ Himself in the Father's house on high.

Meanwhile His word is to us the word of His patience. He waits at the Father's right hand above, and we wait in the place of conflict below, for the same wondrous event, for the same blessed moment of joy. May it be increasingly a reality with every one of us, for His Name's sake!

Lamb of God! Thou soon in glory
Wilt to this sad earth return;
All Thy foes shall quake before Thee,
All that now despise Thee mourn.
All Thy saints shall then be with Thee,
With Thee in Thy kingdom reign;
Thine the praise, and Thine the glory,
Lamb of God, for sinners slain!

The Restoration of Israel.

The ultimate future of Israel is very different from that of Christendom. The latter will plunge into the darkest kind of apostasy, as has been already shown, with no restoration after wards; whereas Israel, after the severe purging of the latter-day crisis, will be brought into blessing and earthly glory. Scripture is blessedly full and plain as to this. Any who have difficulties as to the Jewish question will do well to ponder prayerfully, in the first instance, Rom. 9-11. After having unfolded in the previous chapters the indiscriminate grace of God proclaimed in the Gospel, the Apostle takes up the special promises made by God to Israel, and explains His dealings with regard to them. First, he shows that God is sovereign, and acts as He pleases. This really explains Israel's history in the past. God chose Isaac not Ishmael, though both were the sons of Abraham. Later He chose Jacob in preference to Esau. In this case both were children of one mother (which Isaac and Ishmael were not), and born at the same time. Again, He spared Israel in His sovereignty when they had forfeited everything by their worship of the golden calf, saying, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom. 9: 15). Thus Israel's place in the past was due to the sovereignty of God. There was no question of special merit or desert: He willed it, and that is all. On the same principle He has set them aside during the present period because of their sins and rejection of Messiah, and is dealing in sovereign grace with the Gentiles.

But has He done with the seed of Abraham for ever? By no means. The Apostle raises the question, "I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" (Rom. 11: 1, 2). He then proceeds to show that God has a remnant during the present time, while the spirit of slumber is upon the mass of the nation. These of course are incorporated in the Church of God, the body of Christ. But this is not all. God has not forgotten them as a people, and intends to reinstate them in His divine favour, with the full pardon of all their sins. They have been cut out of the olive tree because of their defection, but they shall be brought in once again. In verse 23 we are shown that this is *possible*, "God is able to graft them in again;" in verse 24 that it is *probable*, "How much more shall these... be grafted into their own olive tree?" Then the Apostle rises higher still in his reasoning and

shows it to be certain, "Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." And so all Israel shall be sated: as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (verses 25, 26).

There are three reasons why God must restore the people of Israel:

(1) His Word; (2) His Name; and (3) the death of Christ.

(1) HIS WORD. The promises of God to Abraham, confirmed later to Isaac, were unconditional. In sovereign grace He appeared to Abraham and said, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed... all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever... unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 12: 3; Gen. 13: 15; Gen. 15: 18). These promises have never been really fulfilled. Israel has never inhabited the whole extent of the land, as here described. True, it was all under tribute in the days of Solomon, but that was not a sufficient answer to the promise of God. His intention was that they should inherit the land themselves and enjoy it apart from the presence of the stranger. Further, it is patent to all that they have not yet had any of it for an everlasting possession; for what they did take possession of they lost after a while by reason of sin, and were dispersed among the Gentiles. Let none suppose that because this was the case, there is no future glory for them. Though they have been unfaithful to God, He will not be unfaithful to them, but will make good all His word. This is strikingly reasoned out by the Holy Spirit in Gal. 3: 15-18. There we read, "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." This is very simple. Their law-breaking has not cancelled God's word. His promises were unconditional and before the law. They remain therefore to be made good at the end; for it is impossible for God to lie.

(2) HIS NAME. When at the first He called Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, God said, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My Name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations" (Ex. 3: 15). More than this, He distinctly connected them with Himself under His Name Jehovah: "I am Jehovah, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My Name Jehovah was I not known to them" (Ex. 6: 2, 3). This Name expresses His unchangeableness, as Mal. 3: 6 shows; in it, therefore, is bound up the restoration of the people, however guilty and undeserving. They have changed towards God, but blessed be His Name, He has never changed towards them, though obliged because of their sins and unbelief to hide His face from them, as it were, for a season. Let the following splendid declaration be pondered by all who think that God has done with Israel: "Thus saith Jehovah, if heaven above can be measured and the foundation of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all they have done, saith Jehovah" (Jer. 31: 37). This is magnificent surely, and worthy of the God who uttered it.

(3) THE DEATH OF CHRIST. This is an additional reason, and a grandly fundamental one, why God will yet show mercy to guilty Israel. Does the reader remember the prophecy of Caiaphas in John 11: 49-51? It was that Jesus should die for the nation. No doubt his thoughts about the matter and the thoughts of the Holy Spirit were very different, but his words contain the truth nevertheless. Believers should see more in the cross of Christ than the mere putting away of our sins. Thank God! He has

borne our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2: 24); but there is a part in that cross for Israel also. They will be brought to know this by-and-by. During Israel's long dark night of unbelief the memorial of that precious sacrifice is before God (Lev. 6: 9). When the Lord Jesus is manifested in glory, they will mourn for Him, as Zechariah speaks. They will learn in that day that He whom their fathers pierced was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities (Zech. 12: 9-14; Isa. 53: 5). What a discovery for Israel! what a lesson to learn after ages of unbelief! Thus will God place them — and that everlastingly — under the shelter of the precious, once-accomplished work of Christ.

Having considered these reasons for their restoration, let us examine some of the statements of Scripture as to it. Turn to Ezek. 37. Here we have the Prophet in the midst of a valley of dry bones. He was told that these bones represented the whole house of Israel. "Behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts" (verse 11). Death is here used to describe their national condition. Death is variously used in the Word of God: (1) It describes the spiritual condition of the unconverted (Eph. 2: 1); (2) The separation of soul and body; (3) The final doom of the ungodly (Rev. 20: 14); and (4) national dissolution, as here. The following passages may also be consulted: Isa. 26: 13, Isa. 14: 19; Dan. 12: 2.

Ezekiel's vision in no way speaks of the resurrection of dead men, as such, nor of the conversion of sinners, though the chapter has at times been used for both these purposes. It is the national awakening of the people of Israel to the possession and enjoyment of their long-lost glory. With this corresponds the words of the Apostle in Rom. 11: 15: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life *from the dead*?" "This is the work of God alone; the time the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not till then will God look upon them with favour, nor put out His hand to restore them.

Any attempt to re-establish them in their land and national position prior to that day, however well-intentioned, will only end in disaster. Let this be well pondered. While on the other hand it is a serious thing to ill-treat or oppress the Jew; on the other hand it is solemn to interfere with the governmental dealings of God by attempting to reinstate them in their possession. They are scattered and broken under the hand of God. He it was Who expelled them for most serious reasons. Who will essay to reverse His sentence? It is no mere accident that has befallen them, but the righteous judgment of God. Ere they can have true restoration Israel must receive at the hands of Jehovah double for their sins (Jer. 16: 18; Isa. 40: 2). He, and He alone, is entitled to fix the time when their warfare shall be accomplished and the indignation shall cease (Dan. 11: 36).

Isaiah 18 is a highly interesting chapter in connection with Israel. It seems to predict an effort by some maritime power to gather them just before the time of the intervention of Jehovah. The chapter is not a burden, but a call. "Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers) to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!" (verses 1, 2). The land is not named, but three marks are given: (1) it is a distant land; (2) it is a maritime power; and (3) friendly to the Jews. There is no need to speculate as to its name; events will show in due course.

But Jehovah is not in the movement, His time not having arrived. However, He draws attention to it: "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountain, and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. For so the Lord said unto me, I will take My rest, and I will consider in My dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in

the heat of harvest" (verses 3, 4). The language may be obscure to some of our readers, but it clearly shows that while men are mistakenly active, God is not moving, but from His heavenly dwelling place He notes what they are doing. He considers their action; but He takes His rest, the due moment not having arrived for deliverance.

Will the enterprise succeed? Will the divine sentence of exile and chastisement thus be reversed for Israel? No. "For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth, and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them" (verses 5, 6). Man's scheme will thus be blasted. When all seems fair, and success seems certain, disaster will come. The people thus restored will but fall a prey to the powers around. With this Scripture before us we need not be surprised at any attempt to reinstate scattered Israel in the land of their fathers. The closing verse of the chapter shows that when Jehovah intervenes on behalf of His people the results will be glorious and full. The once scattered and peeled people will be presented to Himself to be settled in peace for ever around His long-loved centre, the Mount Zion.

We will now consider the details of this. When they were expelled from the good land long ago it was in two parts. The ten tribes were carried away by the kings of Assyria; the two tribes, forming the kingdom of Judah, by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Scripture is silent as to the home-going of the two tribes. It simply regards them as in the land during the events of the last days. They will return in unbelief, and will acknowledge and suffer under the false Christ. They will either rebuild the temple, or adapt to their use some other existing building. Anyhow, we read of "the temple of God" and "the holy place" (2 Thess. 2: 4; Rev. 11: 1, 2; Matt. 24: 15).

The mass of them will be very pleased with their leader, though the godly will have their misgivings from the first. He will come to them in his own name, and will be received, as the Lord Jesus warned (John 5: 43). As their head he will form a seven years covenant with the Roman beast for protection, &c. This Jehovah describes as a covenant with death and an agreement with hell (Isa. 28: 14-22), denouncing the pride and impiety which leads up to it. The reason of this covenant is apparently their dread of the Northern foe, called "the overflowing scourge." But their agreement will prove worthless, for their dreadful foe will chastise them nevertheless; and what is worse, their chosen leader will himself prove a worse enemy within — a veritable wolf in the fold. Alas, for guilty Judah! When the (Christ of God came they knew Him not. They discerned not the things which belonged unto their peace, nor the time of their visitation. Therefore the sorrow and scourging, the darkness and delusion.

The appearing of the Lord Jesus will deliver the godly remnant of Judah from this terrible enemy and persecutor. Matt. 24. 29-31 makes this perfectly plain. He will answer their agonised cry for help and deliverance by His appearing in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. He will appear to their joy, and those who hate them shall be ashamed (Isa. 64: 5).

The re-gathering of the ten tribes will follow. The great trumpet shall be blown, and those who are ready to perish shall be brought together to worship Jehovah in the holy mount at Jerusalem (Isa. 27: 1, 3). The trumpet of Matt. 24: 31 refers to the same event, I have no doubt. Then will the feast of trumpets be fulfilled (Lev. 23: 23-26). When the silver trumpets were first instituted in connection with the tabernacle, they were for the calling together of the people (Num. 10: 1-3).

What a home-coming it will be after long centuries of wandering and desolation! What joy to God, and what blessing for the people of His choice! And, also, what a meeting of the tribes after

dreary ages of separation and estrangement! Isa. 49: 18-23 graphically describes their meeting. To those already in the land — the two tribes — the Lord says: "Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together and come to thee." They shall clothe themselves with them as a garment, and the land will be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants. It is all most touchingly described by the Spirit. "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?" Well may they ask. For centuries Zion has been bereaved of her children. Long has the land kept her Sabbaths. But when Jehovah's time comes, how marvellous and glorious the change!

He will see to it that His own are brought home in a manner befitting the people of the Lord. The Gentiles shall bring Zion's sons in their arms, and her daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. Kings shall be their nursing fathers, and their queens their nursing mothers; and they, the ransomed of the Lord, shall return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 49: 22, 23; Isa. 35: 10).

Many wonder where these tribes are at the present time, and much time and labour have been spent in the endeavour to settle the question. But why should Christians exercise themselves as to such a matter? Where Scripture is silent, we do not well to be curious. Faith is assured that God knows their whereabouts, and that He will make it manifest in His own time and way. The table of shewbread in the sanctuary of old with its twelve loaves was ever before the Lord, and during the darkness the light of the golden candlestick shed its rays upon them (Lev. 24. 1-9). This is night for Israel beyond all question; but the eye of God is upon them, not one of the tribes is forgotten before Him. He knows where to lay hands upon them when He requires them for restoration and blessing.

It must not be supposed, however, that they are all Israel who are of Israel (Rom. 9: 6). The two tribes, as we have seen, will be severely sifted in the land under Antichrist, and but a third part will be brought through the fire for blessing (Zech. 13: 8, 9). The mass will follow the Deceiver to their everlasting ruin and sorrow. The ten tribes will also be sifted, though not quite in the same way. They were not guilty of the grave sin of the rejection of the Messiah, as their brethren were. Judah will be the greater sufferer, being responsible before God for that fearful crime. Still, the other tribes will be put through the sieve, as Ezek. 20: 34-38 shows. Jehovah will bring them into the wilderness before restoring them to Canaan, and will there plead with them face to face. They must pass under His rod, that the rebels and the transgressors may be purged out. The remnant will then be brought in, to be uprooted no more for ever; for Jehovah will plant them in their own land, with His whole heart, and with His whole soul, as the Prophet assures us.

Then the nation will be one once more. They have been a divided people since the days of Rehoboam. Solomon's serious defection from the Lord caused the rending of the nation after his death. Jeroboam was divinely permitted to lead ten tribes away from their allegiance to the house of David (1 Kings 11: 12). They have never been united since that day. They were often in open conflict with each other, the larger company being invariably in league with the kings of Syria. Then came the yet greater separation, when the ten tribes were deported by the kings of Assyria. These have never since been restored to their own possession.

The prophet Ezekiel was instructed as to their future unification in a very simple way. He was bidden to take two sticks, and to write on the one, "For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions;" and on the other, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions ;" and was then to join them to each other, making them one stick in his hand (Ezek. 37:

15-17). Thus will Jehovah do for Israel by-and-by. Their divisions will be healed, these always being the fruit of sin and failure, whether in Israel, the world, or the Church of God.

In the coming day of glory, Israel will have one King and one centre. Christ will be their head, the true David, the man after God's own heart (Ezek. 37: 24, 25; Zech. 14: 9,16,17; Hosea 1: 11; Hosea 3: 5). Then they will sing in reality, "Hosanna to the King of Israel that cometh in the Name of Jehovah." In the past it was but the excitement of nature, the cry changing in less than a week to "Away with Him. Crucify Him. We have no king but Caesar." In the future it will be a real work of the Spirit of God, producing sentiments in their hearts of a divine and abiding character. What a King Christ will be to them! David and Solomon both typified Him, but in what a faint degree! David sinned, and brought the pestilence among the poor sheep in consequence; Solomon dazzled them with glory and splendour, but the yoke was heavy and the oppression severe; and the bright season of glory ended in gloom and disaster. But the true David will bring peace and blessing to His people; the true Solomon will display before them a brighter glory, but His rule will be in righteousness and equity, with no defection on His part at the end. God has only One whom He can entrust with universal rule — His beloved Son, the Son of Man.

Not only will Israel then have but one King; they will have but one centre also. The ancient rivalry between Jerusalem and Samaria will be heard no more; Zion will be exalted to its rightful place as the chosen resting place of the Lord, the city of the great King. It will be an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations (Ps. 132: 13, 14; Ps. 47: 2; Isa. 60: 15). "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps. 137: 23). From thence will the whole earth be administered, and from it will go forth the law and the word of the Lord. Jerusalem has long been trodden under foot by the Gentiles for the sins of her children, but God will yet favour her dust and take pleasure in her palaces. When the arrogant Gentile has been humbled to the dust, Jehovah's long-loved Zion will be restored to its divinely-appointed place in the earth.

When Zion is restored Israel will possess the sanctuary of God once more. This was a distinguishing mark of old, and it shall be so again, in the day to come. "I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore... and the nations shall know that I Jehovah do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 37: 26, 28). The plan of the new temple may be seen in Ezek. 40, &c. The Shekinah cloud which left so reluctantly in the day of Israel's transgression will return again to their joy. The priesthood will be restored, and the sacrifices, and some of the feasts. The sacrifices of the future will, of course, be commemorative in their character, looking back to the one great sacrifice which is the foundation of all blessing, whether for heaven or earth. Of the feasts, all will be restored but the feast of Pentecost and the Day of Atonement. The first is now having its accomplishment in the call of the Church of God; the second will be completed in its last part when the great High Priest comes out of the heavenly sanctuary, and shows Himself to His own.

Though Israel will thus have the sanctuary of God once more, they will be, as it were, but its guardians. God intends the Gentiles to have a part in the blessings and privileges of it. "Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar: for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 54: 7). Year by year the spared ones of the nations will go up to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14: 16). This will not arouse Jewish enmity or jealousy then. They will no longer be the coldly conservative people that they have been. In the early days of Christianity it drew out all their rage that the Gentiles should even hear the Gospel, though they had no regard for it themselves. What changes grace works! In the Day of their blessing, they will gladly share with others

the favours so richly bestowed upon them, and will thus fulfil their high and holy mission in the earth.

The whole nation will be converted. When they are brought under the power of the New Covenant, God will put His laws in their hearts and write them in their minds. They will not need to appeal to each other's consciences as to sin, nor to exhort each other as to the Lord, for all will know Him from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31: 31-34). A mighty change, surely, when we consider their present alienated state!

A fresh outpouring of the Spirit will also be experienced at that time. The early rain fell on the Day of Pentecost, and marvellous have been the results. The latter rain will fall on Israel in the day of their millennial glory. God will put His Spirit within them, pouring Him out from on high (Ezek. 37: 14; Isa. 32: 15). Joel's prophecy, quoted by Peter in Acts 2, will then be completely accomplished. No fresh outpouring must be looked for until then. During this period of grace the Holy Spirit is here as the birthright portion of every individual Christian and of the Church of God. It is ours to walk in the Spirit and to be filled with Him. Many are vague as to this. They observe that the spiritual condition of the Church at large is low, and deplore it, but think that the only corrective is another outpouring or baptism of the Spirit. This is not the case, however well-intentioned the souls may be who think so. The real need is more simple faith in the mighty fact that the Holy Spirit is present on earth. Let us use the power we have, and God will honour the effort.

When Israel is thus converted and blessed with the Spirit the link of relationship between them and Jehovah will be fully restored. Israel has been an unfaithful wife to Jehovah, playing with many lovers, so that He has had to divorce her and put her away. But the time of her widowhood is drawing to a close, the Lo Ammi sentence will soon be reversed, and God will once more have pleasure in His people. In the past she did not know, in her blindness, who it was that really loved her, and gave her corn, and wine and oil, and decked her with jewels; but when grace operates in her heart, she will turn to Him in contrition and repentance, that she may be received to His heart once more. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her (or, speak to her heart)... And it shall be at that day, saith Jehovah, that thou shalt call Me Ishi (my husband); and shalt call Me no more Baali (my lord). I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name" (Hosea 2: 14-17). The Book of Psalms and the Song of Solomon open up to us the dealings of God with Israel in that day; the one showing His work in their consciences and the other His work in their hearts. Israel shall be His in reality in that day of glory.

Those will be days of universal blessing. Not by our means will God fill the earth with His glory, but by means of restored and converted Israel. The following is their language rather than the language of the Church of God: —

"God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the people praise Thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Let the people praise Thee, O God, let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us: and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him" (Ps. 67).

Well might the Psalmist say, as he thought of the coming glory: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious Name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen" (Ps. 72: 18, 19).

Thy sympathies and hopes are ours;

Dear Lord! we wait to see
Creation, all — below, above,
Redeemed and blest by Thee