

# Joel

## Lectures on the Minor Prophets.

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"The word of Jehovah that came to Joel the son of Pethuel." Like Hosea, Joel is one of the earliest prophets (being earlier even than Jonah), but differs essentially in this, that whereas the former looks at the whole people, the latter was led of God to restrict himself to that portion which outwardly clave to the house of David as well as the ordinances of the law. This gives us accordingly a much more contracted sphere, but for that very reason contributes to a greater definiteness in the objects noticed, which is also helped by a characteristic vividness of style. Indeed the contrast is striking between these two earlier prophets, Joel being as remarkable for smoothness of language, fulness of handling, and easy transitions, as Hosea for a certain rough negligence, pregnant brevity, and sudden turns, highly expressive but to Gentile minds somewhat obscure.

The grand subject of our prophet is the day of Jehovah, and this in all its extent, but with special application to the Jews, and above all to Jerusalem. At the same time Joel shares the habit of all the prophets, one may say, in taking some present fact, or that which was close at hand, as a groundwork for what was future. Thus the prophecy had an immediate bearing or a practical aim not far off, while along with it we see how far the Spirit of God is from confining Himself to what was either actually at work or of a transient nature. No prophecy of scripture is of its own solution; it is constructed so as not to be. To limit it to the past would be an oversight; to set aside the future would destroy the most momentous object God has in it. Thus if to deny the past be an error, to deny the future is a still greater one. The one would have cut off somewhat of interest and profit then; the other shuts out its permanent witness to God's glory. In both respects divine wisdom is most apparent. He provided that which was a warning or encouragement to His people when the prophet was in view of the circumstances which surrounded him; but He pointed onward to a time that was not yet arrived, when the just results of what was in His own mind will be made good and manifest. Now those results never can be till the kingdom of God come in power and glory. It is impossible that the Spirit of God could be satisfied with anything which either has been among men or is now. All that man has achieved, all that exists, although there be a witness in various ways of what God is toward man, affords alas! still larger and more constant evidence of the failure of man to use aright what God has given him. We shall find these general principles fully borne out, not only in Joel but in all the prophets; for they are invariable.

Among the readers of Joel there has been not only difficulty felt, but one may say misapprehension; yet this rather from their own want of perception of the subject than from any lack of point or of pure and direct language in the prophet. Some have regarded these locust inflictions as merely symbolic; others again deny anything beyond the literal swarms of insects which successively preyed on the products of Palestine. But God, because He is great, can take notice of what is little, while obviously He cannot be limited to it. Hence it is a mistake to suppose that God would in any way be demeaned by noticing the depredations of these various locusts. He takes the liveliest interest in His people for their joy and blessing. He concerns Himself about every sorrow which weighs them down, and deigns to use that which is afflicting for good. Consequently the Spirit of God does not think it beneath His notice to bring before the people of God that which God intended by these successive depredations. Chapter 1 brings them before us; but the connection which follows shows that they were only admonitory facts then. It is to be doubted that they represent the enemies who would surely fall on a people in due time if impenitent. They might well suggest such a result to the thoughtful mind. They

were past; worse was coming and at hand.

In Joel 2 the literal locusts are left behind (save of course in the blessing, ver. 25, which reverses all), and the prophet goes forward to that which the locusts represented. Thus the first chapter gives us actual facts, nothing but the various creatures which committed depredations on all the vegetation of the land. It does not appear that in themselves any ulterior meaning is definitely meant to be gathered. The successive desolations caused by the insects are distinctly presented to us. From verse 15 God uses them as an introduction for the purpose of warning His people of a still greater and more momentous burden. The details of this begin to be brought out in chapter 2, with a promise of spiritual power couched in such terms that the New Testament could apply it to the great privilege and power which signalled the godly remnant of Jews who called on the name of the Lord in Jerusalem at Pentecost, but in its full and precious import awaiting its fulfilment when all the accessories of the prediction will be realised at the end of the age.

Joel 3 looks to the full issue in judgment and blessing, the characteristic features of the day of Jehovah. Here again may be seen that, instead of the prophecy consisting of uncertain prognostication and of exaggerated terms, such thoughts are only due to men who do not understand its scope. Would it not be more becoming for them to abstain from an opinion till they do? In my judgment nothing can be less reverent or more inconsistent with modesty than such off-hand and random statements about the word of God. The truth is that scripture is always perfect, but men are not competent to speak unless taught of God. Thus, humanly speaking, there are those who could appreciate the wonders of the heavens, but are dull to perceive the divine construction of a daisy; yet to any one that estimates aright, the perfect hand of God even in a daisy is just as clear and certain as in the solar system. It is only a question of the place which each creature of God occupies in His own immense scheme. His wisdom and power are displayed no less in the minute than in the grand and massive and sublime. Thus there is no doubt that, if the telescope opens many a wonder to man, the microscope is not less impressive. They are both important instruments in the hand of man, and they are both intended, doubtless in God's providence, to show man from the natural world a witness of divine power in what is above and also in that which is beneath. But in all things what ought to be gathered from it is not incense for man (without denying the great dignity of him who is the head or natural chief of creation), but the wonders of God in what He has wrought. A similar principle applies to the word of God; for therein if God displays Himself in what is vast, quite as much does He appear in ways whose minuteness might easily escape observation. Everywhere perfection is claimed for God, whether in what He has made or, above all, in that which He has written, and in what He has written beyond that which He has wrought, because His mind and ways must transcend His outward works. For the word of God is claimed the very highest place as the expression of His wisdom — His inner wisdom. For that which is connected with matter must yield to what has to do with mind and the affections, and above all the display of the divine nature.

Now prophecy is a notable part of this expression of His mind, though it is far from being the highest. But I do not think that any sufficient reason appears to suppose a link of connection between the ravages caused by these marauding insects and the providential judgments previous to the day of Jehovah, which some assign to the earlier part of the cut off seventieth week after the church is taken to heaven. That both chapters must be understood in the same manner, either as alluding to locusts or to a hostile army invading Judah, is a rash and unfounded notion, with no other source than man's will added to a contracted mind. Closely connected they undoubtedly are, but there is much beauty in taking the past calamity as the occasion of warning the Jews of a far more awful infliction, and connecting it with the future day of Jehovah.

Nor do I see any solid reason for considering the four swarms respectively allegorical of Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar on the one hand, nor on the other of the Assyro-Babylonian power, the Medo-Persian, the Macedonian or Syro-Macedonian, and the Roman, or of this last modified. These are speculations which found favour among certain early Christian writers as well as the Jews of their day. But the more we assert the value of the prophetic word, the more resolutely should we set our face against every scheme of interpretation which savours of fancy. We do well to dread speculation in the things of God. It is the rash guess-work of men not subject to His mind as revealed in scripture, and too hasty in coming to conclusions. If we are not sure, it is wise to wait on One who does not disappoint. The basis of scripture for such views it would be desirable to weigh if it can be produced. Hitherto none has been produced, save the analogy of the four with the four beasts and four carpenters, of which we read in the visions of Daniel and of Zechariah. Can any evidence be conceived more precarious? The prophet draws a warning lesson from actual events that had occurred and were before all eyes; and then proceeds to speak of incomparably grave events in grace and judgment, most of which yet remain to be fulfilled. But we must not confound with any part of Joel 1 the plague of locusts in Revelation 9 under the fifth trumpet. The ravages in the holy land furnished the occasion for a figurative description of a mighty foe in chapter 2; the literal locusts being but a passing visitation from God, certainly not to be slighted, but very different from the trouble described afterwards. There may be a connection between Joel 2 (not 1) and Revelation 9, but the latter introduces symbols of a far more complicated nature and pointing to deeper evil. Both refer to men under the symbol of locusts, and in the use of the locusts in chapter 1 I see little more than God's interest in His people. If He dealt a blow, He meant them to humble themselves and ask and learn of Him through the prophet why it was dealt. He was chastening the people He loved that they might be partakers of His holiness, and escape the heavier blows which would otherwise be their portion.

"Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?" Go back as might the oldest, and search as every inhabitant might, no such thing had been in the days of themselves or their fathers. What had occurred then was to be told from one to another of their descendants. Yet was it a scourge easily attributed to second causes, and all profit lost, because God was thus shut out. If He were heard, that which had just befallen the land would arouse to repentance; if despised, the prophet warns of greater ills.

It is familiar to most of us that prophecy always supposes a state of ruin. It comes where there is such unfaithfulness in the people of God as indicates approaching or actual ruin. Prophecy is then God's special and exceptional intervention, not so much because men have failed in doing their duty as when they have been guilty of general and fatal departure from their place, consequently it will be found to have a twofold character. It convicts of the state of ruin on one hand, specifying wherein men have sinned against God, and pronouncing His judgment; but, on the other hand, it bears witness of a better state of things in God's grace, which will displace what is now in ruins. This I believe to be true of all prophecy. It applies even to the garden of Eden. Prophecy always holds out a blessing by a divine judgment that is coming, and has thus a serious aspect towards conscience. God does not give the fulfilment of the hope of something better till present evils already morally discerned are actually judged. It would disparage what He had already given if He brought in a system to displace it otherwise. Judgment therefore must come not in word only, but in deed and in truth. And this judgment in the Old Testament is first temporal — a palpable infliction of blows on the evil of this world, and especially of His own guilty people. Thus when things work out to still greater evil, a partial present judgment becomes an earnest of a much more severe rebuke, till God's final dealing come, with its full unsparing judgment on the world.

But we must remember that in these prophecies before our Lord came we do not read of the judgment before the great white throne. It is never the judgment of the soul and body in a risen state. I am not aware of any Old Testament prophecies which bring in the eternal judgment of man raised and consigned to the lake of fire as the second death. This is as characteristic of Christianity as the judgment of the world or living men on the earth (that is, of nations, tribes, and tongues) is the proper subject of Old Testament prophecy. The Revelation of John, which is as peculiar in its themes as in its style, embracing subjects from Old and New, and in Hebrew-Greek phraseology most appropriately sets both fully before us.

Herein we may see that traditional teaching is extremely defective and doubly misleading, because men try to bring in mere providential judgments into the New Testament state of things, as they would also graft eternal judgment upon the Old Testament predictions. The consequence is that a strain is put upon both Testaments, and confusion ensues; for the true way to understand the Bible is not to confound things that differ, but to accept divine revelation as discharging in each of its two distinct parts the function for which God inspired those raised up to communicate His mind. The Old and New Testaments are perfectly harmonious, and there is not a line or word of one that contradicts the other; but they are very far from being or saying the same thing. God takes particular pains to mark the difference, in fact writing each in a different tongue — the one Hebrew, having its groundwork in the family of Abraham after the flesh — the other Greek, used when God was sending the gospel to the Gentiles as such. Thus the Greek was just as much a representative of Gentile objects as the Hebrew found its fitting object in Israel. But for all that God shows His mind in both. Only the distinctive feature of the Old Testament is His government, while the distinctive truth of the New Testament is His grace. Government and grace are totally distinct; for government is always a dealing with man, whereas grace is the revelation of what God is and does. Consequently the one invariably supposes judgment, and the other is the full display of mercy and goodness; and both find their meeting-point in Christ. As He is the King, He consequently is the head of the government. As He is the Son of God, full of grace and truth, He consequently is the one channel for all the blessing peculiar to the New Testament. His glory, now that the mighty work of redemption is done, accounts for all our characteristic privileges.

But here, in our prophecy, it is evident there was something more defined and painfully different from past times. God had used in former days, no doubt, Midianites and Philistines and other enemies to chastise Israel when guilty especially of idolatry. But here He shows that His hand was stretched out to deal with it in a most humiliating way. Instead of blessings in the basket and the store because of fidelity to His government, they had on the contrary been most unfaithful, and now Jehovah would use even the very insect world, so to speak, to deal with His people. "That which the palmer-worm [or gnawing locust] hath left hath the [swarming] locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm [or licking locust] eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar [or consuming locust] eaten." All this I take in its plain literal import, as having actually occurred then.

"Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion." It is not to me doubtful that the locust depredation is alluded to; but the manner is peculiar, though Prov. 30: 25, 27, might well prepare us for it. If the ants could be described as a "people," surely the locusts as a "nation." Besides the phraseology paves the way as a transition for something more, of which we shall hear more, preparatorily in verses 15-20, fully in Joel 2. That is, Joel uses the present visitation as a fact, but withal employs language which forms an easy passage to the prediction of a nation that would deal with the

Jews in an unparalleled way. There need be no doubt that the nation in question is the Assyrian. Thus the first chapter starts with the repeated and frightful depredations of the locusts in the prophet's day, but looks on to the trouble of a terrible day. The second chapter directly notices no such havoc from insects, but mingles figures taken from them with the Assyrian who should surely come up. This appears to be the true bearing of the earlier half of the book.

Hence is shown, still in figurative language, how everything was dealt with — the vine wasted, the fig-tree barked, the branches cast away and made white. The prophet calls on them accordingly to lament. Nor was it only that the country and men suffered the destruction of their natural resources as a chastening from God, but everything else was affected. The religious oblations felt the blight over the land — the meat-offering and the drink-offering — the one the witness of devotedness, and the other of joy before God. Both these were clean cut off from the house of Jehovah. "Lament as a virgin girded with sackcloth on account of the husband of her youth. The meat-offering and the drink-offering are cut off from the house of Jehovah; the priests howl, the ministers of Jehovah. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth." Every mark of fertility was now disappearing; and hence the very husbandmen are called to shame, and the vine-dressers to howl, on account of the wheat and the barley — for that which constituted the staff or even the barest necessaries of life (verse 11). Assuredly fruit-bearing trees did not escape. "The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men" (verse 12)

It is granted that to a Christian all this may seem somewhat outside his line, and for the obvious reason that our blessings are so entirely apart from nature. It should be remembered that the Jew enjoyed natural blessings from God, whilst the Christian's blessings are supernatural. He may of course have along with his privileges in Christ external mercies; but these are not the substance of his heritage at any time. God may give or withhold them, without any mark of approval whatever. But now for us proper blessings are of a spiritual sort. It was not so with Israel. Hence clearly there was an appropriateness and force in these visitations, which is lost for the Christian; and therefore he is accordingly tempted to explain away such prophecies as these whenever he applies them to himself, which he is apt to do. Maintain their proper fulfilment in the sphere of Israel and Palestine, and there ceases all need of doing violence to scripture. One can then take all such prophecies exactly as they are. Not that this means limiting them in a servile literalism. Be assured that mere alliteration is just as wrong as allegorizing without warrant. It is a false principle of interpretation. The letter, if there be only the letter, kills. The great point is not to divorce letter from spirit, but to hold them together. We must retain the exact meaning of every word of God. We must not tie it down only to what is on the surface; we must remember that while it is the word by man, it is essentially the word of God. It may come in part through Moses, but this is none the less the word of God. Prophets were employed, but it is His word, no matter by whom it may be given.

Hence therefore to say that we must only interpret scripture like any other book is a fallacy, yea, falsehood, on the face of it. That God is pleased to convey His mind in the language of man is perfectly true; but if it flows down to me it springs from God. Unless therefore its true source and character are always maintained in view, it is impossible to interpret the word of God justly. Those who forget it will assuredly be guilty of reducing scripture to its lowest meaning, under the delusion that the least part is the whole. It is evident that this would be unworthy even in dealing with a man. For if I have to do with a person of decidedly superior parts to my own, it were a folly to suppose that my mind must be the sufficient measure of what is in his. It is natural to suppose that his capacity might conceive deeper thoughts than I have yet received, and that words which I use on a lower level might suggest if not

convey more to him. With how much stronger reason this applies to the mind of God! Therefore we would do well to bear this always in memory as to scripture; for after all the true principle of interpreting God's written word must be gathered from His own account of it.

Now we find in the New Testament that there may be a passing application included within the scope of a prophecy, but also an ultimate and therefore more complete fulfilment. They are of course both true. It is a mistake to deny the imminent and lesser application: it is still more grossly erroneous not to look for more. These views when severed divide men commonly into two opposing schools of interpretation; but it will prove the wisest course for us to eschew particular schools, and to hold the fulness of scripture, which contains in harmony what such parties set in opposition to each other. We should take the word of God in its largest import, bowing to it as known to be His, but always leaving room for more, because it is God and not man who has written that word. "Now we know in part." We cannot take in the whole at once. But if it be only possible for us to learn as disciples, the God who makes the application of His word precious and profitable may lead us into an enlarging apprehension of it as we can bear it. So far from thinking this a defect in the word of God, it is rather its distinguishing characteristic and its admirable and exclusive property. Being the word of God, it is capable of very large and various application. Any illustrations of man can indicate it but in a small measure. The truth is that scripture savours of what is infinite, being the expression of God's mind, although clothed in the words of men. It is therefore really unique; for though it may have on its surface what meets the passing need of the day, below this runs a deep and swelling stream, which flows onward to the full ocean of the accomplished purposes and glory of God.

Returning to our chapter, the call comes not merely to lament and sorrow, which was all right, and the intended effect of so grave a visitation of God, but more — "Sanctify ye a fast." It is more than appointing one. Sanctification always supposes separation to God. Sanctified ourselves by grace, we are entitled so to deal even with the most ordinary matters by the word of God and prayer, as we are exhorted to do in 1 Tim. 4. It brings God in. Without this it cannot be. "Call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of Jehovah your God, and cry unto Jehovah."

Then follows for the first time a phrase of great moment: "Alas for the day! for the day of Jehovah is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." Now, it is an especially important thing to get a clear view of the day of Jehovah. The prominent truth involved in that day is, it supposes the manifest judgment of the world by God. The choice of the expression "day" involves this. It is not a question of secret judgments or providential dealings. That might be during the night, and unseen. Indeed, the fullest proof and the most beautiful illustration of providence is when He makes use of ordinary matters to bring about the most surprising results, but results that play a distinct part in the maintaining, shielding, vindicating, justifying of God's own people, or in bringing condign punishment on their enemies.

Take for a plain instance the entire book of Esther. Perhaps there is no more remarkable development of the grand truth of divine providence in the Bible. As a striking concomitant of this, observe how the name of God does not appear throughout. This ignorant men have supposed to be a defect; whereas in truth, if the name were openly named in its course, the book would be materially spoiled. The prime object is to evince His hand secretly working where His name could not rightly be proclaimed. Far from being a fault, this is one of the most strengthening considerations when we remember that we have to do with a similar secret providence every day.

It is not meant assuredly that this is all; for now we know God has been revealed fully and

personally in His Son. God's name not only has been proclaimed to us, but, so to speak, is named upon us. We are brought into living relationship with Him: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." But besides that, what a comfort to know that while God Himself, as our Father, guides us by His Spirit, the secret providence of God controls circumstances and compels enemies where we could not be, and could do nothing if we were, yea where we ought to do nothing! But God fails not to work for us, and often works too by His worst adversaries. The devil himself is one of those who are obliged most of all to work out the fiats of God's providence. He, when least intending or expecting it, brings about, in spite of himself, what God means in goodness. Is not this then a truth full of comfort? If Satan is obliged when he most exalts himself to be only God's scavenger, it is very evident that we may trust our gracious Lord for everything; for the foot of pride after all cannot but do menial services for the purposes of God. It does not matter who it is or what it may be; the providence of God unseen invariably accomplishes His purposes.

Let it be repeated that this is not all. We have something infinitely nearer and more intimate; and I make this remark the more because those are not wanting who think that a Christian ought to be guided simply by God's providence; it is not too much to affirm that such guidance would be always wrong. It is never set forth as guidance. Providence does not guide saints, but controls circumstances and foes. The Holy Spirit deigns to guide Christians. Still we have to do with external things; and there the providence of God works. But we have to do with God as our God and Father; and here we are not left to the unseen processes of circumstances and what might seem to be the casualties of the world, though really accomplishing divine purposes or ends. We have to do with the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, who is pleased to lead us by the written word. This puts everything in its place, at least to faith.

It is an oversight to suppose that to bind up the guidance of the Holy Spirit with the word of God is to take it out of the affairs of daily life in any case. There are no doubt instincts of spiritual life; but the word of God is large enough to take in everything. And this increase of spiritual apprehension serves but to enlarge the sphere of obedience — only we do not always perceive the exceeding breadth of the word, and sometimes we may be guided insensibly where we might fail to allege a definite text. How comforting to find our conviction sustained and strengthened and carried further intelligently by direct scripture! The simple believer is thus guided, more than at first sight appears, by the word of God. You see a Christian at once taking exactly the right line. If you asked him why he did so or so, perhaps he might not be able to say with clearness. Hence, when it is affirmed that the Holy Spirit guides by the word, it is not meant that there is always the positive and distinct application of the divine word on the part of him who is guided. Doubtless in any measure of our scriptural knowledge one can intelligently point to example and principle, if not formal precept, in scripture for what is done according to God's will. One should always seek ability to gather from the range of His word the conduct to be pursued or to be pressed on others.

Thus, for instance, supposing a parent tells the Christian child to take care that the pot simmers properly, or any other duty of the simplest every-day sort, is it meant that one can bring a scripture for these? Certainly one can. The child who is set to watch that the milk should not boil over is called to act in obedience to her parents, and so please the Lord. If excluded from the province of scriptural principle, what mischief must result! On one ground the Christian child in such circumstances is amazingly strengthened by the feeling that it is not a question of the milk, or the pot, or the fire, or only of a parent's charge, but of doing the will of God. It is good to link all with Him. Therefore it seemed well to take the smallest matters that might be thought too low for the dignity of inspiration; but the truth is there is nothing more wonderful in scripture as in Christ than this very feature. They both — He

in deed, it in word — show that there is nothing too great for man, and that there is nothing too little for God. Therefore "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; . . . and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Suppose now a more perplexing case. An evangelist has two or three stations before him at which to preach the gospel. Where is the scripture directing to one more than another? Am I to give up the word here? Certainly not. If I went to a place where another servant of Christ was preaching the gospel, I should not feel disposed to thrust myself in to do the work, knowing that self-assertion or slighting another would be alike contrary to the grace of the gospel. If the ground be open, well; if already occupied, one would wait till asked. We have to represent Christ as well as present the good news. Were one ever so great an evangelist, one ought not to think of interfering with one who was less; if he were a wise and gracious man, he would be too glad to receive help and fellowship in the work. An open door known to be here or there would be a loud call, even if there were many adversaries. Were others there at work in the field, surely the Master would have us confer as fellow-servants, that the good desired should not be ill spoken of or misjudged. Love would lead a workman to engage the cooperation of another to help in the work of the Lord — a principle amply illustrated in the word of God. And thus one would find oneself directed with an exercised conscience before God, and not by the mere circumstances of providence; as the apostle says, "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace." Every case I am persuaded the wisdom of God has forestalled in scripture, if we have ears to hear, and pronounces upon each difficulty that can arise for the believer, though not apart from his state. Hence of course insensibility of conscience, or even want of intelligence, may hinder our perception, and therefore more or less expose us at least to uncertainty, and it may be to error and wrong; however truly in such cases the goodness of God interferes to hinder the full results for the simple who lack intelligence.

But it is our privilege, now that the Holy Ghost dwells in us, to bring everything within the scope of the written word. Thus, suppose you must go a shopping: there at once a question arises; and you will surely incline to one of two desires. In your purchase you will seek to please either yourself or Christ. Even in deciding where to go the same test is really applicable. If among a multitude of shops you wish to know which is the right one to visit, it remains before you still to please Christ. Can one not ask one's conscience, What is my motive for going here or there? He is faithful and knows how to decide by the Spirit's use of the word in judging the secrets of the heart. In the great majority of cases such self-judgment would cut short many a visit to this or that shop, as well as make no small difference in what is bought. Take the very common habit of gratifying one's taste. When one enters a shop, the temptation that occurs to the mind is to get what one likes as far as one can. Where is Christ in this?

We may then look for the distinct guidance of the Lord by His Spirit in the daily affairs of life, as well as the more spiritual occupations that engage our service; but the measure of our spirituality and knowledge of the word gauges our ability to use the word aright as our directory. And thus where we do not clearly see a duty to act, our duty is to wait rather than act. The waiting is a confession of ignorance, but at least of dependence. We desire to do His will and shall not wait in vain. "The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way." "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," says the attitude of waiting, where restless self-will would prompt to this act or that. But God guides either by bringing clearly before one something that calls on love for action, or by keeping one waiting yet longer. Undoubtedly as there is reality in a believer's intercourse with God, so he can look for special guidance. But never let us forget that when we have not a distinct duty before us, we should forbear to act at all. I do not speak exactly of an impression, but of a plain call to duty, or the positive energy of

unselfish love. Undoubtedly there is the guidance of the Holy Spirit often without the letter of a command, but not therefore without scripture. Both the active outgoing of love and the calls of duty fall within scripture, which shows us their fulness in Christ. For instance, a Christian does not know what to do, we will suppose, next Monday. But his mind is made up to serve the Lord; and he is not anxious about it. An individual comes while he is waiting on the Lord, and brings before him a claim to serve Him in a way not outside his measure. Is not the duty then plain enough? May that one be doubted in the slightest degree? Is it not the will of the Lord that one who loves Him should respond to a call of love?

If two come and represent similar things before you, have you scripture to tell you which to select? Will not perplexity ensue? So it might appear and may really be. But in fact such perplexities do not often arise, if indeed they ever do, without some distinct means afforded of the Lord for judging between them.

It thus resolves itself largely into a question of communion with God. The child of God that goes on in communion with Him will not be perplexed or know what it means, because he habitually walks with One who is light. Our Father takes the greatest delight in guiding a child whose object is only to meet His mind. Of course it is another thing if we have ends and purposes of our own; in such a case a Christian would not sincerely wait. But "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" and though there might not be a positive precept, yet there is the hearing of God's mind in scripture in many real though less direct ways. If there is a perplexity, it is time to stop. One cannot act aright without the word; and this is often missed through lack of communion, which itself implies the guidance of the Holy Spirit; but we must not sever this from the scripture.

From this long digression we return to our prophet, and there find ourselves on ground not only of such moral judgment as the word of God always contains, but of solemn and public dealings. The day of Jehovah is not His secret control by secondary causes or circumstances. It is the display of His judgment of man on the earth. Consequently the full sense of the day of Jehovah is that grand dealing when God will "judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath raised from the dead," to quote a well-known scripture from the New Testament that bears on it. "Judging the *world* in righteousness" is altogether a different truth from judging the dead. It is the habitable world. It does not contemplate the resurrection of individuals who once composed its population. The habitable earth as such is the real meaning of Acts 17. So the day of Jehovah falls here. The chief difference is that the day of Jehovah in the Old Testament is put in direct connection with the special place of Israel — their relationship to God, who had so revealed Himself to them. It is the age when man will be no longer allowed to thwart and hinder the purposes of God, and when He Himself will no more work merely in the ways of secret providence, nor even by the mission of the Holy Ghost as now in Christianity, forming and fashioning us by the word according to Christ, but when God will take the world under His direct government — first, for putting down evil; next, for the maintenance and spread of that which is good. Such is the day of Jehovah. Consequently "that day" embraces the divine judgments which will be executed by Christ as the Jehovah God of Israel, when He appears in glory, as well as the whole millennial period. It is all called the day of Jehovah.

But connected with this it is of all importance clearly to understand the difference of that day from all before it; but particularly to discriminate between that day and the previous act of His coming to receive those who are waiting for Him, whether saints who have died or those who shall then be found alive on earth up to that moment. The "coming of the Lord" is a larger expression than the "day of the Lord" (or "Jehovah"). "The day" is a particular part of His coming, when at His call the dead saints rise, and the living saints are changed, and both are caught up together out of the earth to meet

Him in the air. This great event — the translation of those who are Christ's to heaven — has nothing in itself to do with the display of Jehovah's government of the world; and therefore to confound the coming or presence of the Lord with His day is a gross error.\* After the saints have been taken to heaven, the world will go on seemingly much the same, but really very much worse. In no actual sense is it judged by the Lord's grace in taking His own to the Father's house. But the day of the Lord invariably supposes the judgment of the world, though inchoatively including lesser judgments in the Old Testament; not so His presence or coming, which will manifest fulness of grace to those whom He loved to the end. At the same time, when the day of Jehovah comes, it will still be the coming of the Lord; for in this clearly the two coalesce.

{\*The distinction between these two, the παρουσία and the ἡμέρα of the Lord, is the key to 2 Thess. 2. The whole chapter, not to say the entire province of prophecy, is embroiled in confusion where this is not seen. For where would be the force or even sense of beseeching his Christian brethren by the presence or coming of the Lord not to be shaken by the rumour about His day, if the day and His coming be the same? Whereas it is thoroughly intelligible and pertinent to entreat them by a hope so full of good cheer as the presence of the Lord which is bound up with the gathering of the saints to meet Him above, not to be disquieted by the allegation, for which they falsely cited authoritative communications from the Spirit and a supposititious letter of the apostle himself, that His day — that day of judgment of the quick on the earth — was already present. One corrective of the error is the recall of the Christian to his proper hope of joining the Lord at His coming, so as to follow Him out of heaven for the day of His appearing. The other is the making known certain awful developments of evil, the apostacy and the man of sin brought fully out, before that day can come.}

Thus in short the day of the Lord is the public and governmental side of His coming; but the coming of the Lord embraces events of another character distinct from and previous to that day. This may serve as a plain and compendious way of stating what could easily be proved by many scriptures. Only we must bear in mind that the coming of the Lord to receive the saints to Himself is exclusively a New Testament truth. The Old Testament proclaims the day of Jehovah, the New Testament endorses this truth, maintaining and clearing it yet more. But the New Testament adds another truth distinct from it; namely, that Christ will come to receive us to Himself, and present us in the Father's house; after which He will bring in the day of Jehovah, when the saints come with Him in glory. Then will be the day of Jehovah, because this is the time when He will destroy all His foes, the beast and the false prophet, or Antichrist, with all their followers; and further, the king of the north, or Assyrian, the very power foreshadowed by the mighty nation who troubled Israel of old, and who comes before us much more fully in the second chapter of our prophecy.

Before saying a little more as to the Assyrian, let me point out the allusion to the trumpets here. It is a clear reference to the use prescribed in the Book of Numbers. The trumpet was to be blown by the priests on two main occasions. One of them was for the journeying of the camps, and the other was for the calling of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle. If they went to war, an alarm was to be blown with the trumpets, and Jehovah remembered and saved them from their enemies. We may perhaps say then that this last was on the people's part to bring in Jehovah; while the more ordinary sounding was on Jehovah's part to gather the people in view of their solemn feasts and sacrifices before their God. These were the principal uses of the silver trumpets, and they are both employed by Joel. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm." It does not require much skill in interpretation to see the meaning of that trumpet, because the Spirit of God has so plainly defined its character and object. "Sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of Jehovah cometh, for it is nigh at hand."

This warned of what was tremendous to Israel. Jehovah's day was at hand, — a day when not enemies only would be there, but Jehovah would remember Israel, not yet to save His people, but to use the foe as a scourge for them. This might well be a note of alarm; Jehovah would not be absent. It was not merely the day of the Assyrian, but of Jehovah. Is it thought that as the judgment that the Jews were warned against was so remote, they would be liable to say, "It will not come in our day or upon our children"? I answer that it did come in their day. The same Assyrian power, which came then close upon the time of Joel, will reappear in the latter day. This is the true key to all the difficulties men conjure up in the Old Testament. We must remember that those foreign nations are no more done with than the Jews are. Many of them have lost or changed their names, but they abide still. And when the time comes for the restoration of Israel through judgments at the end of the age, they too will reappear and be known as the Assyrian once more. Nations no more die than individual men never rise finally. As surely as a resurrection awaits men, there will be a revival of those Gentile foes of the Jews. It is remarkable too that their final acts will bear the same moral character as their initiatory course. This intimates clearly a divine principle of dealing at the close for the sins at the beginning, because they will repeat their old sins at the end. The same jealousy of Israel, the same determination to exterminate the Jew, the same unbelieving opposition to God's counsels which characterised them at their earliest epochs will also be found at their latest appearance. The circle of their historical unity is made apparent from a moral point of view — the same character of guilt reproduced with God's judgment upon them because of it.

It is not then that I have any doubt that the miraculous check of the Assyrian in the day of Sennacherib is the type of the final overthrow in the day of Jehovah; or that the past event was a day of Jehovah, not in the full sense, but a real though preparatory application of the day of Jehovah, and an unflinching pledge of the final catastrophe. This, which is nothing but the simple fact, seems to me to invest scripture with the greatest possible interest; and, more than this, it demonstrates its living character. Instead of merely looking back to things long since dead and gone, we read in what has been of what is going to be on a still grander scale, and with far more solemn, though also more cheering issues. Hence we can understand how that day had even then a practical purpose; but it had none the less the further bearing already pointed out.

It is here that the rationalistic party are so fatally astray, because they treat the Bible alike prophetic and historical as a mere mummy, if not a scanty corrupted compilation of the old records of the Hebrews, with glances at other tribes that once existed but are now passed away and for ever.

But that day surely comes, "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains." It is impossible to apply this to the Lord's coming to receive His saints caught up to meet Him. Can one want a clearer instance of the folly of identifying the day of Jehovah, with its terrors for the earth, with Christ's coming to translate His own on high? Will His presence which gathers us to Him above be in any wise "a day of gloominess and thick clouds?" The confusion is a palpable blunder. But more than this, His presence is never called His "day." I have no doubt that the reason is that which has been already indicated clearly — the notion of His "day" always supposes manifestation. "That day" may have been of old in a simply providential sense, as for instance when Sennacherib was destroyed; but it is very evident that this was the hand of God displayed terribly on man, and this is what is meant by manifestation to the world; though by and by it will go much farther than anything past.

Christians, indeed, are said to be children of the day before the day comes, as contrasted with men generally who are "children of the night," as we may see in 1 Thess. 5. We are children of light and the day, because we have now the nature of Christ, and shall come along with Him when that day

dawns. But it is a mistake to suppose that we must await the day before we are taken to our place in heaven; whereas it is certain from scripture that, when that day comes, we shall be previously in our own heavenly seats, and shall come with the Lord out of heaven. "When Christ our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Next we have a most graphic description of the Assyrian army. "A great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run." No doubt that in this remarkably nervous sketch, where an unparalleled army is supposed to come up against the land, the prophecy goes beyond what then assailed the Jews. That is, we must take in the whole prospect, the binary star (what is past now prominent, the future still graver behind it), in order to meet the full strength of the divine expressions. The Assyrian then was a most formidable array, yet after all their vain-glorious insolence destroyed so completely in a single night, that Sennacherib returned in disgrace, evidently, consciously, confessedly beaten. But the future day will behold a far more appalling host.

Let me say here that according to scripture there cannot be the slightest doubt that Russia is reserved to play a most important part in this great future crisis. For the policy of that vast modern empire affects the same objects as the Assyrian of the last day. Russia from its position in the north-east is known to seek the lead as suzerain over the eastern powers, acquiring influence politically, so as to be able to mould and guide those vast hordes of central Asia down to the south. It is my conviction that western influence will ere long be completely annihilated in the east, and that the dominion of our own country in India is destined to be short-lived. But this is merely by the way, which if true serves after all to show the importance of having a scriptural judgment on these matters, and how they prepare the mind for what, when it comes, will shake if not paralyze those who have not believed it; whereas, on the contrary, the development of facts, which prepare the way for the immense changes of the latter day, falls in with the faith of those who believe the word of God. They are not moved from their steadfastness by these things; they are prepared to expect them, instead of being surprised.

Again, in verse 5, "Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall; they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: and Jehovah shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for [he is] strong that executeth his word: for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" In this remarkable way the prophet mingles the name and day of Jehovah with the Assyrians employed then to do His work. The same enemy is called in Isaiah 10 "the rod of his anger," "the axe" that boasted itself over Him that hewed with it. Surely therefore the Lord Jehovah will turn against that axe and destroy it. He will employ it to accomplish His purposes upon a guilty people; but inasmuch as it destroyed them unmercifully and without the slightest fear of God, He will turn upon that which exalted itself, taking advantage of His displeasure to destroy His poor people if it could be.

Consequently after this we find the practical appeal to repent. "Therefore also now, saith Jehovah; turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto Jehovah your God" (verses 12-14).

Then comes the second blowing of the trumpets; but this is distinct. "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." It is not now, "Sound an alarm," but, "Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." It is the gathering of the people to God, not merely their loud call on God to appear for them in their great alarm before the enemy. "Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep between the porch and the altar." Thus there is the complete prostration of the people as a whole, even to the very bridegroom and bride and sucking child; including the priests too as well as the people, but not in their own place; for they have to come out, and are with the people in humiliation, not apart in official dignity. It is the most admirable picture of a nation humbling itself before God; so that all classes of society — in political, religious, and family life — give way to the sense of their sin before God. There is no such leveller as sin, or that which is the consequence of sin — death; but it is a blessed thing when the gracious call of God works repentance, which really means the heart taking the place of owning our own evil and accepting what God thereon has to say to us. There is nothing more admirable for a soul, unless it be the grace of God which produces it. But, morally considered, repentance is always wholesome for His people, conscious of having unworthily answered to the grace He had shown them. It cannot but lead to restored communion through self-judgment, and to a practical obedience according to it. So it will be with the Jew by and by. "And let them say, Spare thy people, O Jehovah, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where [is] their God?" The marginal alteration for "rule over" is "use a by-word against." But the text is confirmed by the ancient versions, as indeed the construction of the margin seems contrary to Hebrew idiom, the noun only (not the verb) admitting of the sense of derision.

But God hears. "Then will Jehovah be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, Jehovah will answer" — not for alarm merely, but because of their genuine repentance before Himself. Instead of insensibility or efforts to improve themselves, they will draw near to Jehovah in the sense of their sins. It is when they shall turn in contrition to His word, when they welcome in their heart Him that comes in the name of Jehovah, that He will appear in answer to their cry. And now comes in the full assurance of comfort. The Assyrian enemy is disposed of. "But I will remove far off from you the northern [army], and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill-savour shall come up, because he hath done great things." "The northern" confessedly does not mean any locust irruption, for they come from the south. It is the great foe of the latter day, who will not perish in the sea as those insects usually do, but be driven to a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east or Dead Sea, and his hinder part toward the hinder or Mediterranean Sea. Just judgment of pride! because he "magnified himself to do."

But it is God who will really do great things. "Fear not, O land" (remark this as definitely the hope of the Jewish nation); "be glad and rejoice: for Jehovah will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field." They are called to undergo renovation, instead of drooping for want even of

common sustenance. The millennial day of joy for the earth and all creation is before us here. Hence "the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength." All is reversed. It is not Christianity with its spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and with scorn and suffering on earth for the faithful, but earthly blessing and reward, as well as divine and saving mercy, as we shall see. "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah your God for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you." Thus God will more than undo the mischief. He will restore what He took not away. He will efface by the fulness of His blessing all their past sorrows and shame. "And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of Jehovah your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed."

But could this satisfy? Could it suffice even for the renewed mind? Certainly it could not satisfy Him who must be God, not in righteous government only, whether of friends or of foes, but in His love for His people. Therefore we have an entirely distinct character of blessing introduced after this, where in the Hebrew begins the third chapter. It is matter of regret that, in this respect the Hebrew having a decided advantage over the Gentile arrangement, modern versions have not followed the former.

"And it shall come to pass afterward." It is here we find the distinct break. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the putting of these two sections together has tended to mar the force of this scripture. Verses 28 and 29 then are quite apart from what went before. It is blessing of a higher order, flowing from the love of God, but this evidently in a spiritual way. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." It is the very scripture, as we know, which the apostle Peter quotes on the day of Pentecost to show that the immense blessing of that day was in accordance with the highest favour promised for the kingdom, not that human excitement or moral folly which mistaken or deluded men were quick to impute to those who surpassed others in spiritual power.

But, observe, the apostle did not affirm that this scripture was fulfilled. He says, "It is that thing which was spoken by the prophet Joel;" and so it is. What was promised was the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Without saying that the present fact was the fulfilment of the prophecy (which men have assumed, to the great misunderstanding of scripture and lowering of Christianity), he showed that it was of that nature, and such therefore as to be vindicated by the prophecy before their conscience; but the apostle's language is guarded, while commentators are not. They go too far. We do well always to hold fast to scripture.

As to the promise that the Spirit should be poured upon "all flesh," we must bear in mind that "all flesh" is in contrast with restriction to the Jew. This is another feature which made the Pentecostal gift so admirably illustrate the scripture. For the patent fact that God caused those who received the Holy Ghost to speak in the different tongues distributed over the Gentile world, not causing all the converts to speak the Jewish language (a poor thing if true, which it is not, but a mere dream of superficial paradox), but causing the Jews gathered from their dispersion among all nations to speak the tongues of the Gentiles was a magnificent witness of the grace that was going out to the Gentiles to meet them where they were. The judgment of God had inflicted these various tongues upon them, and completely broken up the ambitious project of joining together to establish an unity of their own through the tower

of Babel. But the grace of God went out exactly where His judgment had placed them. If a crushing blow laid their pride in ever so many separate ditches, the grace of God went out to these ditches, and blessed them where they lay, raising them out of their fallen estate.

Such then is the first interruption, and really the beginning of a new strain, which is sufficiently plain from the way in which it is introduced. "It shall come to pass *afterward*, that I will pour out my Spirit" — makes therefore a break with what goes before, and thus again most admirably suits it to the use to which the apostle Peter applies it. But then we must remember that when the day comes for the Holy Spirit to be poured out afresh, not for the gathering out of a people for heaven, but for the earthly purposes of God's grace (for that is the difference), it will be manifest that the Holy Spirit will be given to men altogether apart from their being Jews. So on the day of Pentecost, when they were exclusively Jews, it was yet shown by the miracle of Gentile tongues that God did not mean to stop there, but to go out towards all the nations.

God will never give up that principle. He does not mean to be limited to the children of Israel again. He will bless the children of Israel once more, and will take up Judah also as such, and will accomplish every word He has promised to their united joy. There is no good that He has annexed to them in His word which He will not bestow; but He will never more restrict Himself to the Jew in the day that is coming. And therefore, when the Holy Ghost is poured out at that time, it will be strictly upon "all flesh," not meaning that every individual in the millennium will have the Holy Ghost; but that no race left after that great day will be excluded from the gift of the Spirit. No class of persons, no age, no sex will be forgotten in God's grace.

But it may be desirable to remark here that there is no thought of healing or improving the flesh, as the fathers and the theologians say. The light of the New Testament shows us the fallacy of such a view. The old nature is judged; our old man is crucified, not renovated. To our Adam state we have died, and enter a new position in Christ, and are called to walk accordingly as dead and risen with Christ.

The external signs here named will precede the day which is still unfulfilled. It is vain to apply verses 30, 31 to the first advent. "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth" is evidently another character of things. "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of Jehovah come." There will be a remarkable outward manifestation of divine power before the judgment is executed. God always sends a testimony before the thing itself. He does not strike before He warns. It is so in His dealings with us every day. What Christian has a chastening upon him before he is admonished of the Spirit of God? There is always a sense of wrong, and a lack of communion sensible to the spirit before the Lord inflicts the blow which tells of His watchful love over our careless ways. He gives the opportunity, if one may say so, of setting ourselves morally right; and if we do not heed the teaching, then comes the sorrow. And so it is here. These wonders cannot but attract the mind and attention of men, but they will not really be heeded. Infatuated and under judicial hardness, they will turn a deaf ear to all, and so the great and terrible day of Jehovah will overtake them like a thief. But God at least will not fail. He had foretold that so it should be, and His people will take heed. There will be a remnant enabled to see, and pre-eminently, as we know, from among the Jews, though by no means limited to them, as we learn from the second half of Rev. 7 and the end of Matt. 25. There will be still the witness of "all flesh" prepared for the glory of Jehovah about to be revealed.

"Whosoever will call upon the name of Jehovah shall be delivered" shows that the blessing is by faith, and hence by grace. "All flesh" does not necessarily mean every individual, but, as we know from

other scriptures, blessing here goes forth largely toward all classes — that is, toward all nations and even all divisions among nations. But all this is of great importance, because the Jewish system naturally tended to limit God as well as to make classes within the Jews. Only the family of Aaron could go into the sanctuary; only Levites could touch the holy vessels with impunity; whereas this greatest blessing of God will go out with the most indiscriminate character of grace. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as Jehovah hath said, and in the remnant whom Jehovah shall call." Hence it is plain that, although it is blessing for Israel, still our prophet Joel keeps true to his purpose. The city of Jerusalem abides the great and royal centre; mount Zion reappears, the sign of grace for the kingdom which Jehovah will establish in that day.

In what follows we have the final events only, which go right into the millennium. "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem." This prophecy does not even speak about all Israel, although of course their redemption is certain. The captivity of Judah and Jerusalem is no real difficulty; for the Jews have in a certain sense never yet been brought back to the land, as the prophets warrant them to expect it. They are suffering the consequence of having been led captive over and over again: and in that sense they may be regarded as captives, just as in Genesis 15 the affliction that Abraham's seed was suffering in a strange land is counted from a long time before they actually arrived there. It would seem that in this way the moral truth of the captivity remains. God counts the time of the captivity from the time that they were carried away from Palestine and dispersed in all lands by Babylonians and then by Romans. They may better themselves in the lands of the Gentiles, and appear to become as great as Joseph did in the land of Egypt; but even he was the rejected Joseph as regards Israel, at the same time that he was the exalted Joseph in the land of Egypt. The reversal of their captivity awaits their restoration by divine power and mercy as yet unfulfilled.

"I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. And they have cast lots." But the nations, all nations, are to be judged as such in this world in that day. Hence the various indignities which they had done to Israel are described, and Jehovah declares that He will return their recompense. He holds to righteous retribution. What they caused Israel to suffer, they must suffer themselves. It is righteous in the eyes of God that the nations which wronged and insulted Israel, not only during the law, but up to the last, after Christianity should receive as they had given to the Jews. "And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off." Hence it is to be proclaimed among the Gentiles that they may muster all their forces and avert their fate if they can. "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up."

Thus, instead of peace being brought about before the day of Jehovah comes, such a wide-spread gathering for war is to be as the world will have never yet seen. The desire to do great things, impatience of obligations, lust of conquest and military glory, will bring on men such a taste for war ere long that no restraints will suffice to keep them within bounds, especially as jealousy of each other will have led to the accumulation of vast stores for military purposes. So the closing scenes of this age will be found to be described in scripture. I repeat, if one's conclusion were drawn from the thoughts of men, much might be said for the contrary. Some might think the age had gained better sense, that they had too deep a conviction of their forefathers' sin and folly in this respect, and that henceforth remonstrance and arbitration would gradually supersede the more savage diplomacy of "blood and

iron." But in vain is it hoped thus to control the passions and will of man. The time of peace is not yet. Men may think that they are going to succeed, but it will be with the Gentiles as of old with Israel. The Jews will try to get back into their land, and the political power of some nations will be used to establish them in peace. But when it is thought that all is going well, the work is arrested, and the Jews become once more an object of jealousy to the Gentiles. Before the harvest, as it is said in Isaiah 18, the fair promise of fruit is nipped in the bud and comes to nothing. Instead of having Christ to reign over them in that state, they but prepare a throne for antichrist. Such will be the speedy result of it, with unspeakable dishonour to God and unexampled ruin to all concerned. The fact is, that God means to bring His people Himself into His land. We see all through the Old Testament the people's blessing in the land He gave them. All attempts to anticipate the time, or change the methods of God for human means, are not only vain, but will involve ruin as the direct consequence of such presumption.

The proper task of Christians now should be in no way to restore Jews, but to point solely to Christ in order that they may be saved. There never can be blessing for the world as a whole till God restores Israel. Christ accepted by and reigning over that nation is the essential condition of universal peace and blessing. The Christian is called out of the world and even now associated with heaven. We know Christ risen from the dead and glorified, and are therefore waiting to be taken to heaven when He comes for us. Even God Himself does not yet undertake the work of regeneration for the earth as such, nor will He till that day. He is gathering out the joint-heirs meanwhile who will then reign with Christ.

Hence, before that day comes, the utter failure of philanthropic and other schemes of improving the world will be clearly proved. It will be seen that all such efforts of men, or even of Christians, in ignorance of His mind and false hopes, must come to worse than nought. At best they are but nostrums that serve in no way the purpose intended, but keep up the delusion for a little while. They must soon answer the prophet's ironical call: "Hallow war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up." Full time it is for the mighty men to awake, and for all the men of war to draw near and come up. "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble [or 'haste'] yourselves, and come, all ye heathen [or 'nations'], and gather yourselves together [from] round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Jehovah." Doubtless those legions of angels are in the mind of the Spirit, which the Lord Jesus declined for Himself. "Thither cause thy mighty ones" to meet the world in its might. For in that day there will be, so to speak, a pitched battle between the powers of God and those of evil, the result of which cannot be doubted. "Let the heathen be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge."

In this passage I do not think that the repeated call to "awake" has any reference to actual resurrection, which is incompatible with a national or time condition for this world. Jehovah pursues the style of His challenge, and warns the nations that they will need all their watchfulness as well as every resource. He invites them to that valley of Jehoshaphat where the quick are destined to meet a never-to-be-forgotten judgment. The "valley of Jehoshaphat" is a literal place in the land of Israel; and this again disproves the notion of a resurrection scene, which is set forth by the solemnities of the great white throne; not by figures taken from the sickle or wine-vat, which really belong exclusively to the Son of Man's dealing with nations. In quite another way the harvest is used for the ingathering of the wheat into the heavenly granary and the subsequent burning of the tares. In this place shall the gathered Gentiles find their graves. There is not a single object on which man prides himself which will not come into the dust of death. The favour which the world now affects toward the Jew will turn into hatred before its day is over. False appearances and fair glosses will then fade and leave man in the naked deformity of sin for God to judge.

It is well known that some far-seeing philosophers of the day have come to very grave conclusions on other grounds than scripture can give to those who believe it. Every one acquainted with the men of this age knows that the author of Latter-day pamphlets is no believer, but a man of the world; nevertheless none, except the foolish, can doubt that he is a person of bold if not profound thought in his own peculiar way and style. But he too issues his latter-day pamphlets no less than such as believe the prophetic word. He has got a strong sense that things cannot go on as now; that there will shortly be a crisis and complete rupture of all existing institutions, and that influences powerfully at work now are destined to bring about that end. And what then? He knows nothing; nor can any save so far as he believes the word of God.

I was reading only a few days ago the words of a late philosophic poet and man of letters in general, whom I need not name, a daring personage who once troubled the German government so much that he was obliged to leave his country, and spend not a little of his life in Paris. This man wrote freely enough there of course, and gave his opinion that the French Revolution was only child's play compared with what is coming. Frenchmen he thought incapable of deep feelings. They do little more than mock at things sacred or political, all their feelings being of a light order, which disposes them to fight by jokes and persiflage; but as for Germans, their love and hate are serious, their very thoughts having not only wings but hands. When the Germans have their revolution, it will be grave for all mankind, — coldly calm in conception, passionate in execution. They struggle not for the human rights of nations, but for the divine rights of humanity! They think that men owe to matter great expiatory sacrifices, that the old offences against her may be pardoned. For Christianity, incapable of destroying her, has on every occasion outraged her; discountenanced the noblest enjoyments; reduced the senses to hypocrisy; and one heard everywhere of nothing but sins! Christianity therefore they are determined to destroy. The sentiment of his own divinity will excite man to erect himself, and it is from that moment that true greatness and true heroism will appear to glorify this earth.

Such are the audacious sentiments of modern Pantheism. Can any strides bring us closer to antichrist? Thus the only God is man, who ought to live and must live according to the laws of his nature! Away with morality! "We desire to found a democracy of terrestrial gods, all equals in happiness and in holiness. You [French revolutionists!] ask simple raiment, austere manners, cheap pleasures; we on the contrary wish for nectar and ambrosia, mantles of purple, the voluptuousness of the best wines, the dancing of nymphs, music, and comedies." Away with judgment! We destroy not priests only, but the religion that restrains and warns, the faith of Him who suffered on the cross! We shall enjoy to our heart's content, when our day comes to call the world and religion to a reckoning for the chains they have put so long on the human race. Such is the general strain of his work on Germany.

It is awful to think how truly the yearnings of this Hegelian spirit coalesce with the picture prophecy furnishes of the apostacy and man of sin. I believe that amidst such revolutionary dreams sounds a witness deep from the heart of one who knows what is working in the infidel men of progress, and who was more than usually frank in uttering their hopes and desires, as being one of them. He was no doubt an outspoken person, a little before the time; and consequently he suffered the penalty; nevertheless he expresses and lets us hear what men wish. Lawlessness will be the predominant sign of the change which is coming — the rejection of all restraint.\* Little did the German cited think that he was unconsciously anticipating the anti-Christian state of Christendom. Men will appear to succeed, but the effect of the success will be to bring the Lord forth to consume with the breath of His mouth, and to destroy the lawless one with the shining forth of His appearing. He knows well that the bulwarks of society will prove a mere house of cards, and that the will of man will not long bear the feeble resistance. Men are determined to have their way, and they will to their own perdition, to which

consummation the wits and thinkers, the doctrinaires of this day, are pushing them on. The upper classes are listening largely, and will yet more, as the lower classes have been led away long ago. They will have their suited leader, who will at length make war with the Lamb; but the Lamb shall overcome; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

{\*"The philosophy of Germany is an important affair which concerns the whole human race; and our great grand-children alone will be in a position to decide whether we should have praise or blame for having worked out our philosophy in the first place — our revolution in the second. I think the order we have adopted was worthy of a methodical people. Heads which philosophy has employed in meditation might have been mowed down at pleasure by revolution; but philosophy could have made no use of heads thus dealt with by revolution. But nevertheless, my dear countrymen, be in no distress: the German revolution will neither be the more gay nor the more mild that it was preceded by the Critik of Kant, the transcendental Idealism of Fichte, and the Philosophy of Nature. These doctrines have developed revolutionary forges which now only await the moment to explode and fill the world with terror and admiration. Then will appear the Kantists, who will hear no more of reverence in the world of deeds than in the world of ideas, and who will turn up without pity, with axe and sword, the soil of our European life in order to extirpate the last roots of the past. On the same scene will come the Fichteans, whose fanaticism of will can be mastered neither by fear nor by interest; for they live in spirit and despise matter. But the most fearful of all will be the philosophers of Nature when they take an active part in a German revolution, and identify themselves in the work of destruction; for if the hand of the Kantist strikes firmly and surely, because his heart is inaccessible to any traditional respect; if the Fichtean despises all dangers, because they have for him no real existence; the philosopher of Nature will be terrible indeed when he places himself in communication with the original powers of the earth, conjures up the hidden resources of tradition, evokes the whole force of the antique German Pantheism, and re-awakens that ardour of battle which the old Germans displayed — an ardour which had not for its object destruction nor even victory, but merely the pleasure of the combat itself Christianity has softened to a certain extent that brutal rage of battle, but it has not been able to extinguish it; and soon as the Cross, the restraining talisman, is broken, you shall see let loose again all the ferocity and frenzied exaltation of the Berserkers, sung by the poets of the north. The old warlike divinities will rouse themselves from their fabulous tombs, and wipe the dust of ages from their eyelids; Thor will be stirring again with his gigantic hammer, and woe to the cathedrals! There will be performed a drama, compared to which the French Revolution was but an innocent idyll. The nations will group themselves around Germany as on the ascending benches of an amphitheatre, and great and terrible are the games which await their eyes."}

Doubtless, if the word of God did not warn us plainly of such a future, I should not attach the smallest importance to any man's prognostications, but rather consider so awful an issue the ravings of a fanatic. But the believer who searches the word of God is enabled to say beforehand what God has said and written there, and he sees the principles at work in these so-called Christian lands. The word of God springing from the highest source (namely, His own perfect knowledge of what is coming) is equally worthy of trust, whether He speak to us of things present, past, or future.

In that day then it is a question not so much of the heavens as of the earth. Jehovah intends to take the earth under His care. "Multitudes, multitudes in the day of decision: for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. Jehovah shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem."

Jehovah will appear, and demolish first the western powers, with their religious head in Jerusalem. For we know from Daniel and the Revelation of John that the Roman Empire will be

established again. I do not understand the Pope by this, but the imperial power. The Italians are certainly rather tired of the papacy. But the old Roman Empire will be resuscitated once more. It will re-appear, repeat its old sins in new forms, and be judged for what it did from the beginning to the end. The empire of Rome was that which had the responsibility of the crucifixion of the Son of God, and God has not forgotten this, but means to judge them for it. Thus the Latin Empire revived will be the western political power, which utterly rejects Christianity as a fable. The religious power, or what is now Christendom, amalgamating with renegade Judaism, will be apostate too. Both will make the apostacy complete. It is very evident that the beast will have his seat at Rome; and the false prophet at Jerusalem. The religious or second beast will be where Christ was crucified; and there the beast or imperial civil power with its supporters will find themselves before the Lord appear. I have no doubt that for this things are preparing, and that the stripping of his temporal dominion from the Pope and giving Rome to Italy are steps on the way to the restored Roman Empire, as well as to a new form of religious chief in the Holy Land.

But the Assyrian survives that power, and this it is which is described here, not Babylon, nor Rome, but the king of the north, who also will appear in the last days, taking up his old pretensions and opposition to Israel. Such then is the Assyrian of Joel; it is the northern [army], the head of the northern and eastern powers of the world, who will by and by, as of old, come into collision with the Jew. He musters the great assemblage of the nations spoken of here. The western powers will comprise the flower of Europe, helping on and propping up the false prophet who will then reign at Jerusalem. Men have seen a certain quarrel which rose about the holy places, where the western powers came into a serious collision with the north-east. This will be carried on still more keenly and extensively when the beast and his ten horns sustain antichrist there. The man that will set up to have the highest spiritual power will reign in Jerusalem, and be the final personal antichrist, with the western powers for his supporters.

It is not to be doubted that many Jews will be gathered back to their land before that crisis comes: for the second beast rules over them. But they will of course return in unbelief. It will be the fruit of man's doing then. The Gentiles will work to this end. This failing, God will afterwards gather the Israelites in from every side. The Assyrian will then show himself their adversary, and appear to succeed at first, so as to enhance his destruction in its time; especially as the western empire (the beast), with the religious ally and chief in Palestine, will have been judged previously by divine power. This the Assyrian will regard as wrought in their own favour. They will infer that they are going to have things all their own way then, and will simply come therefore to receive their judgment after the western powers have been blotted out by the Lord.

England, like the rest of western Europe, will be under the apostate influence of Rome and the antichrist; for there is no power faithfully protesting against this iniquity. For similar reasons, if I might venture to give an opinion (and I never think of giving one's own thought as more than that), it is that the United States of America will be swamped into a political marsh; and as they have been hitherto a mere *omnium gatherum* or conglomerate from the rest of the world, especially from Europe, comprising no doubt a vast deal of skill, industry, and enterprise, but also not a little of the scum and refuse of all nations; so I believe they will break up into factions of noisy primitive elements; and, after going off in boastful vapouring, will at length burst as a bubble.

Population does not in itself make a nation strong. Some of the nations greatest in masses of men have been politically weak before a small energetic kingdom. Look at Darius's power, as opposed to Alexander and his Macedonians. The last appeared contemptible. Did it not seem the greatest folly for these few adventurers to invade Asia, and face the enormous armaments of Persia? Yet the he-goat

with his horn was too much for the myriads of the great king, and the second empire collapsed.

So as to America, I conceive that the young giant power which has grown so fast will sink still faster, probably through intestine quarrel, but assuredly somehow before that day comes. They will break up into different fragments. Their prime object is to maintain political unity. This is their great ambition, and though it may appear to stand and advance, as everything ambitious is apt to prosper for a time, it will be all blown down before long. For it is a remarkable fact that there is no place in prophecy for a vast influential power, such as the American United States would naturally be, if it so long retained its cohesion. Is it conceivable that there should be such a power existing at that day without any mention of it? Can the omission be accounted for save by its dissolution? However, I particularly wish every one to understand that this is merely drawn from the general principles of the word of God.

India I presume will be part of the north-eastern system spoken of here and elsewhere. The British will lose possession of India, as nationalities wake up to yearn after their own distinct position. And such is even now the tendency, which prophecy distinctly recognises as characterising the end of this age. The Russian empire, as being itself north-eastern, is destined to be the suzerain power there. They may not be aware of the role divine prophecy attributes to them, of their immense success, and of their total destruction under the hand of Jehovah. But scripture is clear. (Compare Ezek. 38, 39) Divine judgment will not slumber.

That it is the quick only, the wicked nations of the earth, who are here judged by an outpouring of divine judgment, when they think of no more than a campaign or politics, will be plain from what follows: a rising from the dead to be judged according to their works it is not. "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." Nevertheless it is not "the end" of 1 Cor. 15: 24, but the consummation of the age, of this present evil age, which will be followed by the glorious world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11), and the fulfilment of the great mass of the prophecies in the earth's blessedness under His reign. Verses 16 and 17 make this equally plain and sure. "Jehovah also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but Jehovah will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." At the judgment of the dead Jehovah will not roar as here out of Zion, neither will He dwell there, making Jerusalem holiness. For earth and heaven will have fled away. (Rev. 20: 11) The absolutely new creation follows for eternity in Rev. 21: 1-5.

But here the picture is so different as necessarily to suppose a time wholly distinct. It is the earthly Jerusalem, not the heavenly; it is not the Lord's shout calling His own to meet Him in the air, but His lion-like roar against His enemies on earth. It is His dwelling in Zion, His holy mountain, so as to make the holiness of Jerusalem no longer a mockery but a blessed reality. It is not yet the hour when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth and the works that are therein being burned up. For it shall come to pass in the time here spoken of, "that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I

have not cleansed: for Jehovah dwelleth in Zion." It is the time of the restitution of all things according to the full stream of the prophetic testimony, yet in no wise the last hour of that day when all must be destroyed in order to the eternal judgment and the new heavens and new earth, not in an inchoative but in the complete and absolute sense of the words.

The confusion of pious, able, and learned men on this subject is incredible to those who have not examined them carefully with a competent knowledge of scriptural truth to judge them by. It is not correct to say, for instance, that the imagery describes the fulness of spiritual blessings which God at all times diffuses in and through the church; nor is it well founded to assume that on earth (and the text speaks of the earth) the church has a lease of such blessings for ever, unless one speaks only of such individuals as have eternal life; nor again can we lightly speak of the church's enemies being cut off for ever, unless we limit our thoughts to the powers of darkness (Eph. 6: 12), which are surely not what is intended here by the desolations of Egypt and Edom.

The objections to taking the prophecy in its strict and natural import are of no such weight as to call for a mystical sense. Thus it is said that "the promise cannot relate to exuberance of temporal blessings, even as tokens of God's favour. For he says 'a fountain shall come forth of the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim.' But the valley of Shittim is on the other side Jordan, beyond the Dead Sea, so that by nature the waters could not flow thither." But here lies the mistake; for the reign of the Lord over the earth (which St. John declares shall last for a thousand years) differs essentially from all previous ages, as well as from the eternal state which succeeds. And the fuller light of the New Testament makes it plain that its distinctive feature is the heading up of all things in heaven and of all things on earth in Christ, the glorious Head of the universe now enjoying the promised blessing for which the groaning lower creation still yearns. Hence there will be a perfect condition for those on high (including the church then glorified), a blessed but not absolutely perfect state for those below, among whom Israel, converted and planted in their own land under Messiah and the new covenant, will have the highest place.

Thus it is easy to see that it will be the time for removing the effects of curse and shedding both spiritual and natural blessing. In witness of this shall go forth the vivifying fountain from the house of Jehovah, the waters of which take their course even to the valley of Shittim beyond the Dead Sea. The very point is a blessing power beyond nature going directly through a sea so dismal. Ezekiel 47 gives full particulars, and states an exception to the healing, which is important as negating the idea of heaven or eternity. Zechariah 14: 8 lets us know that, of the living waters issuing from Jerusalem in that day, half should go west to the Mediterranean, and half east to the Salt Sea, unaffected by the vicissitudes of the year. Undoubtedly along with this will be vouchsafed spiritual good abundantly; but there is no solid ground to question the real physical fact and its consequences in that day so glorious to Jehovah-Messiah. We must leave room in the future for the divine vindication of Himself in the lower creation, remembering the reconciliation to God of all *things* as well as of believers (Col. 1: 20, 21), and that Christ is head over all things to the church which is His body. It is admitted that the vision of Ezekiel belongs to this life; as also Revelation 21: 24-26; Revelation 22: 1, 2. But in none is the connection with the present evil age, but with the good age to come.

It will be seen that I contend for no pseudo-literalism, and acknowledge freely the strong figures employed; as for example the mountains dropping new wine, and the hills flowing with milk; but surely the force is the supernatural spontaneousness with which God will then cause the earth to yield its choicest stores of the animate as well as inanimate creation. The day of toil and sorrow is past; and this through the Second man's grace, not the first man's skill any more than his deserts. Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. But it is not a description of our spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

Undoubtedly it is earthly Judah and Jerusalem; but mercy and truth have wrought in the people, and divine power in the land and city of the great King. Their blessing shall abide for ever, as long as the earth endures; yea, Judah's surely in a new form throughout all eternity. "And I will avenge [or pronounce free from guilt] their blood [that] I had not avenged; and Jehovah dwelleth in Zion." It is not the church either militant or triumphant, but the permanent vindication and blessing of His earthly people, when He makes good His pledge of the hill He chose of old as His rest for ever.