The Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

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The Christian Hope and the Sure Word of Prophecy.

Lecture 1 - 2 Peter 1:16-21.

The hope of the Christian has suffered much from being confounded with the prophetic word. It is not denied that prophecy is of God. As this very passage tells us, we do well to take heed to it; nevertheless it remains true that the Christian hope has another character, though they are both from the same source of goodness and truth. They are not of man, but revealed of God. But the importance of distinguishing between the hope of the Christian and prophecy will be felt as we traverse the ground of some of the Scriptures which treat of them both. Indeed, we need not go farther than the passage before our eyes tonight, in order to see how strongly the Holy Ghost distinguishes between them. Nay, He even contrasts the one with the other. As the passage is often misconceived and its force lost through not apprehending the very distinction which the Holy Ghost here lays down, I may just preface the present lecture by a few words on this subject.

“We have also,” the apostle says, “the word of prophecy more sure,” or more confirmed. He means that the scene upon the mount of Transfiguration was a confirmation of prophecy. The Old Testament saints had the prophetic word. We have in this a decided advantage over them. That which God was pleased to vouchsafe to chosen witnesses upon the holy mount presented livingly before their eyes the central scene to which all prophecy tends — the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus, of which

we read in the 16th verse. Upon that mount not a mere prophetic delineation was given, but as in an actual scene before their eyes the great substantial features of the kingdom of God. There were the dead saints represented as risen in Moses; there were the translated saints who had not passed through death seen in the person of Elijah; there was the Lord Jesus, the head and centre of all blessedness and glory. Besides, there were saints in natural unchanged bodies represented by Peter and James and John. The whole group therefore was a kind of seal confirming that which the prophets had given the people of God to expect. Thus “we have,” as he says, “the word of prophecy more confirmed; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light” rather a lamp, or candle “that shineth in a dark place.” But he shows us something more, and not this only, but different and superior in character — “until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.” This does not mean till the day of the Lord Jesus shine upon the world. Such an interpretation destroys the entire value of this part of the sentence; indeed it leads souls into, and leaves them under, the confusion of the Christian hope with the prophetic word. Prophecy, it is intimated, is good, and to be heeded; but then there is something better still. You are quite right in profiting by that word. Christianity, and the hope which it puts before the soul, in no wise impairs the worth of the ancient oracles, but rather confirms them, as we surely know; but then Christianity does bring in not only a more blessedly revealed and known foundation for the soul, not only a higher walk for the believer now, but as the foundation becomes deeper and enlarged, as the walk becomes more heavenly, so does the hope proportionately rise and brighten. Therefore he says, “until the day dawn,

and the day-star arise in your hearts." Indeed, it is never said that the day-star rises upon the world, nor could it have any just sense. It is really a question of the heart, and of daylight dawning, and the day-star arising there.

Is it not evident that the power of the Holy Ghost is meant, giving the Christian now to lay hold of the hope proper to him, as one belonging to Christ in heaven? When the believer is led by grace into his due place of liberty as a Christian, the light which shines round about him is no mere glimmering of a candle or lamp; but, as it is said, "we walk in the light;" and this, because we are brought to God. We walk in divine light, and, as we are children of light and of the day with respect to our Christian privilege and responsibility, we are just the same as to our hope. So daylight dawns in the Christian's heart before the day shines upon the world; and the day-star, Christ Himself in heavenly grace, is by faith apprehended in his personal affection, before He arises as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings for those that fear his name among the Jews of the latter day. In a word, Peter allows that the lamp of prophecy is excellent, and quite right it is to heed it; but then it must be carefully borne in mind that there is a superior light, without disparagement to prophecy and its office. Again, when the Christian enjoys heavenly daylight for his soul, it is evident that he must be aware of despising this further blessing of God; and despising it surely would be not to follow and accept that which casts, I will not say a greater degree of brightness only, but another and far better light upon all God has given us in Christ.

It may help some if I point out a clear proof that the day-star here introduced differs essentially from the day-star

of the prophetic word. The latter, far from being Christ, is His enemy, and so judged and destroyed. The prophet Isaiah (Isa. 14) shows us this day-star; but who is he? “O Lucifer, son of the morning!” This is not Christ. Hence, if we go to the word of prophecy and look for its day-star, we find that the king of Babylon is meant, the enemy of the Lord of glory, destined to destruction by the power of God; whereas that which is vouchsafed to me in the special revelations of Christianity is, I repeat, not merely the lamp of prophecy disclosing the fearful end of human pride in the world’s and Satan’s day-star, but Christ exalted on high, the heavenly day-star. Here we find the glory of One who is above the sun, moon, and stars, who needs not to say in His heart, “I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.” For He was and is the Most High — the lowly Man who once came into this world, by suffering in atonement to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; that He, not snatching at any glory which was not His, but, on the contrary, stooping down and renouncing His own glory for God’s glory, in obedience even unto the death of the cross, might have by grace the guiltiest reconciled to God by His death, and made companions of His glory as the risen ascended Lord — might be able to receive the glory of heaven, not take it in His own right as that which belonged to Him in the communion of the Godhead, but rather receive it as redemption’s prize from God, the Head of a family given also to Him, even those who believed on His name. From His heavenly seat He sends down the Holy Ghost, who is to us the power of present fellowship with Christ, and makes good this new and incomparable light, the full and proper Christian hope, a portion with Christ Himself

in that sphere into which He is entered, to which we in no sense belong naturally, to which Christ alone has called us, which His own glory alone could fill, but to which by His death and resurrection He has acquired the fullest title for us, that we might share it in peace, though adoringly, along with Him.

It is in this way that the true force of the passage is made apparent. We have the prophetic word more sure or confirmed by the vision on the holy mount, and in no wise neutralized by Christianity. This could not be. In truth all the Old Testament derives stronger sanction from the New, and is seen by us to be still more blessed than any Jew ever saw it, no matter how real a saint he might be. The coming of Christ, with its vast and eternal results, did not fail to stamp a new value on every part of God's word, beyond what any soul conceived who had no experience beyond those earlier days, But at the same time the very passage which asserts not only the confirmation of the prophetic word, but its present importance, shows that there is a better light to be looked for, because it is not only divine but heavenly — a light which shines in the person of Christ, flows from Him in virtue of His work and glory on high, and associates us in heart and hope with Himself there.

That Christ is the true light, no one who knows Him will dispute. Rejected from earth, He is at God's right hand, whence He shines on the soul, and gives it to behold Him thus, attracted and united to Himself in heaven. This is precisely the great truth which is lost where the prophetic word is confounded with the Christian hope. The Christian, therefore, it will be seen from these preliminary remarks, lacks none of the prophetic truth in Old or New Testament. Prophecy pertains to him as

part of the precious heritage of revelation that God has given him. These lively oracles are surely in no sense taken away from us; but at the same time we must carefully remember also that, while we inherit what the Old Testament saints possessed, we have, as the present gift of God's grace, a bright hope that is suited to the new condition into which we are called. There need be therefore no hesitation in saying that this is the point in the mind of the Holy Ghost here. "We have the prophetic word more confirmed, whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a lamp" (I venture to translate literally, because thus the contrast is given better) "which shineth in a dark place." This does not dispel the darkness, as may be observed. No doubt, when no more could be had, the Spirit of God graciously made the lamp of prophecy sufficient to guide the benighted pilgrim; but now there is another light. Now we find, in Christ revealed above, the strength that keeps the soul from being weary, and the light which drives out all darkness from before it; or, as is said here, "until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time [or ever] by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." That is, if you insulate prophecy, if you take it as a mere statement independently of the purpose of God, you cut the divine thread of truth. It is not of private interpretation; it does not furnish its own solution, but must be taken as a necessary part of the entire sum of God's testimony to the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has the glory of His Son before Him: as in all else, so in the prophetic word, such is the key. This is above all what He aims at. Take it therefore merely in fragments, make

each part, as it were, explain itself and be limited to itself, and while one may find ample, interesting, weighty facts in prophecy, which history corroborates and thus proclaims as evidences of prophecy, still the mind of God is missed if it be read thus. Rightly to profit the soul and glorify God, one must take it as His testimony to the glory of Christ; for in truth it never was in any way the will of man. Man is competent to give me a fact, but not the truth on any subject, and still less on that vast scene of glory which God has formed, and which He has revealed too for the glory of the Lord.

Having made these few prefatory remarks, I hope tonight, in a brief and simple way, to direct attention to the testimony that Scripture renders to these two things, and more particularly — as my great object and desire — to dwell on the Christian hope, that special heavenly presentation of the truth of God respecting Christ's coming for us, which is of such unspeakable moment for every child of God.

Looking at the New Testament, there is one portion which claims our especial attention on such a theme as this. Need I say I refer to the two epistles to the Thessalonians? 1 Thess. 1 gives us the character of those saints from their earliest reception of the gospel You will remember that the Thessalonians were but a freshly gathered assembly of believers. They had not long known the gospel. They are viewed as simple and withal earnest witnesses, in all its great practical qualities, of the Christian life. There were, no doubt, some things wanting as to outward order, and further instruction that they needed deeply. Errors too there were floating near, if not then among them, which in some respects menaced them. But, spite of all this, they

stand conspicuously before us as a choice and fragrant gathering of God's children in this evil world. Now, let me ask, what is the prominent truth that characterizes them? They had, like others, Christ as the deliverer and rest of their souls; they had, as all have, Christ their life and their righteousness; but what was it that gave them the special bloom of beauty which I think must be apparent even on a casual acquaintance? What drew toward them so remarkably the affections of the apostle? I admit you have those Christian affections fresh, and full, and strong, between him and the Philippians, and under strikingly different circumstances. They were veterans; and most sweet it is to see that these who were mature in the truth and experienced in the work could be as redolent of Christ, and as hearty and simple, as those that were in the vigour of youth. But as for the Thessalonians, they had needed no rude and humbling lessons to show them their path of separation from the world. From the first they had broken with it decidedly. Now, what was it that so attracted and refreshed the apostle's heart as he looked on these young saints? What was it that more than anything else in the mind of the Spirit of God stamped a peculiar character upon them? Alas, that it should be peculiar! But so it was: so it is. Is there anything that so shines, in the inspired account both of their condition and of the apostle's own appreciation of them, as the simplicity of heart with which they were filled with Christ as the hope of their souls? Hence, there is not a single chapter in the two epistles which does not, in some way or another, bring the coming of the Lord before us; and in some more than once. No matter what may be the theme, somehow the Spirit of God comes round to Christ's coming. It was the hope in which they lived; it was the prospect which He

sanctioned as the strength and joy of their life. Far from weakening this mighty spring that wrought in their souls, on the contrary, He confirms it to them, praises them for it, gives them to see the truth as to it more perfectly, and establishes them in it as a sacred deposit which they had received thus cordially of the Holy Ghost.

Hence then we find that, from the beginning of the first epistle, the Spirit spreads our hope before us in connection with them. Thus, in the 8th verse He says, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also, in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.” A remarkable testimony! And what was the reason or ground of it? The very world bore witness to the power of the apostle’s work among the souls brought to God in Thessalonica. “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” It impressed men’s consciences, and occupied their minds and mouths. The world was full of the change in these Gentiles, and gave its very unconscious testimony to the power of grace in their conversion to God. People told one another that these men had turned away from their idols, and were now worshipping one God, the living and true God, nay, that they were actually awaiting His Son from heaven. In this way they were themselves testifying to the truth of God and to the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven, because of the powerful and profound effect that had been produced on their spirits. They

might at times reason against or ridicule it; they might consider it strange and vain. Still impression enough was made on them to set them talking of those that expected Jesus, the Son of God, to come from heaven, that Jesus “whom He raised from the dead, our deliverer from the wrath to come.”

One important inference we ought to draw from this Scripture is, that the Christian hope is a fit, and seasonable, and divinely warranted expectation for a young convert’s soul. Whatever may be said about the propriety of prophetic study for such an one, the coming of the Lord Jesus is certainly suitable. The Lord thus intimates His approval that it should be proclaimed to and received by even the youngest saint. I press this; for there are many who think otherwise, but they are wrong. God’s word is wiser than all the reasons of men — wiser than all the thoughts and feelings of Christians. God’s word alone is right, as it is also as clear as He can make it that the Thessalonian saints from their very conversion waited for His Son from heaven. The Holy Ghost, instead of treating this as meddling with that which was unfit for them instead of regarding these as unripe for it, on the contrary mentions it to their praise as a component part and happy feature of their conversion, a result of God’s mighty power which wrought on them from the very first. Thus, we have it on the sure authority of God’s word that it is never out of season to bring before the simplest soul “that blessed hope” of the Lord Jesus Christ’s return. When I say “blessed hope,” beware of construing it into the hope of knowing the forgiveness of sins, or that we are justified. If the gospel be set before old or young according to God’s mind, it proclaims salvation; it affirms with divine

authority the certainty of the Saviour's work, which has for ever blotted out sin before God. Jesus is a deliverer, Jesus risen from the dead, as we are told in this very verse. He is a deliverer not only from guilt now, not only from present condemnation, but from "the wrath to come." In a word, He is a perfect and everlasting Saviour. But this is quite different from our hope. We believe that He has delivered and will deliver us; but then this is not what we await from heaven. It has already been done on earth in the cross. Our hope is Himself — nothing short of it. Our hope is Christ — not of course to die for us, neither is it to live for us. We know that He died to reconcile us to God; and we know that, risen from the dead, He lives for us, and that we shall be saved through His life. We believe and are sure, and we hope and long for it, that He will come, and that we shall see Him as He is. For this the Thessalonians were waiting, and they were right. May the Lord grant that all those who have to do even with the youngest children of God may heed this first lesson which the Spirit of God gives in chapter 1. The Christian hope is not only true and blessed in itself, but blessedly adapted even for the youngest confessor of Christ; and so far indeed from its being an unsuitable thought, any one who has observed the young (I do not speak now of those who are merely young in years, but of such as have been recently brought by the gospel to the knowledge of Christ and redemption) must, I think, have observed that there is a childlike readiness to look and long for Christ. It was a remarkable feature that was noticed in the work of God which overspread another country a few years ago. It was noticed by many, if not by all, that it seemed to be a necessary companion to the conversion which God was then effecting, that they

looked for the coming of the Lord, that they were filled with the expectation of His presence, that it was not merely a mighty blessing that had reached their souls — as indeed it was; but along with this, and above this I may say, there was the fixing of the heart on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. They desired and hoped to be with Him shortly.

This then I would press on those listening tonight, that they may not be in any wise discouraged by persons who, I am persuaded, have not gathered their thoughts on this subject from the word of God. We all know that there is a continual tendency to regard the hope of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as unsuited food, at least for those that are but recently brought to the knowledge of Christ. Here we have God Himself meeting this difficulty, as in grace He corrects every error of the human mind. Here we have a divine warrant for turning the babe in Christ to his Lord’s coming as His people’s hope. Let me express my belief that the more usual defects and the too common dangers are far more on the other side. There is too great a shrinking from bringing the hope of the Lord’s return before the family of faith, whether newly converted or not. With some there is the thought of a certain time in which they must become established in the gospel, and then be regularly trained in the general truth of God first, so that by degrees they may be fitted to receive “that blessed hope.” Now far be it from me in any way to question the wisdom of the gradual unfolding of the mind of God in Scripture. But here His word is clear, peremptory, and decisive, showing most plainly the secret of the spiritual freshness in the young Christians whom the New Testament commends to us as so remarkably

distinguished by their brightness and vigour of faith, or, as it is said, their work of faith, their labour of love, their patience of hope. We have the real reason found in this — that they who had believed the gospel, preached by the apostle himself, had not only received the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, but were led into the blessed hope of the Lord's returning in glory and His kingdom. You may recollect that it was a part of the charge brought against the apostle Paul at Thessalonica, that he was an enemy of the Roman constitution, and setting aside Caesar by proclaiming another king, even Jesus. Thus we have in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 17) facts clearly corresponding with what we have here. The history of Luke lets us see that the bright future of the kingdom was not withheld from these Christians when Paul first visited and preached to them, just as here, from their very conversion, they waited for God's Son from heaven. The apostle set forth the fundamental truth of a suffering and a risen Christ, even Jesus; but besides, from the inspired history, and from his own epistles, it is plain that he insisted from the first on the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

Here then is the first weighty practical inference I would now draw from this epistle to the Thessalonians. God is our warrant, who makes it to be our responsibility (if we bear in mind and respect the apostle's ways in Christ, as he taught everywhere in every assembly), to set the Lord in His coming glory as the object of hope before the babe in Christ. Be assured that we all need it. Even the soul that is only just brought to God has wants met nowhere else. The reason is manifest. You can no more hinder any one, even the new-born soul, from thinking of the future, than you can command your natural eye not

to look before you. Was it not made so to look right onward? It is wrong to cross the bent of its original constitution and its habitual aim. It is not merely that you can look into what you like of things open; but you cannot without violence avoid looking before you. And so it is spiritually. As the natural man, audaciously confiding in himself, or even worse, would pry into the dark unknown before him, the heart of the child of God cannot but look onward; but he is privileged so to look - humbly, believingly. How is the future for him to be filled? Is God to occupy him with His future? or is the believer to imagine a future of his own? This seems to me the real question. And what does God answer? That He who hung upon the cross, “that same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

The hope of the Christian, it thus appears, is worthy of his foundation. As there is but one Lord and one faith, so God has given him but one hope: it is Christ. If the true hope be not presented according to Scripture to the inexperienced believer, he is in danger from, nay, he will inevitably fall into, the various thoughts and expectations with which human tradition has peopled the future. What is it that you find many an old Christian looking for? Are not some labouring, not merely to gather souls to Christ in heaven, but to get the world better now? Is that the Christian hope? Others again seem to look for little more than, when they die, to go and be with Christ. Precious truth it is, that departing we shall be with Him above. God forbid that I should slight it, or say one word to weaken its importance; but it is not the Christian hope. However sweet to be thus with Christ, my part of it is assuredly but an imperfect

condition, my going as a separate spirit, even to be with the Saviour. Blessed as it is, and far better even so than abiding here away from Him in the sorrows and failures of the world, still it is not the hope as God speaks of it. The Christian hope is not our going to be with Jesus, but Jesus coming from heaven for us, that we may be caught up, and so may ever be with Him. Is there no difference? or is it a mere secondary matter? Is it a trivial distinction, whether it be each individually after death going to heaven, or Jesus coming for us all from heaven, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life? Do you say, it makes no difference either way, for it will be all well with you? Ah! I see what is the root of the objection pressed: you are occupied with your things. If it be well with you, is this the one and only consideration? What poverty of thought, what lowness of feeling for the soul of the saint, when thus his hopes are limited to the horizon of his own well-being! Well with him! Has not the cross made it well with you? The blood of Christ has washed you from your sins, and you are made kings and priests to God, who has sealed you in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of our inheritance for the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. Is it not, as far as present object is concerned, for the very purpose of leading your heart, enlarged and free, to enter into His thoughts and His glory?

And where and on what does His glory shine? Upon you? Upon me? Thank God, it is upon Christ, the only worthy One! Will it not then be even for us infinitely better, than if it shone only on you or me, to show out what we are in our weakness, in our selfishness, in our little thoughts and hearts, so unworthy of His grace? God has not left it

to us to decide. He has not made it our business to form our hope, any more than to define the proper object of our faith. He has given us Christ everywhere — Christ our hope no less than Christ the object of our faith.

Allow me to put the case otherwise. You suppose that there is, practically, no difference; for it is but a small matter with you, whether it be your going to Christ, or Christ coming for His saints: in short, you think that, after sin and salvation are settled, all else must be but secondary questions. But I answer, if there be a fact above all others of primary moment; if a truth which, most majestic in itself, will embrace within its range, beyond dispute, delay, or concealment, every creature of God; it is that change, most mighty in its character, which will be ushered in by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. A secondary thing! Heaven, earth, and all that are in them, not to speak of the unseen world, the lost, with the devil and his angels, — the entire universe of God, throughout time, must bow virtually at once, formally in due season, to the Lord Jesus in that day. Never since time began has there been anything comparable to it, save one hour; that hour I grant most entirely, with all my soul, to be, beyond all compare, solitary, exclusive, standing unrivalled in time, yea, which will stand alone throughout all eternity — the hour of the Cross, when the Saviour died for our sins. But the coming again of the Lord Jesus will be no rival of the cross, but its triumph — will in no way detract from, but rather prove and display to all, the full power and blessedness of the cross. Impossible that God could ever introduce any scheme even of good, which would come, I will not say, into collision with the cross, but into the smallest independence of that scene, the weakness and

suffering of our great God and Saviour. On the contrary, the second coming of Christ will not be as once God glorifying His Son in Himself at His own right hand in heaven, which no doubt is the present joy of faith, and was, we know, a debt paid in raising Jesus up from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand in heavenly places: the Lord's advent will be the introductory, or first act, of that mighty change in which God will never allow a return, stop, or check, until His glory is established both in the heavens and earth, and in every part of His creation; and therefore, I must repeat, so far from its being in any respect a doubtful or subordinate question, it is not only the sure truth of God but second to the cross alone in weight and solemnity. In point of fact it is the application, as far as it goes, of the reconciling power of the cross; it is the beginning of God's display to every eye of what the cross of Christ is, which faith knew before, but which God will then manifest by degrees to every creature. Therefore manifestly no objection can be less founded in truth than the notion that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ can be shelved and slighted, as if it were an insignificant matter, even if true.

Hence we see in 1 Thess. 2 that the joy and hope of the apostle's heart in his labours of love is no present honour, recompense, influence, or gratification; it is the saints he here cherished and led on as his crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at His coming. In 1 Thess. 3 he prays the Lord to make them exceed and abound in love toward one another, and toward all, in order to confirm their hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. In 1 Thess. 4 it is the

especial consolation, yea triumph, in presence of the death of brethren. As Jesus died and rose, resurrection will be the portion of those who die; for God will bring with Jesus those who have slept through Him. In 1 Thess. 5 the day of the Lord is supposed to be familiarly known, and about to come as a thief in the night with destruction for those who are of darkness, which is in no way the characteristic of the Christian, but of the condition out of which the knowledge of Christ takes him. Also, in verse 23, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not death, is presented as the time and circumstances in which the desire for the entire sanctification of the saints, wholly and in every part, inwardly and outwardly, will be realized according to the faithfulness and power of Him who calls the saints.

2 Thessalonians 1 brings into prominence the retributive character, not of Christ's coming to receive the saints, but of His day when He will be displayed in judgment of the troublers of His people, strangers to God and rejecters of the Gospel, and withal in publicly-awarded rest to those now troubled for the sake of righteousness and His name. 2 Thess. 2 dispels the alarm created by the pretence that the day of the Lord was actually come, by showing that this cannot be; for the Lord must come and gather His saints to Himself above, and the apostasy and man of sin must be revealed fully before that day. In the last chapter (2 Thess. 3) the apostle prays the Lord to direct their hearts into the patience of Christ as well as God's love. Christ patiently waits to come, and the saints should cultivate communion with Him in this.

Enough has been said to prove how contrary to the mind of God it is to push aside the truth of the Lord's return. I will draw attention to a few Scriptures, not only the

epistles to the Thessalonians which have passed before us, but other parts of the New Testament, in a cursory manner, as tonight's lecture is simply prefatory. I hope to show, by the word of God, the exceedingly practical character of Christ's coming. It matters little what is taken up first. There are scarce any epistles of the New Testament which do not present the great truth in some form or another, and the Gospels, in fact, do the same, and, of course, the Revelation.

Again, as elsewhere, so in the Gospels, the coming of Christ is presented according to the special design of the Spirit in each book. For instance, the Gospel of Matthew depicts Jesus as Jehovah-Messiah, according to promise and prophecy; but also as the rejected Messiah, with its incalculable consequences both for Israel and the Gentiles, the divine vindication of Him as the Son of Man returning in the clouds of heaven with power and glory, to be the judge of all the nations of the earth, as well as of Christendom and the Jews, while delivering and gathering the elect of Israel. These are the topics presented in accordance with that point of view. (Matt. 24, 25)

So also in Mark, to give an instance, we find a similarly suitable connection with the object of his Gospel, where the prophetic work or ministry of Christ appears. Thus, he only, in his account of the prophecy on the Mount of Olives (Mark 13), mingles with it the warning against a pre-meditated self-defence (v. 11); he only describes the Son of man as giving authority to His servants and to every man his work and as commanding the porter to watch (v. 34).

Again, in Luke we come to what more particularly illustrates, on the one side, the grace of God, and, on the other, the heart of man. The coming of Christ, therefore, is there put, just as we might expect, in close contact with the affections and the conscience. The reason is obvious. Luke is the great moralist among the four, and therefore the announcement of Christ's return partakes of a corresponding character. Accordingly, in Luke 12, we have the right attitude of the believer in relation to the Lord's advent. This is the way in which the Lord presents it in verses 35, 36: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." The thought is entirely peculiar to St. Luke. To "open to him immediately," as expressive of constant expectation, is a phrase found neither in Matthew, nor in Mark, nor in John; but only here. Why so? Because it supposes a condition of the heart, and therefore falls in with the province of Luke, who traces not only what God is to man in His grace, but also the effect of His grace upon the heart. Let the lesson not be in vain. Observe how the Lord singles out this readiness, inwardly and outwardly, to receive Himself, as the right condition for the saint to cultivate in awaiting His return. It is clear and certain that this supposes the Lord's coming as the proximate hope, and the believer waiting for Him, not knowing when He is coming, but constantly expecting Him to come; certain that He is coming, though uncertain, if you will, when He comes. What is the effect of this on faith and unbelief? The faithless heart goes to sleep; the evil servant says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming," and takes advantage of His absence, eating

and drinking with the drunken, and beating his fellow-servants. But what of the faithful heart? What does he who is fresh in the enjoyment of the Christian hope? He waits in readiness of soul that, when the Lord knocks, he may open the door immediately, with nothing to hinder it, with no object to detain the heart, with no plans that have to be accomplished first, without thought of rising in the world, or settling the family, or helping to build up some tower of human pride, in a lesser or a greater degree. He is outside the interests and schemes and hopes of men. Were his heart ever so little there, the return of the Saviour could not be welcome; it would ruin the interests, spoil the plans, and frustrate the hopes. The saint that longs for Him, and desires nothing so much as His coming, has already found in His precious blood redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is alive to God through Him, and has received in the Holy Ghost new power to glorify God through realizing himself one with Christ and the rich and eternal interests of His love. Where Christ is not thus simply and intelligently looked for, there is the danger of making a little world even out of Christian service. The religious life, of which Christ's coming is not the hope, has its energies and its objects where one often detects some such tincture; but surely this is the abuse of that field which the Spirit of God affords to the believer; for He prompts the Bride to say, Come, to her Lord, leads us to wait for God's Son from heaven; yea, not merely so, but, when the Lord knocks, would have us open to Him "immediately."

In the Gospel of John, the coming of Christ is presented after another style, and of course in accordance with the general character of that Scripture. It is not so much the

right moral condition of the earth towards the Lord which is put to the test, but His coming as connected with the personal glory of the Lord and His love. What was suitable for the only begotten Son, full of grace and truth, the Son of the Father? He would win the disciples there from their earthly and Jewish thoughts. They were looking for the glorious Messiah to come, put down the Romans, and deliver them from the Gentiles, whose kings and queens should nourish and bow down to Israel. So ran the prophetic warrant; and it is most true. He will come, He will judge the world, He will put down the Romans and all other Gentiles, He will exalt the Jews; but none of these things is day dawning and the day-star rising in the heart. Solemn and just as we know it is, and to be desired for God's glory and man's blessing, there is no heavenly light, brethren, in the judgment that will be executed upon the nations of the world. There is nothing here to lift the heart now from earth to Christ above, great and righteous as is the power of God that will thus deliver the godly Jews of that day and tread down the proud oppressor. It is most sure and holy, and we cannot but delight in the thought, that the day is coming when wickedness must disappear under the mighty hand of God, and the poor in spirit shall be exalted here below, and the glory of Jehovah shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea But, blessed as the prospect may be, it is the earth. Wondrous the change, and bright the condition for the world when the Lord, Jehovah-Messiah, shall be undisputed King; but it is not the heavenly joy, the Father's name, the light of heaven that has shone into us, even now; and we cannot be satisfied with anything short of it. Our hearts desire to be with Him, not merely in the place where His light shall then come, and His

glory rise, dispelling at last the darkness of the world, the gross darkness of the peoples. Then and there Israel shall be set on high, according to the sovereign choice of Jehovah, and Gentiles shall come to the light of Zion, and kings to the brightness of His rising. But for us, the hope of our hearts is the Son in the Father's house: it is to see Him, to hear Him, and be with Him there. Is this too high an expectation? Is it presumption? On the contrary it is faith, it is the real and proper hope of the Christian. It were unbelief, and to despise the love and truth of Christ, for us to be satisfied with anything less or different. He has been pleased to open this scene for us, and He is not going to close it. He has told us of heaven, and of the Father's house: we cannot rest on the earth longer, but go forth to meet the Bridegroom. (Matt. 25)

We know that He is coming to receive us to Himself, and to have us where He is, for He has told us so. (John 14) "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Ye believe in God, though you have never seen Him; I, too, am going to be invisible. I am not now about to be displayed in the world as your glorious Messiah, I am going to be unseen on high with My Father, to be simply and exclusively an object of faith in heaven. Christ was doubtless One to be believed on, and not seen only, while here below. It was faith alone that saw what was under the veil of flesh; but now He was going to be nothing but an object of faith, even as God always is. And, more than this, He discloses a new scene, He opens the door into a region of love and glory beyond all ken or thought of man. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Whoever before heard of the Father's house? Yet, divine as it is, He intimates that He spoke not of it for Himself alone. Love gives, and

delights in giving. His love delighted in giving the best; and so with this, the best and only proper sphere of the Saviour's glory, the place where He had been the eternal object of the Father's love: there will He shortly bring us. He will introduce us, strangers there, to no stranger God, to His and our Father's well-known love. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." In John 13 He lets us know how He was preparing us in every way for that place. It was not enough for Him to shed His blood for us: He must occupy Himself even in glory with us; for we are still in this world in the midst of its defilements, and thus in danger of soiling that which Christ has cleansed with His blood. No doubt such lowly persistent love is entirely beyond our nature, as it was beyond the thought of Peter when he said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But if not, he had never been prepared for a place with Christ in the Father's house. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Observe, it is not merely a part in me, or by me; it is a part "with me.'' It is communion with Christ that is in question, and by water, not here by blood. Thus John 13 is the revelation of Christ — preparing us for the place, as John 14 reveals that He is going to prepare the place for us. When all is done, He comes again. "If I go away, I will come again, and receive you unto myself" — not merely into heaven, but receive you unto myself — "that where I am, there ye may be also."

This is the Christian hope, and far beyond the word of prophecy. Search the Scriptures for yourselves. Search the word of prophecy from beginning to end; search it from Genesis to Malachi, yea, to the Apocalypse of John. Search where you will, the word of prophecy, though it

is a blessing provided of God for His people on the earth, is but a lamp for the dark place; but this is the bright light of heaven for that glorious home above where we are going. This is the suited light for the heaven from which it springs. It is of the Son bringing many sons unto glory. It is for those that are heavenly, though they be yet on the earth. It was given to mould and fashion their hearts according to that heavenly hope. By and by we shall be there with Christ ourselves, when we shall no longer need its conforming power. But we do need this blessed hope now; and while we value the prophetic word of God, we ought to value yet more — I was going to say, infinitely more — that which is the sweetest, highest, most intimate word of the Son of God revealing to us from God our Father His own house in heaven, and our place with Him there. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. To have the Christian hope before us now, and nothing short of this, is the day dawning, and the day-star arising in the heart.

We may now pass on, surveying some scriptures, as it were from a distance and briefly, in this preliminary lecture. You will find in the New Testament that we have presented the hope or the prophetic word — as the case may be — according to the exigency of the circumstances, or rather as the grace of God gave it suited to each particular case. Take for instance the epistle to the Romans. We have the Jewish question raised and answered. If God was so good as to send His gospel freely to the Gentiles, what becomes of the distinctive promises He had of old given to the Jews? These at once lead us to the word of prophecy, and there we behold in vision the display of God’s counsels for His

people Israel on the earth. The Redeemer is to come out of Zion, and to be the deliverer of the Jew. But is this the Christian hope? It is a question of Zion; it is the word of prophecy. There is no difficulty whatever in distinguishing between the peculiar proper hope of the Christian and the predicted events he cannot but expect, because they are according to the word of prophecy. In sober truth it is evident that, if I am still waiting to be delivered, if I do not know the Saviour already come and I am only looking for a deliverer to come out of Zion to take away my sins I ignore or give up Christianity altogether. The deliverer coming out of Zion, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob! Is this what you have sunk into? Undoubtedly it is where the confusion of Christian hope with the word of prophecy is in danger of carrying its victims. The instance given may be palpable; but, be assured, in one degree or another, this is the great snare as to the present subject. The effort of Satan is to Judaize the Church in everything. He is not content with assailing the foundation, and bringing in the law wholly or in part (sometimes pressing it on the utterly dark, as the only way to be saved; at other times more subtilely lowering the work of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ himself to a bare keeping the law, even when He died for our sins). If this were so, Christ on the cross was only doing His duty! What ignorance of sin and its judgment, as well as of redemption! What utter blindness to the infinite grace of Christ even in His earthly path, not to speak of His death! What preference of mere imagination to the Scriptures! Never have I read in God’s word that Christ by the law but by “the grace of God” tasted death for every creature. No doubt He accomplished the law; but was it the law that the only begotten Son should come from heaven, should be

born of the virgin, should go about doing good, and, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, should die for sinners? No; it is the express contrast of divine love with any affection of man's. Make it an affair of nothing but law, and I affirm that it is the devil blotting out and debasing the love of God as much as possible, under pretence of honouring His law. And then, as to the walk too, Satan would blind you lest you should be imitators of God as dear children. Just so would he lower the hope. Alas! it is too painfully consistent with the sounds one hears. Are there not men who declare that heaven is opened for us, in virtue not of, the precious blood of Jesus, but of the law kept or so much duty rendered in full tale? In the face of the cross, of God's most solemn judgment of sin in the agonies of the Son of God, they prefer what the law demanded, and what every man under law was bound to give. It is true and certain that Christ, as a man and an Israelite, was subject to the law, and glorified His Father here as everywhere. But is this what Scripture calls the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all them that believe? It is here Israel fell. Is this the place where the Christian is called to stand? Is this, after all, the true grace of God wherein we stand? Is it by grace through faith we are saved? Or is there some other and better way than Scripture speaks of? Even if we look at Christian practice, is there no such thing as grace giving a believer to suffer in well-doing? Or is it come to this, that the Christian walk is to be taken away too, as well as falsifying, we have seen, the foundation? Alas! it is too true. It is not surprising then that, if the enemy has sought to rob the Christian of all these, he has not failed to breathe his pestilential breath on the object of our hope also.

The allusion to Romans 11:26, 27 has shown how ruinous to the Christian would be the full adoption of the Jewish hope. But in point of fact such is, to a large extent, the hope as many view it. The consequence is, that those who receive it in any measure are just in the same proportion uncertain whether, after all, the Lord has taken away their sins or not. They are still seeking, anon striving, often repenting, ever learning, and never seeming to come to the knowledge of the truth. God (blessed be His name!) is more faithful to them than they are to Him or His truth. Assuredly His mercy endures for ever! He pities His children thus painfully beguiled, and refuses to take them at their word. Assuredly He will bring them through, spite of their unscriptural conceits. But it is none the less a watchman's duty to put every soul on his guard against the Judaizing that is going on, — against the words and ways of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not but do lie. One can scarce name a single branch of Christian truth which they do not darken, deny, or destroy, to the detriment of God's honour, and to the lowering of His Christ.

In Rom. 13:11, 12, the character and the proximity of "the day" are pressed as motives to holy earnestness in our practical ways. It is already time "to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us cast off, therefore, the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." It is ours to walk becomingly as in daylight.

As to the rest of the epistles, we find the coming of the Lord according to prophecy, or according to the Christian hope — just as the context requires. Thus, in 1

Corinthians, our Lord's revelation (not "coming") is presented in 1 Cor. 1:7. It will then be seen how each gift has been used. — The apostle exhorts them (1 Cor. 4:5) not to judge till the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God. Before that it is vain to expect praise, and wrong to judge dark things. — So again we find the Lord's coming presented in connection with the remembrance of Him in the Eucharist. (1 Cor. 11) It is our congregational hope, so to speak, and not individual only, and thus in strict keeping with the Epistle. Then (1 Cor. 15) we have the resurrection of those who are Christ's, bound up with His coming when they reign with Him over a delivered earth, not with the white throne before which the rest of the dead stand and are judged, nor with "the end" when all judgment is over, and He gives up the kingdom and God is all in all. Thus, you see, we have light cast upon each part of the Christian walk and the truth, all that God saw to be then needed by the saints addressed, yea by saints at all times.

Take again indirect allusions to the coming of the Lord. Some brethren were going to law one with another. (1 Cor. 6) What is the weapon of the apostle? Is it merely the unbecoming sight of brother suing brother before a court of law? The apostle urges not the moral propriety which any one ought to feel, but lets in the light of that day upon the litigants. "Do ye not know," he says, "that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" How could they then go before the world to be judged? He

shames them by the incongruity of Christians, the future judges of the world, seeking its judgment upon their matters. May I venture to say, that the incongruity of the Christian going before the world to punish the world was a thought reserved for a day of yet darker confusion? — From the next chapter, again, we learn that there were some who wanted to better their condition then — slaves, who were impatient to be free; men and women, who were in a hurry to change their condition by marrying, etc. What is the language of the apostle? what does the Holy Ghost counsel? “The time is short.” The moral was plain to the Christian; the great truth of the Lord’s coming underlies it. Be it that trial abounds: if He is at hand, why be anxious? why let your will work? What matter the circumstances of the present time? It is not merely that the Lord can lead the master to give his slave liberty, which he may use, value, and be thankful for. But if not, what then? The Christian slave has already a better emancipation, and soon the scene will be over; “for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

Thus we see the large use which is made of the Lord’s coming, and the manner in which it insinuates itself into the most ordinary matter in hand. The indirect mingling of that truth with the various elements of the Christian life I conceive to be very important to take note of in reading the word of God. The apostle assumes it as a truth constantly before the eyes of the saints. So far from being a debateable matter, or, even if allowed, an uninfluential theory, it was, on the contrary, the great living hope which suffering believers had and needed to sustain them, which filled them with joy, patience, triumph, and heavenly separateness. (Acts 3:19-21;

Rom. 8:18-25; Phil. 1:6, 10; Phil. 2:16; Col. 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:27, 28; Heb. 10:25, 37; James 5:8, 9; 1 Peter 1:5, 7, 13; 1 Peter 4:7, 13; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 2:28; Jude 14, 24.)

You will tell me perhaps, that Paul and the early Christians were mistaken in thus expecting Christ from day to day. (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:17; Phil. 3:20, 21; 4:5.) Is it possible that such language can come from the lips of a Christian man? The apostle mistaken! Nay; but he reaped the blessing of his hope in his soul every day. Was his power of gracious endurance, and of separation from the world, was this a mistake too? No; it is you who make the statement who are yourselves mistaken. And sure I am that you reap no blessing from your hope; otherwise you would know, that never is the soul mistaken in looking for Christ. Does the apostle anywhere intimate that Christ was coming at any particular date? In the word of God there is no fixing of years or days for His coming to receive us to Himself. No system is right which takes it for granted. But is it wrong therefore to wait for Christ? Do you object that Christ did ut this does not weaken the hope. The apostle has only changed his place of waiting. He is not the less (perhaps, the more) waiting for Christ because he is now with Christ. He has not given his hope up. That blessed man of God then made no mistake, none whatever in this respect. The only difference, we have seen, is, that he now waits in heaven for Christ to come, instead of awaiting Him upon the earth; and who can doubt that that is much the better of the two? Thus you see that, instead of the apostle having missed his way, the only error is on the part of unbelief, which ventures to judge where God calls us to delight in

a precious and purifying truth. No, Christ is still coming, and coming quickly: in this hope the apostle lived and died.

And why is it that the Lord has not come? Is it because He is slack concerning His promise? The Spirit of God has refuted the libel firmly, lovingly, solemnly. (2 Peter 3) His purposes of grace alone hinder for the moment. He is bent on saving souls. He shrinks, so to say, from exchanging the present work of salvation for the strange work of judgment. He wants to fill heaven with the guests of grace that are suited to it; but He is not slack concerning His promise. Whatever scoffers may say, the day of the Lord will come as a thief.

The eminently practical power of the hope of the Lord's coming, in purifying the heart and ways, is shown in 1 John 3:3: "Every man that hath this hope in Him" (i.e. founded on Christ) "purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Scripture never uses the coming of Christ to weaken present responsibility to the Lord in holiness. We too often hear people say now-a-days, "Oh, you cannot expect a perfect church; when Christ comes, He will set all to rights. Such language, such thoughts, never came from the Spirit of God. Do you believe that Christ may come at any time; and can you, with that hope as a present thing before you, go on with what you know to be wrong? Do you believe that Christ, when He comes, will not only correct what is wrong, but sanction and approve your allowance of it? Is this the way of one espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ? I should have thought that the bride, who was living and looking for the bridegroom, if conscious of anything amiss that could not suit the beloved's eye and heart, would be animated by the power of her love and her hope enough

to leave nothing undone to please him that she expected to come, — she knew not how soon. And if this holds good in earthly relationship, is it not true of the saint in view of Christ's coming? It is the way of easy-going unbelief to shrink from the cross and every present duty on the plea that, when Christ comes, He will set all to rights; but it is to abuse, not to believe, the truth. Indifference to His will now, in presence of the full revelation of His mind in the word, is the clear evidence that the heart is filled, not with the hope, the true and blessed hope of His coming, but with our own vain imaginations about it. It is the proof that we are feeding on husks, on mere phantom or shadow, and not on the truth itself.

In a similar way we might refer to the epistles minutely, indeed to all save Galatians, Ephesians, and Philemon; but time would fail even to glance at much that is given us. The last book of the New Testament largely deals with both these subjects — the word of prophecy in the central parts of it, and the Christian hope after the visions are ended. (Rev. 22:7, 12, 16, 17, 20.) This I only indicate in a general way; for one need not say more on the present occasion. Other opportunities will offer, if it please God, in which we may meet together and examine what the Scripture discloses to us on the more important branches of this large subject. May He deign to bless His own truth now, and to prepare hearts for the fuller understanding and enjoyment of His word through the Holy Spirit; that He may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.

The Jews in relation to the Coming of the Lord

Lecture 2 - Matt. 23:37-39.

Our Saviour's words seem to me to be clear and conclusive. They meet a notion that prevails too largely even among the children of God — the notion that God has done with the Jew as such; that there is no longer a hope for them, as a nation; that they are merely to be converted individually now, or it may be later on multitudinously, as Christians through the preaching of the gospel, to be brought into the membership of the body of Christ, and joined with the Gentiles who believe in the Saviour, so as to form one body. Clearly too our Saviour was here not speaking of the gospel or any word of God that was about to proceed from Him seated at the right hand of God. He speaks of Jerusalem, loved but guilty Christ-rejecting Jerusalem; He speaks of that city, the holy city in title, but in fact the rebellious city, the once idolatrous city, that had killed saints and prophets, that was now summing up her guilt in the cross of her own Messiah. Yet to Jerusalem, as such, our Lord makes known that she would repent and welcome the now despised King as surely as desolation was to be her portion meanwhile, yea, of the very house, once the house of God, but now degraded before God (He, the Lord who has all rights, being disowned). Thus the Saviour puts it: "Your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

And what or whose faith is this? Of Christians now? or of Jews by and by? “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!” The Christian faith is, that He has come, that He has died, and is now risen and glorified. Not so does the Lord speak of the shape which the faith in question is to take. I say not that they will not identify their coming Messiah with Him who suffered on the cross, but that distinctly and unmistakeably our Saviour carries them back to the ancient oracles, and applies that word to them written in the 118th Psalm, which looks for Israel to be blessed, but Israel blessed in the coming of Him who was rejected by the builders, the masterbuilders The despised Messiah is no longer refused, but on the contrary most welcome to their hearts, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!” The passage therefore is equally definite in showing that, if the present Jerusalem and her temple were to be left desolate, all that was her distinctive glory being taken from her, and this at the word of the Saviour Himself, yet the time would come when their hearts would desire Him, saying, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” Jerusalem is not forsaken for ever. He who left her to herself, to her sin and shame in refusing Him, even He is our warrant for knowing that the self-same people and city will look for Him, hail Him, and have provided for their song in the utterance of their faith the great Hallel.1 What a proof that God has in no wise abandoned His people; that He will make good every word He has uttered about them; that, although for a time there is a painful gap, and Israel is forsaken of her Lord apparently, and in a sense really too, yet in truth, as His heart yearned over her in the midst and in spite of her sin, so her heart will turn to

Him in that blessed day when His people shall be "willing in the day of his power." (Ps. 110)

This then is our Lord's own answer to the thoughts of men. If we search the doctrinal unfoldings of the New Testament, we shall find that the Holy Ghost affirms the same great truth, and in the same epistle where, above all others, He insists on the indiscriminate grace of God in the gospel I do not speak now of such an epistle as that to the Ephesians, where the heavenly character of the Church as an entirely new thing leaves out of sight the thoughts and hopes of Israel. But let us take the epistle to the Romans, which makes it so much the more striking, because unquestionably the Jew by and by will be saved by the same Saviour, by the same sacrifice will be set apart to God. Yet it is in Romans that the Spirit of God gives us the truth of God as to this, elaborately laid down with the utmost possible distinctness. All is set before the saints from His perfect mind. We have dispensation in the epistle to the Romans, and there we find the Gentiles brought in as such now. This led to the question, Has God cast away His people? What people? Clearly not Christians. On the contrary God was only then gathering such believers, not casting them out. What people then are in question? The Jews, and none other. The answer is, that He has not cast them away. The apostle gives various proofs that there is no abandonment save for a time. There is a limit, just as we have before seen, "until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh." So here we find the Holy Ghost confirming the same blessed truth, and we are shown on several plain grounds that the Holy Ghost distinctly looks onward to the gathering together of Israel as a people unto the Lord.. It is the blessing of the Jew as such, after the Lord

has closed His present work and calling from the Gentiles.

Hence, inasmuch as it is a question of the dispensation of God upon the earth, we have the figure of the olive tree introduced — not the one body of Christ, but an old thing, which had begun in early days — begun indeed, I may say, before Israel in him who was the father of Israel. Accordingly the olive tree appears before us with certain of its branches — the unfaithful Jewish branches — broken off, and the wild olive of the Gentile grafted in. Next, the Spirit of God intimates that, for the Gentiles, all turns upon their faithfulness, upon their continuance in God's goodness. That is, it is a question of dispensation. Where it is an outflow of saving mercy, where it is simply the sovereign grace of God, there could be no such question as the condition of the faithfulness of the people; but, inasmuch as it is evidently the course of God's dealing upon the earth, it is made known to them that they stand by faith, that they stand only in the goodness of God. They are admonished to take warning by the severity God has used towards the Jews, and to hold fast their trust: otherwise they also should be cut off.

Then we have more than this. In the same chapter (Romans 11) the argument of the apostle makes it perfectly plain that the Spirit of God contemplates nothing less than all Israel, brought in as a people to the enjoyment of their ancient and cherished hopes, though upon the ground of the sovereign mercy of God, and therefore with a real work of the Holy Ghost in their souls. The argument in the eleventh verse is this: "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the

Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." The actual blessing of Gentiles by the gospel was in no wise to leave the Jews for ever outside the promises of God as a nation. You must remember, there was nothing in the mind of God, or indeed of the saints at that time, to forbid the thought that many individuals of the Jews would be brought in meanwhile by the faith of Jesus. The fact is, a very large portion of the believers then living were Jews; certainly in the places where the gospel was first preached, they formed the great majority of those who bore His name. The work was extending among the Gentiles, and, no doubt, in no long time, the Gentiles that believed far outnumbered the Jews; but still, in the earlier days of evangelisation, it is plain that the mass of professors were from the nation of Israel. Therefore, manifestly, it was no question at all of God's mercy to individuals out of Israel. The only point to decide was, whether God had abandoned Israel as a people. The answer distinctly negatives such a conclusion. If His mercy now went out to the Gentiles, it was to provoke Israel to jealousy in the long run, it was to win back the nation as such. "Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?" Then, instead of seeing a mere remnant of believers separate from the main body of the Jews, there should be a nation born of God, an entire people publicly enjoying all that God had promised, and, by faith, knowing the sweetness of the promises infinitely more because they had found their King, as well as their forgiveness, in that very Saviour whom they had before despised, rejected, and crucified. Accordingly, in the latter part of the chapter, he gives us no longer the fact of a remnant as a witness that God had not definitively

cast off Israel as a whole, no longer a process of reasoning from the end of provoking Israel to jealousy, but the most distinct textual proof from direct prophecy. He says: “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits” [the very danger of Christendom and the snare into which it has fallen]; “that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” What doctrine or deduction can be plainer? It is certain, from the language of the Holy Ghost, not merely that there shall be a vast accession to the remnant of believers out of the Jews (for this is not the matter in hand), but that there is the surest warrant from the word of God that the nation, as such, shall yet be blessed. “All Israel shall be saved.” It is in contrast with a mere remnant.

Thus we find the Spirit of God citing this portion of Isaiah as authority, and adding the most conclusive reason why it cannot be a part of the present work of God in gathering out the Church of God. In the Church, the Jew and the Gentile, as such, are unknown; there the distinction has entirely disappeared. Here, on the contrary, you have “all Israel” saved, in contrast with the divine action that is now going forth toward the Gentiles, where a remnant of Jews coalesces with a mass of Gentiles This is in progress now, and in Christ, in the

Church, the distinction does not exist. Whereas, on the contrary, when God has finished His present work, all Israel shall be saved. This entirely explains the language of verse 28, “Enemies, as concerning the Gospel” — an expression which could not be used if it were by the gospel as now preached. No doubt in that bright day they will be brought into reconciliation; but then it will be by a distinct work of God. It will be, not by a message which supposes the distinction of Jew and Gentile at an end as in that which God is doing now, because He is acting from Christ at the right hand of God, where Jewish and Gentile distinctions have no place. But God, after this work is done, takes up the links of the ancient promises and prophecies, and brings them home to Israel by the power of the Spirit, so that the whole nation shall be saved.

I have used therefore these two scriptures as a kind of introduction, before we look at the prophecies of the Old Testament which refer to this weighty subject. I hope to show, as far as the limits of a single evening will permit, what will precede the real work of God in restoring Israel and bringing them into a true Spirit-taught knowledge of redemption.

The prophet Isaiah presents the fullest revelation of God’s ways with His people. In Isaiah 1 we have a moral pleading between God and Israel. Throughout it is the same Jerusalem; but first Jerusalem is viewed as no better than Sodom and Gomorrah. The faithful city was become a harlot. It was full of judgment, but now murderers were there. “Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves.” There can be no question what city is meant. Certainly it is not the heavenly Jerusalem;

but the literal, historical, earthly Jerusalem is regarded as already corrupt, becoming more and more rebellious, about to be altogether apostate. “Therefore (ver. 24) saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: and I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.” Can any fair-minded person affirm or conceive that there has ever been even the appearance of an accomplishment of this moral restoration? It was uttered considerably more than a century before the wickedness of Jerusalem was such that God could tolerate it no more. Then Judah was carried away into captivity to Babylon. Has there been anything since answering to this promise? Doubtless a small body of Jews returned from that captivity; but was Zion restored as at the beginning? Was Jerusalem at any time afterwards “the city of righteousness?” On the contrary, did they not come back feeble and few, a poor broken remnant, the slaves and prey of Gentile lords? Did they not incur after that the further and deeper guilt of rejecting their own Messiah?

But this is not all. The second chapter gives us a view of the restoration that is really intended, certain features of which make plain whether it has been accomplished, or whether, on the contrary, we have still to look forward and wait. “The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of Jehovah’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains,

and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." There are those who interpret passages like this in the mystic sense of converts to Christ gathered out of the Gentiles by the gospel, and brought into the church; but let us read a little farther. "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob." Now, does not the gospel go out to souls? Is it not so that the Lord now works? Does He not send out His servants with the glad tidings to every creature? Is it not in the most precise contrast with such a gathering as this to an earthly centre? Is there not the activity of grace in the apostolic mission? It is not waiting for souls to gather to Jerusalem, or anywhere else on earth, but, on the contrary, going out to them, as it is said, "Neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father; but they that worship must worship in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." In "the hour that now is" we have this excluded. In the prophecy of Isaiah the gathering of nations is to an earthly metropolis, to Jerusalem, to that mountain. That is, our Lord describes the Christian order of things in terms as pointedly in contrast, it seems to me, as could well be conceived. The prophet contemplates another day, a totally different scene. Nothing has answered to it since Isaiah uttered these words. The gospel, we have seen, which is the only active work of God's grace that there has been since, is in contrast with it, instead of being its accomplishment. But there is even more. We have here the law going forth out of Zion. It is clearly not the gospel, but the living oracles, as of old. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law." I do not understand by this that it is merely a question of the ten commandments, but the revelation

as God gave it before the cross — a revelation founded on the promise of exalting the people of God on the earth, and of maintaining them as a centre of blessing for the nations when Messiah shall reign. Such seems to my mind its clear unequivocal character. Mark what follows. “He shall judge among the nations.” It is not the revelation of One who, in grace toward sinners, though as a basis of divine righteousness withal, bore the judgment of sin upon the cross. He will be King then, King not of Israel only, but of nations also, as it is in Jeremiah 10, and should be in Revelation 15. Here, however, it is rather a question of judicial authority, exercised in respect of them, and assuredly it will be in contrast with what He is doing now. “He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares.” Need I say that there has been no accomplishment of such words as these? Need I insist, that even the so-called Christian nations are rather the leaders and chiefs in the invention of every kind of implement for mutual destruction? Is this beating swords into plowshares? The contrary is the fact in this age most evidently. But the age is coming when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning- hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Let any one compare this with what our Saviour Himself utters (Matt. 24) immediately after the portion of Scripture we began with tonight. You will find that from the mount of Olives He, instructing the disciples in what they were to expect, distinctly says that nation should rise against nation, that they were to look for wars and rumours of wars. Can this then be the same time as that intended in Isaiah 2? How are we to decide then? Make them to be the same time, and you

set the Old Testament against the New; distinguish the periods, and the balance of truth is restored. Both are true, Old Testament prophet and New Testament apostle; both were divinely inspired. The Lord, embracing that which, while going on to the end of the age, more or less was at hand for His disciples, conclusively shows that the character of the world should not be changed yet; that it was only the testimony, the gospel of the kingdom, that was now going forth, not the kingdom itself set up in power and judging the habitable earth, as it is said, “He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people.” As yet it was no more than the witness borne to it, it was the working of His Spirit by the word of God; but this in no wise alters the face of things here below as a whole. Only individuals are brought to the knowledge of Himself, and saved everywhere out of all nations; but as to the nations themselves, instead of being rebuked they have abused and insulted the goodness of God, they have refused to bow to the divine testimony, and, their passions being unchanged, they rise against each other, learning, teaching, and carrying on war and every ambitious scheme with as much zest and impetus as ever. So it has been, so it is to this very day. And what, then, of this early prophecy of Isaiah? Never having been accomplished to this hour, it remains to be accomplished. Nothing more simple. Everything falls into its place when we leave time and space for the working out of the magnificent ways of God.

Thus, without dwelling upon each chapter, though there is hardly one that would not furnish evidence, if it were needed, upon the subject, I would refer to chapter 4 as a striking picture in contrast with anything that God is

doing now. “And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” That is, the prophet foreshows a condition where men will have been cut off by the judgment of God, where there has been a fearful desolation by divine judgment. “In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious.” Judgment proceeds, and then there is the breaking forth of the branch of Jehovah into beauty and glory. “The fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel; and it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.” It is to be a real work of God. No Christian should allow the thought of a mere carnal restoration, or of anything which could be achieved by the revolutions of the political wheel.. But it is not, on the other hand, the effect of preaching the gospel as now. “That nation” will once more come into prominence, and in their own land — at least the escaped of Israel. It will be souls blessed of God, but at the same time blessed as the seed of Jacob in the earth, “When Jehovah shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” Is this the gospel — “the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning?” “And Jehovah will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night.” What delusion to spend our time and breath vainly imagining how the Spirit of God is thus at work now? Is there anything in the least degree resembling

it? “For upon all the glory shall be a defence.” Now, on the contrary, the power of God is put forth not in defending the witnesses of His grace, but in nerving the Christian to suffer, in strengthening him to endure with joy as well as patience. Here, on the other hand, it is an openly displayed and glorious vindication of His people, so long broken down, when all war and trouble are ended. It is another state of things altogether. “There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” Are we to fritter away the blessed word of God? Are we to suppose that this really means spiritual comfort for souls? Surely souls will be blessed by its spirit now; but every word of the Lord shall be fulfilled, and Israel shall be His witnesses when glory shines on the earth.

Without dwelling on the intervening chapters, I would point your attention to the opening of chap. 9, where we have a prophecy partially accomplished. It may serve as an instance of that which is very common throughout the Old Testament. “Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.” As I apprehend, the Spirit of God shows a much more severe affliction coming upon that land than would be under the king of Babylon. The Roman, the last great power of the Gentiles, was to be the instrument of an affliction incomparably more intense. This furnishes occasion for the Spirit of God to bring in a partial application to Christ, because it was under the fourth empire that our Lord appeared. Consequently there was

readiness for the final scene. At any rate there was One who brought them in light divine, and this into Galilee; as it is said here, by the way of the sea, Galilee of the nations. “The people, that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” This is the point that the Spirit of God applies in the New Testament; and nothing can be more simple; but then He does not apply what was not accomplished. Then let us read on: “Thou hast multiplied the nation, and [let me refer now to the margin] increased the joy to him: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of the oppressor, as in the day of Midian.” Is this, too, fulfilled? When was there any appearance of it? Under Pompey, under Augustus, under Tiberius, under Titus? What took place then? When the Romans came up, was the rod of the oppressor broken? On the contrary, did it not fall more heavily, and without the smallest intervention from God? Did the predicted facts occur? “For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.” The Spirit of God here most clearly looks onward to the time when the crisis should be no longer a mere clash of earthly arms, but another character of conflict, God dealing with burning fuel of fire. It is evidently judgment, not the judgment of men before God’s throne, but His dealing with them when He destroys the enemies of His people Israel. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the Father of eternity, the Prince of Peace.”

Unquestionably the King in person, the Messiah, appeared under the Caesars; but the Jews rejected Him, and the kingdom was postponed. Hence the execution of judgment awaits another day, and blessing shall follow according to all the promises of God. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” The passage proves, that before Jehovah establishes the kingdom of David that is spoken of here, there must be not the mere shock of human armies, but the Lord smiting, consuming destroying the enemies of His people. This has never yet been, but rather the contrary. Instead of the Jews being delivered by divine judgment, and their enemies overthrown in a manner wholly exceptional and suitable to the action of God Himself, the Romans were permitted to destroy Jerusalem and to sweep away the Jews from the face of their land, carrying off those they spared, and dispersing them over the earth even unto this day. There has been no semblance of the accomplishment of the prophecy.

Let us turn now to Isaiah 11. We have there the same Messiah without doubt. There is no question as to this. All, whether Jews or Christians, admit beyond controversy that here we have Messiah described. The question is as to the character of His kingdom. But read from verse 4, “With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” Is this an adequate account of the ways of the Lord in the gospel? Is He not meeting His enemies now? Is He not emphatically saving the lost? How does “judging” or “reproving with equity” meet the case? Doubtless to the

poor the gospel is preached; but here it is righteous rule controlling and blessing the earth, not salvation by grace gathering souls for heaven. Our chapter, therefore, is in no true sense a description of what the Holy Ghost sets Himself to do for the glory of the name of Christ at this present time. Here it is judging, it is the functions of a king — of One reigning in equity. It is a state of things differing entirely from the present. What will further confirm it is the connected word that "He shall smite the earth." Does the gospel as such contemplate this? "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he [not quicken souls by the grace of God, but] slay the wicked." Can it be doubted that the mystical interpretation is completely set aside by the use which the Spirit of God makes of this verse in 2 Thess. 2:8, where the apostle Paul quotes it? To what is it applied? To the gospel? Not to the consequences of Christ's first coming, not to the grace God sends out now the message of Christ founded upon the cross, but expressly and exclusively to the manifestation of Christ's coming, the bright shining out of His second advent, when He shall deal with the lawless one.

Thus we have a divine warrant for our interpretation of the prophecy. We learn from the apostle that the Lord at His appearing, when He sets up this kingdom, will introduce His power into the earth by a literal smiting, by a judgment that destroys. Allow me to add, for the sake of any who may not be familiar with these subjects, that from Isaiah 30:28-33 a distinct light is cast upon the expression, "spirit of his mouth" in 2 Thess. 2. The breath of the Lord's mouth is not compared to the mercy of the gospel, but is the expression of His anger and

indignation. It is “like a stream of brimstone.” In other words, this is divine unsparing judgment of the wicked, while the gospel is God’s glad tidings of grace to the wicked, winning them to God by the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, not their consumption by the vengeance of Jehovah.

Before going farther, let me call your attention to a few more points in the chapter, without anticipating that which will come before us in a future lecture. “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people.” What is the force of this “second time,” if you turn aside the stream of prophecy from Israel? Give it its plain, unadulterated meaning, and what can be clearer? Jehovah had once redeemed His people from Egypt: He will deliver them a second time. This is not the only reference to His bringing the people out of a house of bondage. The close of the chapter repeats the allusion. “He shall set his hand the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah.” Where and when has there been any approach to a fulfilment of this prophecy? “The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.” Thus it will not only be a national restoration in the fullest

sense (the ten tribes as well as the two tribes, or “all Israel” according to the doctrinal statement of the New Testament), but, besides, there will be a great spiritual action upon souls; there will be the removal by the grace of God of all strife, rivalry, vexation, and envy between the different portions of Israel. It will be a work in every part of it worthy of the mighty transforming goodness of God Himself. But, further, it is said that “Jehovah shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.” No just principle of interpretation can be applied to this chapter without confessing the plain meaning of a future restoration of Israel as such by the power of God in the latter day. That which would here sanction its application to Christianity, if carried out fully elsewhere, would shake to the very foundations the whole truth of God as revealed in the Bible. Neither verses 6-9 nor verse 14 can be regarded as serious difficulties by those who look for a vast relief for the lower creation under the last Adam, and the re-appearing of ancient races, when Israel’s restoration becomes the question once more.

So, again, in Isaiah 14, we find that Jehovah will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah for servants and handmaids: and they

shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that Jehovah shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb. In vain one asks where anything in the past answers to this predicted turn of mercy's tide towards Israel.

Another portion of deep interest in some sort will be found in Isaiah 18, especially as the time hastens when it will find its accomplishment. You will have noticed how, in passages already brought before you, Jehovah is said to set His hand to the restoration of His people. It would be a mistake to suppose that the only thing disclosed in prophecy is that divine intervention on their behalf. Degraded as are the Jews, scattered up and down the earth, they are more than ever pining after their own land. No doubt there are differences, and some share, if they do not lead, in the rapidly increasing rationalism of the present day; but in those who have not abandoned in every respect the thoughts and aspirations of Israel, there are symptoms of a restless uneasy but strong feeling in the direction of their own land. This chapter shows, that as Israel will desire to return there in their own strength, and after their own wisdom, as they will endeavour to settle themselves there, so they will go down for help to some unnamed Gentile nation. "Woe" (or rather "Ho!") "to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia" (Cush). This means beyond the limits that Israel of old had to do with. There were two famous rivers, both of them called rivers of Cush, the Nile on the one hand, and the Euphrates on the other. A people

beyond either of those rivers will undertake the task of protector to Israel: it will set its hand to bring them safely and settle them under its patronage in their own land. This people is further described as a maritime power, by figures drawn, of course, from that which was familiar to the Jews in those days. It is a land “that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto.” The nation spoken of as “terrible from their beginning hitherto,” is obviously the Jewish people, who are said to be “meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled.” All the world knows how they have suffered from the oppression of enemies. “All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet.” God calls upon the nations to observe what He is doing, and not only what He does, but rather what they are doing, when He is but a spectator of their ways. The moment is critical, and dangers loom to all. “For so Jehovah said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches.” Things promise well. It looks as if all were hastening to the desired accomplishment of Israel’s hopes. But it is only the sour grapes; there is no real ripening of fruit for Jehovah to taste. Jehovah will act then; but as yet it is to blow on the hasty plan. He cuts down without sparing, and brings to nought all hope of restoration by the

interference of men. He judges everything that betokened the readiness of the Jews, as they might conceive, for the latter-day blessing. He will not own Gentiles in presuming to be instruments of accomplishing His people's deliverance. "They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth." The nations are untrustworthy: vain is the help of man. The Gentiles will turn once more from Israel, and oppress them; they will devour and ravage as before. "And the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them." Is this, then, the end of Israel? Have their hopes, excited after a carnal fashion, and sought to be made good by human policy, for ever come to nought thus under the judgment of God? Nay, "In that time shall the present be brought unto Jehovah of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, the mount Zion." It is the hour for Jehovah to work by His hand. But, as in other cases so in this, man first tries his competency to bring about the purpose of God, and so entails utter ruin upon all. But Jehovah at that time will receive Israel and lead them to mount Zion. To Jehovah shall the present be brought of a people and from a people scattered and peeled. They shall bring a present and at the same time be a present, to Jehovah of hosts in mount Zion.

Such is the clear statement of the Spirit. This prepares us for human methods of restoring Israel, and is an important safeguard for the children of God now, lest they should be excited by rumours here or there of great things for the Jews. The believer should have no

confidence in any plans of men for the bringing of Israel into their own land. God is not working to that end; He is gathering souls out of Israel as He is out of the Gentiles; for Christ is still at God's right hand in heaven. When He has done the heavenly work, He will permit man in his confidence to think he can repair the ruins of Zion, and gather back the dispersed of Israel; but all will prove fruitless in the pride of man. Gentile affection for Israel will be proved utterly worthless; but just when all appears to fail more hopelessly than ever, at that time Jehovah will accomplish His long-deferred purposes. All this again declares, in the strongest possible way, that Israel must be restored; but first there will be an attempt to restore themselves, through the help of the Gentiles, and its entire failure, the issue of which will be to bring upon them Antichrist; and this again will be the signal for other Gentiles to pour down as a scourge upon the Jewish people. All the birds and beasts of prey from among the nations break loose upon them, because of their apostasy as well as presumption; for idols and Antichrist will be set up in Jerusalem and the holy place; and because these abominations find shelter there, a desolator shall be (I presume the Assyrian), even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate, i.e. upon Jerusalem. (Dan. 9:27)

Of course I cannot enter into all the proofs of this tonight, nor indeed do I propose to attempt curious detail in this course of lectures; but we may turn to two or three other chapters of our prophet before we have done. In chapter 24 we have the closing scene of this age. "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be

removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again." Perhaps there are some here disposed to think this the end of the world, or the dissolution of all things. But read the next verse, and judge for yourselves. "And it shall come to pass in that day [it is not eternity you see, but "that day"], that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth." I am only leaving out the words in italics which have no business here whatever. The arena of evil is also that of retribution. "And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed" [figurative language I admit], "when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." In a word, it is not the passing away of the heavens and earth that now are, and the introduction of the new heaven and earth in the final sense. It is a figure of it, no doubt, and such as actually appears in Isa. 65, Isa. 66, but no more. Nothing can be more certain than that here we have, not the reigning in life (Rom. 5) such as will be throughout eternity, as a general expression of a glorious state before God through the Lord Jesus, but an earthly scene, however blessed and glorious too. It is Zion or Jerusalem, over which Jehovah reigns, after He has punished the hosts of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth. It is not in any sense the great white throne judgment and the eternal condition connected with it; but it is the introduction of "that day" in the blessing and glory of God for the earth, and specially for the people of Israel.

This is entirely confirmed by what follows. Isaiah 25 tells us, “Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” The reference is clearly to that same time of trouble, when the Gentiles summer and winter upon Israel, according to the language of Isaiah 18 “Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well relined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and Jehovah God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.” This scripture is the more to be weighed, because of the quotation in 1 Cor. 15:54. Hence it appears on apostolic authority that the epoch of the resurrection of the righteous is bound up with the return and deliverance of Israel, as well as with the millennial blessing of all nations. “If the casting away of them [the Jews] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”

In the next chapter we have yet more. “In the way of thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for thee” — it is Israel’s song in answer to these dealings of God — “ the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the

remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." It is not the gospel in the world calling souls out of it to heaven, but the judgments of God that are in the earth, and then the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. "Let favour be showed the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.'' This is notoriously the result of the gospel where it is refused, as man treats it without faith. He hears of the full favour of God, but despises it. The consequence is that the Lord will let fall His heavy hand in judgment, and the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. "Jehovah, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." I need not dwell upon the verses that follow. They may come before us more appropriately upon another occasion, and for another purpose; but this may suffice to show not only that the Israelites are to be gathered as a people, but further, that it will be introduced by divine judgments which separate "that day" from all the past. Jehovah will deal with those wicked spirits that seek to corrupt every blessing of God, if it were possible; He will also put down everything that is high and lifted up on the earth. Then and thus will Israel be brought into that which they long for, but long for as yet after a carnal sort, impenitent and unbelieving as they are.

Isaiah 27 closes this section of the prophecy, and is most explicit. "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.... And it shall come to pass in that day,

that Jehovah shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." (Verses 6, 12, 13.) To refer all this to the Christian or the Church is untenable: apply it to the Lord's dealing with the Jews brought into their land, after He has translated us to heaven, and all is transparent.

The next chapters (Isa. 28 - 35) dwell on the special circumstances of the trial and triumph of the Jews at the end of the age, their internal evils which exposed them to such severe discipline, the blessed change introduced by the reign of the Messiah, the judgments executed on their enemies, and the character of the times of restitution of all things. Then follows the historical episode (Isa. 35 - 39) — the invasion and overthrow of the Assyrian in the person of Sennacherib, the sickness well-nigh to death but revival of the Son of David (Hezekiah), and the announcement of the captivity in Babylon. The rest of the book (Isa. 40 - 66) has important sections also, on which it is not now the time to dilate. Suffice it to say, for the purpose in hand, that the last eight chapters are an almost continuous tissue of evidence to the future blessing of Israel as such, and therefore, on principles essentially distinguished from the indiscriminate grace which is characteristic of the gospel. The end of Isa. 59 is the scripture cited by the apostle in Romans 11, and itself decisive of the question. While the gospel is going out now, they are evident

enemies: when “that day” comes, they will with repentant hearts turn to the Messiah, who will come to and out of Zion, and all Israel shall be saved — the proof that they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes, and that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The past of Jewish history fails to meet this prophecy; so does the present work of God in the gospel. The glory of the Church by-and-by issuing in resurrection is quite distinct. There remains the future restoration and blessedness of Israel here below. This alone fulfils the exigencies of the word.

Then how rich as well as distinct is Isaiah 60 “Arise shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but Jehovah shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of Jehovah thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night;

that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee, The city of Jehovah, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." A perverted eye can alone account for missing the force of declarations so plainly converging on Israel's blessing in that day, in contrast with heavenly grace in Christ now appropriated through faith while the Jews are for the most part blinded. And this is in no way weakened, but confirmed, by the striking use our Lord made of Isaiah 61, as recorded in Luke 4; for, as is well known, He closed the book after reading the first clause of verse 2, though it was not even the end of a sentence. He thus marked how far there was an accomplishment. His first advent proclaimed the acceptable year of Jehovah: only at His second coming will the day of vengeance of our God begin. Then the two appear together. Between them Christianity, properly so called, has come in, founded on the rejection, death, and resurrection of Christ, and calling souls out from the world meanwhile to have their portion in and with Christ in heaven. This done, and they glorified with their Head, He will link the acceptable year of Jehovah with the day of God's vengeance, judge the quick at His appearing, set up His kingdom manifestly over the earth, and bless His ancient chosen people, who will then be the head, and the Gentiles the tail. "Ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah; men shall

call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves... All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed." (See especially Isa. 62, Isa. 65, Isa. 66)

Jeremiah, though less copious in visions of coming glory, and more characterized by moral appeals to the conscience than Isaiah, presents ample testimony to the bright future of Israel in their own land. Thus, Jeremiah 3 points to the time when the most sacred associations in the Mosaic institute shall pale before the actual blessing from the Lord. "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers." (vv. 17, 18.) Compare also Jeremiah 23:5-8, where it is declared that the first deliverance from Egypt shall be eclipsed by a future and far mightier recovery from all the lands where the Jews are still dispersed, the whole people being specified, Judah and Israel. The raising up of their long-expected King, the righteous Branch, also excludes all notion of the return from Babylon, as well as of the Spirit's way under the gospel. Still fuller, as well as more precise, are Jeremiah 30 - 33. The great day of Jacob's trouble, which precedes their deliverance and the humiliation of their Gentile oppressors, is yet future. They are far as yet from serving the Lord their God, and David their king, raised up of God unto them. "Behold, the days come, saith

Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," etc. — It is important to observe, that the Apostle, in citing this passage in Heb. 8 and 10, does not speak of the new covenant as our proper portion, still less denies (what the prophet affirmed) that it will be made good to Israel under their Messiah in His coming kingdom. The first citation is to prove the perpetuity of the first covenant an error; for the mention of a new covenant makes the first old, and ready to vanish away. The second citation is simply to show from its terms an inspired witness to the grand truth, that God, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, remembers our sins no more, — the very reverse of the action of the old covenant. — The last of these chapters (33.) goes farther, and not only pledges the restoration of Israel in joy and glory to their land, people, King, and priests, all settled in abiding divine order, but sternly censures the Gentile conceit, that God had cast off His people, that they should be no more a nation. (Compare Rom. 11) It is not a question of saving souls by the gospel, of gathering out from Jews and Gentiles into the Church, but of the two families the Lord chose, the seed of Jacob and David.

Ezekiel is not less distinct. Compare Ezekiel 16, 17, 20, but particularly Ezekiel 34, 36, 37, and 40 - 68. It is the blessing of Israel, under the Messiah, and in their own land.

So to Daniel (Dan. 12) the angel makes known the revival of the prophet's people Israel, by divine judgment of their Gentile enemies, which is not yet fulfilled.

Hosea plainly intimates the same truth in the close of Hosea 1 and Hosea 2. Still more striking is the sketch given us in the brief but instructive Hosea 3:4, 5: — ”For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without seraphim: afterward shall the people of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king; and shall fear Jehovah and His goodness in the latter days.” Since the captivity, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem, what a comment on these words! To this day (many days indeed) they abide a people in the midst of peoples, yet not absorbed, — a people yet without the bonds of national conservation; for they are “without a king, and without a prince.” Still more peculiar is their religious condition, and as exactly fulfilled in the Jews alone of all races since the world began. They are “without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without seraphim.” They lack the sacrifice and the ephod which they had according to divine institution, and essential to the Levitical worship; but they have, on the other hand, neither image nor seraphim, the symbols of idolatry in its public and private forms. Thus they are in the anomalous position of a people who are no people, incapable, somehow, of true worship, yet not idolaters, and thus the contrast not only of all other nations, but most of all of their own antecedents. How evidently divine the picture of verse 4! What an earnest of the fulfilment of verse 5! “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king.” Thus their future will be peculiar, their conversion not to God only, but to their rightful King, the Messiah. It is not the gospel now, but Israel blessed as such in the latter day.

So chapter 14 predicts a repentance and consequent blessing from God, neither of which has yet been seen in Israel from that day to this. Both are future.

Again, men may reason on Joel 2 because of the accomplishment of the pouring out of the Spirit, but it is impossible to treat Joel 3 as fulfilled, which supposes all nations gathered and judged of God when He brings again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, and then the earth's blessing, not its destruction. Amos 9 is not said in Acts 15 to have been actually accomplished, but only "to this agree the words," etc., i.e. to God's recognition of Gentiles called by His name, which, true now, will be verified in the millennium. Verses 13-15 refer not to heaven but to earth, and not to the Church but to Israel, who will then and thus be blessed. So Obadiah 15-21 binds together the day of Jehovah upon all the nations with holy deliverance on Mount Zion.

I do not enter into the moral history of Jonah the prophet, viewed as a type, but would point to the remarkable Micah 4, Micah 5, with the concluding verses of Micah 7. It is a vision of the latter-day glory of Zion yet more exclusively than Isaiah 2, which Micah 4 so strongly resembles. Nahum predicts the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian holder of which typifies one who will figure largely in the East at the close of this age; but God will make his grave, and publish peace to Judah. If Habakkuk bring out chiefly the exercised hearts of the godly, it is not without anticipations of divine judgment on the enemy of Israel, though holding to the life of faith meanwhile. Zephaniah is distinct as to the judgment of the nations, when there shall be no more haughtiness in God's holy mountain, and the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity nor speak lies. "The King of Israel, even

Jehovah, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more." It is unquestionably future. The post-captivity prophets — Haggai 2:6-9, 21- 23; Zechariah 2, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14; and Malachi 4 — are explicit as to Israel's hopes. What evidence can be conceived more abundant, uniform, or decisive?

But what, it may be asked, is the practical profit of all this for the Christian? Why do we dwell at such length upon the future restoration of Israel? Were we to examine minutely the prophecies which treat of the subject, it would no doubt detain us long, though it would also add many particulars of interest. Time would fail to go through many on a single occasion. I have, therefore, taken the prophecy of Isaiah, with a mere glance at others, as being quite sufficient for the purpose. But once more, What is the value to the believer now of receiving this truth?

In the first place, it is good to see that our own profit is hardly the right measure in looking at the truth of God. It is never the best side: nor is it, I am persuaded, the straight road to reap the best blessing. The Lord gives His riches where He is confided in most simply. Our place is not to weigh the consequence of what He says, but to believe. Then, indeed, when we do believe on the bare warrant of His word, the profit is much every way. But I may briefly observe that there is an immediate result of the most important kind in this, that the giving Israel its own distinctive place of future blessing, according to the Old Testament promises and prophecies, is a main safeguard against the Judaising snare, which is in all ways an instrument of evil, and of the most formidable kind, in the hands of the enemy. Give Israel their earthly distinction according to the

prophetic word, and you preserve with simplicity the heavenly place to which the grace of God now calls you. Is anything lost by this? On the contrary, it is pure and heavenly gain; it is a gain that keeps the heart free for Christ above, from the world below, maintaining withal the supremacy, and the plain, literal import of God's word. We suffer in every part of revealed truth, when we swerve from the simple meaning into that mystical jargon to which I have referred more than once. You cannot be false to Israel in the Old Testament, and retain the truth of Christianity unalloyed in the New Testament. You weaken the authority of the entire word of God. Stolen waters are proverbially sweet to those who misappropriate them, but they bring their own penalty. And so it has been with those who rob Israel of their hopes: the real character of the Church, yea, of the Christian standing, is never retained as a consequence.

You cannot with impunity defraud Israel of their portion. You may seek to clutch, and appropriate, and keep it to yourself; but the effect is that you are unjust to them. It is not only that your heart is closed against what God has in His heart towards His ancient people, nor is it only that, by such a style of explanation, you tend to overthrow the faithfulness of God, the unchanged purposes of God, the word that He has passed and pledged to His people. But there is worse. For, instead of gaining more, you lose your own proper and peculiar blessing. With Christ in heaven you have all things — just as the apostle could tell the Corinthians who were setting up one favourite here and another there upon earth; it was truly to cheat themselves, as well as to dishonour the Lord, the giver of all that is good, and of all who are good, to every one of His saints. So it is in

another way, not the looking down as from heaven, but the sinking into an earthly place, when you read these prophecies as if it were our loss, because we do not find there our own glory and blessedness, or the Lord's mercy to us in those beautiful visions which He vouchsafed touching the people of His choice. To find our blessing there is both to leave heaven for earth and to restrict ourselves to a mere fragment of the blessing, instead of knowing, in our union with Christ, the bride's share in the Bridegroom's exaltation over all things.

In the New Testament we find the same period is looked at from a heavenly or church point of view. Take Ephesians 1:9, 10 as an instance. God has "made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." What is this counsel which He thus puts before Himself? It is His purpose, in view of the dispensation or administration of the fulness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both the things which are in heaven and the things which are in earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance. It is plain that this is no mean portion of the blessing which the Lord will shed around Him in that bright day. We have obtained an inheritance, not in Israel, nor in the earth, nor even in the heavens alone; but rather in Him. We are by grace heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who is set Head over all things, the Church being His body, and so united with Him in His supremacy over all things. (Ephesians 1:22, 23.) Carefully guard against including the Church among the "all things." Not so; the Church is part, yea, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all; the Church is the body of Him who is head over all things. In Him, then, we have obtained an inheritance, who is the Head over

all things. These comprehend whatever is in heaven above or in the earth beneath — all which God has put under Him. This exalted position the Church has by association with Him; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Evidently then the unbelief which endeavours to secure all the blessing on the surface of Scripture defeats itself. The truest and the only full blessing to the saint is found in unqualified subjection to God, who now, as always, honours such as honour Him, and keeps back nothing that is profitable from those to whom He has revealed His Son in glory. In fact, we shall share with Christ all things. So complete is the inheritance of all, that He only is excepted who has put all things under Him. (1 Cor. 15:27)

The common error is thus morally deplorable, and in every way destructive of the truth; it loses sight of God's glory in Christ, it is blind to the largeness of the ways of God, it knows not the special heavenly character of the Church's relations, and it sacrifices to self the fidelity of God in His covenant dealings with His ancient people. It is evident, that the person who could break his plighted word with one party cannot be trusted by another without hesitation. It is dreadful to be obliged to reason thus; but I may be pardoned if I endeavour to present the principle in a very plain form so as to prove its unworthiness. The popular error, then, supposes that God may break His promise; for nothing is more certain than that He repeatedly, spontaneously, and unconditionally bound Himself to bless Israel, and in such sort, that, when the blessing comes from Him, it never should pass away. If on the contrary God could change His mind as to His gifts and calling in Israel's case, (may the evil thought and expression be forgiven!)

if He be now so disgusted and ashamed of Israel as to turn away from them as His people for ever, where is the security of His truth? where the assurance of His character in revealing Himself to us? Surely it is not for us to deny that never did Israel more fail, if failure account for change; never did Israel more dishonour the revelation which God made of Himself to them, than we, the Church, have failed in bearing an adequate witness to the glory and the grace of Christ made known to us. How plain it is, then, that all the ground of stable peace and confidence is threatened with ruin by this error, which might at first sight seem to be comparatively trivial.

Besides, I may observe, that it is not only to shake the general character of God, but there lurks behind what Satan has more than ever at heart. God in His grace has of late re-awakened His children to look into heavenly things, and to behold Jesus there. He has shown them their portion with Christ above, who is soon coming to take them to be where He is. This has been before us already; I only, therefore, refer to it again to remark how one truth corroborates another, and how all the parts fit together. The heavenly portion remains in its own unmixed character above. The believer, now gathered out from Jew or Gentile, finds his place in Christ there. The earth remains for the earthly people Israel, who will be called in their season. We have seen to-night that it is not merely a question of Christ in the heavens, but that God will assuredly convert, bless, and restore to their land His guilty people. If there is joy over a single soul that is- brought to God, will that joy be less when it is over a nation, and that nation the one which most of all despised, abhorred, and insulted Jesus, ay, His very

name? Will it be any loss of blessing to the Church in the heavens to look down and rejoice in the blessed poor of spirit, in the remnant, once so proud yet deceitful, that shall no longer speak lies nor carry itself haughtily? Will it not be joy to see that Abraham will have a seed blessed below as well as above, and all through Christ the Lord? What a joy, when that people, long active and successful in stirring up the Gentiles against the name of Jesus, in perverting the truth of God, in inciting men of intellect and learning throughout the world against the scriptures, in refusing those further and heavenly communications of God's grace, which only draw out the gnashing of their teeth because they were left in utter darkness in regard to them — what a joy when they will be broken down in true repentance, mourning, and self-reproach before their Deliverer, now recognised as the Messiah they crucified! Doubtless their fall has been God's occasion to raise us up to a glory far above their own; yet surely it is not for those called to that surpassing glory to wish for aught not their own, still less to deny to Israel that which God has promised them. Rather let us be the first to proclaim in the ears of Israel, That which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, His hand will surely accomplish, even all that is in His heart, for His beloved people — enemies still as regards the gospel, but beloved for the fathers' sake.

I therefore conclude for the present the subject of the Jew, aware how scantily it has been treated. But enough has been said at any rate to stimulate enquiry, and to encourage the children of God to trust every word He has written, every promise He has given.

1 The technical name for Psalms 113 - 118.

The Gentiles in relation to the Coming of the Lord

Lecture 3 - Deut. 32:8.

This remarkable Scripture establishes a truth of the highest importance, often forgotten now, but continually assumed throughout the great mass of the prophecies of God. The people of Israel are the necessary centre in God's plan for dealing with the nations of the earth. It is a thought not a little humbling and offensive to the Gentile mind; for men evince, even to this hour, in spite of many opposing tendencies in the days in which we live, the latent contempt and natural scorn which the Gentile has for the Jew. Nevertheless, God, in all that He regulated or permitted, kept before His own eye the great governing thought, that all other peoples must find their place according to this plan. To the tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, must come the first dominion. For Israel His choicest earthly blessing is reserved, though it will flow far and wide to the nations. For the time being, their grievous presumption, as well as insubjection to God, has frustrated all; but by-and-by mercy will triumph, when the day comes for God to prove what He is for Israel, in spite of what Israel has been against Himself. This, however, is but one form in which God gives us His mind touching the nations.

We find a change of immense import which came in at a subsequent date; and God has not left us without explaining the grounds and results of this great event. But the truth here revealed looks up to the earliest

formation of nations, and peoples, and tongues after the flood. In Genesis 10 we hear of their first fathers or founders. One name of very solemn import comes before us from the very first — the name of Babel. Not merely does it appear from this division of the rising nations into their separate languages and distinct bounds of habitation, but it reappears when that vast change I have alluded to comes to pass. It will be found of much interest, and even importance, for the believer rightly to apprehend the original constitution of the nations as circling round Israel, as well as the new arrangement according to God's sovereign will when Israel publicly forfeited their central place. First, nothing can be plainer than the way in which the scriptures account for that which is otherwise perfectly inexplicable. You are aware that men are now searching with diligence, and sometimes applauding each other upon the very scanty measure of success with which they trace out, these different nationalities. The word of God has laid it all open to those who believe. He that searches the Scriptures has a clear, comprehensive, and perfectly intelligible account, he sees in it not accident, but the mighty and wise design of God — His judgment too, in humbling the pride of man, which renewed its tendency from the flood, as at the first. That principle, on which men so pique themselves at the present hour, the power of union, was attempted directly after the flood; and men gathered together to build a conspicuous and permanent testimony to human greatness and an uniting bond for mankind, otherwise in danger of dispersion. But the tower which man built, in his pride and self-confidence, as a means of unity, was the ground on which God brought in confusion. Because they built a tower that they might remain together as one race, God

broke them up into that division of languages, and tribes, and tongues according to the several lands which He arranged in His own mind for them; and the main substantial landmarks of the mighty judgment of God abide to our day, and shall abide till the Lord Jesus Christ comes, yea, till the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Now, in this dispersion to which God sentenced the race, Israel was the central thought; and therefore it is that we find in Genesis 10 the Mosaic account of these different families according to the three sons of Noah. In Genesis 11 follows the key or hidden reason why God so dealt with man; for it was a new thing, an utterly unprecedented change, which has left results that unbelieving man cannot yet divine, but only speculate upon and lose himself in wandering mazes. For God it was no mere dealing with man's presumption, however surely this was checked. There was also the gracious intention of making Israel the means of blessedness for these dispersed nations of the earth. Accordingly Genesis 12 shows us the root and stock of the promises to Israel. Thus there is a very manifest and beautiful divine order in the way in which these truths come before us. Here, then, stands clearly the moral sequence — the rise of tongues and nationalities as the consequence of a divine judgment, the explanation of that which drew down the judgment; next, the revelation of that astonishing principle of divine grace, whether for earth or heaven — God's call of man to Himself. Abraham accordingly becomes the great witness of the call of God, the father of Israel, in due time to be called out also They were called out of Egypt; but at Sinai they preferred to trust themselves rather than God. They

forgot His promises to the fathers, or at least their principle; they accepted terms of their own obedience, i.e. really of their own goodness; and thus, as ever, their history became the constant evident proof of their entire badness. It is the moral tale of every heart; it is what we all prove till grace humbles the soul and brings us to God through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. As it was with Israel, so is it with every child of man now who essays to enter into covenant with God, till self is judged, and the heart, purified by faith, finds its rest and strength in another, even Christ.

It is not my purpose to follow the history of Israel, but just to show in a prefatory way the place in which the nations are first viewed in the word of God, as circulating round Israel, where God was pleased to manifest His presence as far as was consistent with His counsels as then revealed. The Shechinah of glory was in their midst, hidden, it is true, behind a veil; but still such a manifestation of divine glory as no other people had. God dwelt in darkness; still it was God who dwelt there; and this of all their national privileges was surely inferior to none. God was in the midst of Israel; but they preferred other gods. They abandoned shamefully, shamelessly, the living God who deigned to be there, their God. There was not a vile idol of the nations to which they did not bow down, none, according to the expressive figure of Scripture, with which they did not commit adultery. The consequence was, that God began to deal with the larger portion of the nation which had already rejected their king. Having proved themselves rebellious to the royal house that God had Himself chosen for them, they consummated that rebellion by apostasy from God, who, after slighted warnings, swept

away the ten tribes of Israel first, as a most solemn lesson to those who remained. But Judah was deaf and blind to that which God was pointing out through guilty Israel; and when not only they, but the king of David's line, seemed only to vie with each other who would be foremost in the invention of idolatry, and in the debasing imitation of the nations whose false gods they set up, the true God, after reiterated summons and threats, allowed Babel to come forth once more. It was that same system of confusion; but now in a new form. Babylon, the mother of old Testament abominations, the inventress of idols, — Babylon must be the instrument of executing judgment on idolatrous Judah! It was a strange sight to see at first; but there was the deep wisdom of God in the choice. Thus the God of heaven singled out Babylon of all the powers of the earth to have a new character of dominion never possessed before. Up to this epoch, Israel and Judah had been patiently waited on by the Lord of the whole earth, who had vouchsafed His presence, as we have seen, in their midst. There was a long course of long-suffering on the part of God, if peradventure the people would repent; but they became more and more guilty, and even apostate, yea, and their king. All hope was gone. Then the God of heaven in His sovereignty raised up the very worst of the Gentiles. The old seat of man — idolatrous, self-exalting, and concentrating in contempt of God, now a young, vigorous power, that lately rebelled against the Assyrian, and was the active means of overthrowing that old overthrower of Israel — Babylon, was summoned of God to the place of imperial power of a world-empire.

There was a definite grant of power on God's part to Babylon. The empire of Nebuchadnezzar had from God

Himself a charter of universal dominion. He was the head of gold in the image he saw. The times of the Gentiles began.

This then is the great change to which I referred. For the first time in the world's history one king was permitted of God to be the undisputed monarch of the world. It is not a question of how far he pushed his conquests. Nebuchadnezzar was sufficiently active, we all know, in the East, and as far as Egypt and Palestine; but God gave him the place which others sought in vain. More than one had struggled for it: the various competitors for it failed one after another. God gave the world-power to the king of Babylon. The proofs of this will appear presently and abundantly, and I trust souls may see a little more clearly its importance. The first witness I would cite is Daniel 2. In the dream which God recalled to Nebuchadnezzar by the prophet, there was a great image. "This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Happily there is no controversy worth talking about as to the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The prophet himself explains that the king of Babylon answers to the head of the image. That dynasty was followed by one inferior to it,

not in extent of territory, but in the character of its power. Instead of having it direct from God, and using it as a solemn trust for His glory, you find a number of human counsellors interfering with and weakening the sense of a responsibility immediate to God. This was the Persian rule, the features of which appear in Daniel 6, Esther, and Ezra. Then you have the third empire of brass, the Macedonian kingdom, under the well-known Alexander the Great, where there was a still lower character of influence intercepting the sovereign will of him who had called himself to the throne: not grave senators, men accustomed to rule, but soldiers of fortune, who could not, however clever generals, be supposed to understand matters of state. Here it was evidently the predominance of the military element, not the patrician. Again, you have in the fourth empire that which is common enough in our days, sovereignty founded on the multitude, on the simple will of man, and of course therefore on a majority, who could be least able to weigh all the difficulties, the niceties, the conflicts of human interests — everything that is required in legislation or rule. So it was in the Roman empire, as we know, republican in its origin, and therefore farther and farther removed from the idea of God conferring sovereignty upon man.

Besides, we find the striking intimation that this picture of the last empire shows, particularly in the interpretation given by the prophet, a foreign element introduced into it. This certainly is of no small interest to us, inasmuch as the clay is precisely that which indicates the intermixture of our barbarian forefathers, the wild hordes that burst from the north-east of Europe, first upsetting the old Roman empire, and then

gradually incorporated into it. They of course were not free from the violence proper to the uncivilized, with wild notions of human freedom, recklessness of rule, and the passionate rejection of almost every kind of restraint. Hence in due course, when toned down by civilization, the boasted principle of constitutionalism. Men have wondered whence it came; but it is all explained in the word of God. It is the foreign element that did not belong to the empire in its origin. Thus it is the introduction of the Teutonic element — these strangers from the north of Europe and Asia — into the old Roman empire, which formed the combination of the past with semi-barbarian wilfulness. This, accordingly, led to a very important point that begins to appear in our chapter (Dan. 2) — the break up of the empire into a number of separate kingdoms. It is alluded to briefly; but we shall have it much more fully in Daniel 7. After describing the mixture of the miry clay with the iron of Rome, it is said, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” Your attention is particularly called to this: “In the days of these kings.” What kings? The prophet had spoken about the image terminating in feet and toes; and, I think, there cannot be a doubt, more particularly by comparing this chapter with the seventh, that the toes of the image answer to the horns of the fourth beast. The proof of this will appear directly. Referring to the ten separate kingdoms, or their kings, Daniel says, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” There is no propriety in applying “these kings” to the four empires, because unquestionably the God of heaven sets up His kingdom, not during their course, but in the closing state of the fourth or last of

the empires. Does not this fix the meaning to kings of the divided Roman empire in its last phase? It is impossible fairly to resist the conclusion.

I am aware that there are those who apply this portion of the interpretation to the introducing of Christianity into the earth. They conceive that such is the kingdom which the God of heaven set up. But a remark or two, I think, will disabuse any dispassionate mind here of such a thought. It is a very momentous subject to be clear upon, and a great many Christians are under the impression alluded to. Those who know better will bear with me for a moment, if I digress to dispose of a thought as injurious as it is popular. You will observe that the clay is supposed to have entered the image, and the division to have ensued, when we read, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” Was this the case when Christ was born? Was there anything correspondent when Christ died, rose again, went to heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost? Was there any change answerable to the union of the miry clay with the iron of Rome? On the contrary, do we not know clearly from the Bible — and it is a great mercy we have not to travel farther than the Bible for proof of it — that there was but one head of the Roman empire then (Luke 2), that the realm was unbroken and the ruler a single individual, and consequently “the day of these kings” was not yet come? Thus it was iron, and nothing but iron, for many years after Christianity was set up. The importance of the remark, however simple, is this, — that one cannot anywhere introduce Christianity, or anything else that can answer to the setting up of the kingdom then.

The truth is that, though the foreign element predicted here be come in, this division is still future: for full proof of this, I must ask you to look with me into Daniel 7. I shall not go over the earlier verses that describe the other kingdoms; but in the 7th verse we read: “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great thing).”

You see, every different passage communicates some further truth from God. We had a division in chapter 2; we have here not only that division still more clearly shown, but also another personage quite distinct from those kings, whose conduct brings judgment not only on himself; but on all his associates. All I would first press is, that you have here the fourth beast, or imperial power; and, besides, separate horns pertaining to that beast. This denotes the peculiar features of the beast at the close. The ten horns are not successive but contemporaneous kings. Upon another occasion we may hope to dwell on the last king a little more fully. What can be plainer than that we have here the Spirit of God tracing from beginning to end the course of world-empire - that so many powers should rise and no more? It is a well-known fact — nobody disputes it — that these great imperial powers have arisen, and that none has been established since. What does the word of God

declare to be the end? “A little stone cut without hands” is the figure of God’s kingdom used in Daniel 2. The Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven is that which corresponds with it in chapter 7. Remark the action of the little stone. It falls upon the iron-clay feet of the image. This is its first operation. There is no working to transform the image-power; there is no introduction of new principles or moral influence, so as to effect a change in its character. On the contrary a blow falls — a sudden decisive stroke. The inference would be natural and necessary for an unprejudiced mind, even if the word of God did not explain it, that the blow means judgment by divine intervention — the destruction and sweeping away of the last imperial power then subsisting in the world, with all the remains of the empires which had preceded it. Can an event of such a character as this be considered secondary? Is it not an intimation of the utmost possible weight for any soul to contemplate as at hand? Undoubtedly we who believe are by grace called to bright hopes; and God has opened heaven to us, showing us our portion in Christ at His right hand. But He has been also pleased to give us the lamp of prophecy to shine distinctly upon that which is about to take place in the world. This demonstrates that He will ere long raise the question of the earth; nay, more, — that His hands must soon be lifted up to strike; for He must execute judgment if way is to be made for blessing. But His judgment will be destruction, not merely of wicked individuals here and there, but a public conclusive act of divine judgment, which shall take effect upon those that are highest in the world and all their adherents. So, in the vision of Daniel 2, “was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of

the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." What God does now in His kingdom, where there is faith or even outward Christian profession, finds no expression here. Daniel speaks exclusively of the manifested kingdom of God which expands over all the earth, when His judgment, executed by the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, has smitten the Roman empire in its final condition. So, in chap. 7, "because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame." It is the execution of God's vengeance on the Roman empire and its several kings, because of the blasphemous lawlessness of the little horn or its last chief. The kingdom of the Son of man, of which the prophet speaks, is established for ever, and displayed when judgment has cleared the scene of its horrors.

Once the mind of the believer submits to this revealed yet simple fact, what a flood of light is cast upon all that is at work in the world and that awaits it! How it harmonizes with the great mass of scriptures that otherwise the eye might pass lightly over! We have in the word of God frequent declarations of the blessing God has in store for the world. One of the earliest of these is in the Book of Numbers, where He swears solemnly that He will fill the earth with His glory. I press this. Let no one, then; suppose that we are merely looking at the dark side of that which God is going to bring about. The scripture referred to is in Numbers 14:19-23: "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and

as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And Jehovah said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it." The reader can hardly fail to observe that the very same text which presents Jehovah filling the earth with His glory, puts it in immediate connection with the execution of judgment upon sinful men. Look again at Isaiah 11:4-9. If we have another declaration of glory for the earth, we have the same solemn association of divine judgment with it: "In righteousness shall he [the Messiah, who is evidently the person spoken of — the branch of David] judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Then follows the assured blessing of the earth in the richest terms, wound up with the promise that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." If we turn, moreover, to Habakkuk 2:13, 14, the connection is, if possible, still clearer. "Behold, is it not of Jehovah of hosts that the people[s] shall labour in the very fire, and the people[s] shall weary themselves for very vanity?" (How just a description of that which occupies men laboriously but in vain!) "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." But in the immediate neighbourhood we have woes pronounced, the unequivocal intimation of divine judgment.

Thus the order in which Scripture presents the dark and the bright for the earth is abundantly plain. God means to bless the world, and fill it with His glory: there is no doubt of it whatever. But has He not also shown us how the blessing is to be effected? As little does He leave us in doubt as to the answer; and this on moral grounds. For the Gentiles will have proved themselves to be as thoroughly lawless, false, and apostate, judged according to their responsibility, as we saw Israel to be, measured by the standard God applies to them. It is remarkable, too, that this is what occupies the mind of the Spirit of God between the two chapters which furnish the prophetic account of the four empires (Daniel 2 and 7), as has often been remarked, though it may be well to repeat it briefly now. The departure of the Gentiles was immediate, and the history that follows soon cut off all hope of real improvement, i.e. of repentance. What is the very next scene to the setting of Nebuchadnezzar in his place of undisputed power as the governor of the world? We have him at once erecting a golden image, and sending out a mandate, in which, on pain of a most cruel death, he insisted that the inhabitants of his vast dominions, congregated there at least representatively, should bow down and worship, at a given signal, the idol that he had just set up. In a word, the Gentile used his power (it is the very first occasion which Scripture records) to compel his subjects to idolatry under penalty of death. Is the Gentile any better in the other chapters (Dan. 4-6)? He is seen attributing all his grandeur to his own skill: “Is not this great Babylon that I have built?” Entirely forgetful of the grant of God, Nebuchadnezzar is thereon made an example of by divine power; his heart is changed from man’s, and a beast’s heart given him, till “seven times” passed over

him (which, no doubt, furnished the reason for the empires being designated “beasts” in chapter 7). Then comes, in Daniel 5, dissolute pride, and desecration of God in His holy things, in order to vaunt the false gods of the nations. Judgment falls upon Babylon at once. Finally, in chapter 6, the head of the new imperial power, King Darius, forbids the offering of any worship, for a certain time, save to himself. How evident a type of the self-deifying end of the Gentile power! Thus God’s word, from the very first, stamps upon the Gentile empires their character and their judgment. Their history and end were all spread out from the beginning. Between the visions of the second and of the seventh chapters, we have their moral course which necessitated such a doom. The character may not have been manifested to its full extent, but it is the same principle; there may be outward difference and large development, but God marked it all from the very first, and the scriptures of truth show us that so it will be at the last. And what then? God judges the Gentiles, and sets up His own kingdom under the Son of man. “And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages [not a mere election out of them — as now], should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

But where is the gospel all the while? In this prophecy totally unnoticed. And why so? Because the gospel is not a system of power, however glorious, that puts down rebellious nations, but a display of grace which unites all who receive it, whether Jew or Gentile, to Christ at the right hand of God. Here we have the course of what was earthly judged when the heavens ruled; but the gospel

has nothing to do with governing the powers of this world. What is it, then? Not a superior power from heaven putting down all antagonists, but grace gathering souls out of the earth to heaven, and forming them, by the Lord the Spirit, according to Christ as seen there. This is the gospel of the glory of Christ, founded no doubt, upon the cross — the glad tidings of grace which God can send forth to every creature, because of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The object of the gospel is to set the soul perfectly free from all question of its guilt, to purge the conscience, to bring the heart and mind into communion with God's delight in His beloved Son. But then it is the revelation of Christ when He had finished the work of redemption upon earth, and taken His place in heaven. It is clearly, therefore, wholly distinct in source, character, and issues, from all that we trace out here. Yet men still assert that the kingdom which the God of heaven sets up, according to Daniel 2, is Christianity. Why is it that they "labour in the very fire," if one may so say, to press this vanity? The reason is obvious. Man likes to be energetic in the world, loves to have some great objects here, would prefer to have a religion that would suit and consort with the earth Hence it is that the well-known system of Romanism so readily gains on natural minds of a certain religious character. Catholicism was before Romanism proper, but the Catholic principle of the early ages led to the Papacy of Rome, which found convenient for its purposes the current delusion as to the kingdom that the God of heaven would set up here. Why was it? In truth Christendom had long fallen from its heavenly enjoyment of, and testimony to, Christ. Hence it could look for an empire upon the earth. In this it was, ere long, gratified to the full. We all know that the Roman

empire at length acknowledged Christ in an outward manner, and hearts too ready to believe what they liked supposed it to be the accomplishment of this and other prophecies of the sort. Thus men like Eusebius and others in no long time taught the notion that the vision of God's kingdom, according to Dan. 2, etc., began when Christ came to earth, and was completed, to a certain extent, when the Emperor Constantine and his successors authoritatively owned Christianity as the truth in the empire. Notwithstanding, the great revolution of that day, important as it was, is outside this Scripture, as the plainest reasons prove. Being an earthly view, it displaces heavenly grace from its power over the heart; and not being of God, it allows some idol connected with ourselves to be set up, instead of illustrating how all God's thoughts and purposes find their real application in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is, just as sin only betrayed its full character when Christ came, as the exceeding malignity of the flesh was only made manifest when He died and rose again, so also the world was then judged in principle. This is so important for the soul, that a mistake in these matters involves profoundly evil consequences. There may be piety and devotedness, as there has been, in men who conceive that the vision is accomplished in what is going on now, or in the past. But no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation: it cannot be rightly severed from being an item in the great sum which testifies of the coming kingdom of Christ. The inevitable effect is, that, as far as it goes, it turns away the heart from heaven to earth, and substitutes the creature in its littleness now for that mighty power of God which will work after a new fashion when the Lord Jesus reigns over the earth. It hinders all right moral feeling as to present things; for

it refuses to regard the world as a condemned system on which judgment is ever suspended and about to fall.

But, on the contrary, if the kingdom of God, according to the prophecy, has been already introduced, then it becomes a question of faith to see the blessing that flows all around us, and of hope for the mountain to fill the whole earth, while those who cannot see it must be troublers of Israel — mere Ishmaelites, whose chief work is to make man uncomfortable, and pour contempt on the efforts of Christendom. But if it be true that the world- power has never yet been judged of God, as we have seen in Daniel 2 and 7; if it be allowed that Christianity is another thing, not found here, but fully and clearly revealed in the New Testament (the proofs of which I hope to pursue on another occasion); if it be certain that God in this prophecy simply reveals the times of the Gentiles, put in a place of power, guilty from the very first, and pursuing their course of evil to the last, what a different aspect appears! It ought to be remembered, that there was no such thing as the division into ten kingdoms when Christ was born, or when Constantine and others professed Christianity. The hordes of barbarians from the north and east had not poured into the empire and broken it up. Certainly nothing since has answered to it, unless you imagine the Papacy to be the kingdom which the God of heaven sets up. But men ever so little imbued with the mind of God know well that not only is all grace centred in Christ, but that He alone is worthy to be entrusted with the execution of judgment. Everything, therefore, tends to fix the eye and the ear of the believer upon Him.

Be sure of this, that one never really gets hold of any truth of the Bible unless somehow or other we are

enabled to see it as a reflection of Christ, or as something that contributes to manifest the power of God in Him. Consequently this ever ready and only sure test of the truth becomes invaluable when applied to our subject. Has Christ yet smitten the Roman empire as is here described? Instead of His acting as the victorious "Stone," instead of smiting it, the Roman empire smote Him. In the Christ of humiliation we see the very reverse of what is described here. The Roman empire smote Him, nay, had the guilt — not alone, it is true, but in conjunction with apostate Judaism — of crucifying the Lord of glory. The Lord, speaking of Himself as the Stone in Matthew 21, has perfectly and with divine clearness and brevity put the two cases. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone [as He was here in shame going to the cross] shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, [when He returns in power and glory,] it will grind him to powder." Manifestly there is no Stone of humiliation in the prophecy of Daniel. The first fact alleged of the Stone cut without hands, is not of unbelief stumbling over it as it was presented in lowly love, but that it falls and smites the great image of the world in its last phase of imperial power. It is not, as it were, a stone for man to tread and stumble on; it comes from above; it smites, overwhelms, and only then swells into a mountain and fills all the earth. In few words, then, a stumbling-stone is Christ in His humiliation; and those who stumble upon Him are broken. But what is it when presented afterwards? "Upon whomsoever it shall fall, they shall be ground to powder." The Lord refers in these last words, and in these only, to the statement of our prophet, who leaves out all question of stumbling. We have only the Stone falling and grinding to powder. We have not a Stone of stumbling in Daniel, but only the

Stone of judgment from above, which, as its preliminary action, breaks the image to pieces; so that not only the clay and the iron, but even the brass, the silver, and the gold, all disappear. The iron and the clay mix for the last form of the fourth empire. The separate nations exist now; but there is no such thing as the beast revived, nor the final division either; for they all receive power for one hour. (Rev. 17:12.) The beast is the uniting corporate bond and head which wields the force of the ten western kings. Much may be getting ready, everything in prospect of it; but there still lacks this bond of union under a chief of the west. It awaits the accomplishment of other purposes of God.

There is a restraint, as we know from 2 Thess. 2 Satan cannot bring his scheme to pass until the moment that is known in the mind of God. Nevertheless all ripens each day for it, and the desire of men for it is manifest, however great their wonder may be when it is realized. Ambition is not without aspirations after it. The converse of men shows a presentiment of it in their minds. The most careless are afraid of what looms upon the earth. Such is ever the case before some mighty catastrophe. Coming events cast their shadows before. This always has been, and always will be, till the Lord take the world under His own government. All this then goes on; yet there is a power that hinders its fulfilment, because God has other plans to consummate before He will allow the final climax of evil. But when the apostasy arrives and the man of sin is revealed and the beast emerges from the pit, the end of the age is at hand. Divine power will act in judgment, and the kingdom of God appears.

Again, the symbolic expression of “a Stone cut without hands” in no way suits the gathering of believers which began at Pentecost Individually considered, these may be, and are, viewed as living stones. (1 Peter 2) But, as a whole, they are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; they are growing into an holy temple in the Lord; they are even now the temple of God, God’s house, the assembly of the living God.

The “Stone” is appropriated to Christ in the law (Gen. 49.), as we have seen in the Psalms (118.) and in the prophets (Isa. 28); and it is clear to me, that our Lord, in Matt. 21:42-44 already referred to, connects Daniel ii. with Psalm 118. I need not add other allusions to the same effect in the Acts and the Epistles but conclude that it means the kingdom of God and of heaven appearing in the person of the Lord Jesus, and this in judgment of the Roman empire. The point of contrast with the four image world-powers in Daniel 2 is its source above man, its immediate judicial overthrow of all existing empire with the relics of the past, its unprecedented expansion after the first destructive blow, and its perpetuity, instead of falling to others like its predecessors. Of a spiritual power dealing with hearts by faith, by heavenly aims, by divine principles, and thus spreading over humanity a regenerating influence, not a word appears here. The Stone has never yet smitten the Image, still less has it grown so as to fill the whole earth. Daniel 7 contrasts with the four beasts emerging from the mass of troubled waters one like a Son of man, invested by the Ancient of days with universal dominion. Put the two things together, and what can be simpler in itself? what sense more beautifully true? What more harmonizing with the

general scope of the truth of God? Whatever form of existence the kingdom of God may have had in the world, the question here is one of the Lord's intervention in irresistible might, judgment, and destruction of the powers that be, and of His subsequent reign with His saints over the earth in power and glory I may now briefly refer to a few more passages of Scripture to show, not merely the vast imperial system of Gentile power judged by the Lord, when He comes in the clouds of heaven, but that God has not given up His design of making Israel the centre of independent nations circling round that people. Nothing can be more striking than to see the admirable concord of the prophets, and indeed of all Scripture. In some, our Lord Jesus is referred to as the Son of David. It is His Messianic glory. Where this is the thought, Zion, (Jerusalem) is the revealed scene of His reign, and Israel the channel of the blessing that He will diffuse through the nations. Next, when the times of the Gentiles are introduced, as in Daniel, a farther scene opens. As God abandons for the time Israel as His pivot of blessing, as He raises up the great universal empire, so the Lord Jesus will have a sphere of dominion answering to these larger dealings of God. Hence, in Daniel 7, He is not as the Son of David, but "one like a Son of man" is seen. Why so? Because He receives an unlimited dominion over the children of men. "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Thus the most perfect harmony reigns between the different portions of divine truth, even as the rejection of

Christ in one glory led in God's wisdom to the unfolding of a still larger and higher. Let me turn now to some Scriptures of the prophets, which follow up what we have seen in Deuteronomy and Daniel. In Isaiah, in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, as well as in the minor prophets and the Psalms, we have much confirmatory truth. As it is important to have distinct thoughts on that which God has revealed in relation to this subject, let me dwell for a short time upon some of the more salient points. In Jeremiah 3 we see that the Spirit of God cherishes the first thought alluded to. Israel are viewed as yet to be God's earthly centre for the blessing of the nations. "It shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem." Does any fair (not to say instructed) person here believe that there has been the smallest approach to an accomplishment of this prophecy? Mark the time when God gave it — not before the days of David and Solomon, but after Israel had been broken up, and the great mass of the tribes had been carried away into captivity; when Judah, that still remained, was falling into the worst possible defection from God, being flooded with idols yet more than Israel. It was, therefore, after the developed evil of Israel, and of Judah too. The prediction supposes the fact of the Babylonish captivity that was then impending because of idolatry. Yet God predicts, through His servant, a time so glorious, that no period of glory in the past should be comparable to that which was coming. But I refer to this

Scripture now to show, not the future blessing of Israel, but that the first view of the Gentiles I have sought to present tonight supposes Israel to be blessed, and disclaims all hope of a good time for the world at large, except through Israel restored and regenerate. Here, accordingly, it is said that Jerusalem shall be called “the throne of Jehovah, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it” Where has there been the smallest realization of this promise? If any nations were ever gathered to Jerusalem up to the present, it was to desolate and trample the Jews down of old, or to destroy one another since. Our Lord has Himself told us that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But here is the time of Israel; here Jerusalem’s blessing comes, not the eking out of the sad days of Gentile supremacy. All the nations shall be gathered, not for vain contests between the Cross and the Crescent, but “to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem.” It is not the gospel; for its direction is precisely the opposite. The message of grace is now being diffused to the Gentiles, to every nation throughout the world. Here it is the gathering of the nations to an earthly centre — to Jerusalem.

Does any one slight this as a low thought unworthy of God? Oh, what an abuse of heavenly blessing! Surely, to be blessed with Christ in heaven is infinitely higher, sweeter, lovelier, holier than any glory which concerns the earth. But am I, therefore, to deny the wonderful word of my God, that He means to bless this world? Am I to defraud of aught the Saviour that has died for us, brought us nigh to God, and that will have us in heaven along with Himself? Am I to say, that the will of the Father shall not be done on earth, as it is in heaven? Am

I not to pray this prayer in spirit and understanding also, instead of reducing it to an unknown, unmeaning form? Every one virtually blots it out, or at least ignores its meaning, who denies that the earth is to be blessed, creation delivered from the curse it now groans under, the nations to have the glory of the Lord filling it and themselves, therefore, sharing these precious blessings with Israel. Jerusalem then is to be the throne of Jehovah. Ah! if it be worthy of God, suitable to His grace, and due to His Son, that He should show mercy to the vilest of sinners now, will it detract from His glory, or will it lessen His grace, if He pour out His mercy over the earth — if He yet make that guilty city to be a holy city, not in word only, but in deed and in truth? The time shall come when He who saw and wept over its growing iniquity, and was the herald of judgments to the Gentiles, will be the unhindered and eternal blessing of Jerusalem, that the nations may be blessed too. Is not this the comforting thought that is presented here? Is there not here predicted a full cup of joy for Jerusalem, that all the nations may share it? Not that they shall be on the same level, or enjoy the same measure of blessing; but certainly they shall be gathered to Jerusalem to be blessed there. (See Appendix.)

Again, without enlarging, on any one prophecy particularly tonight, let me refer to a very striking one in the prophecy of Ezekiel. We shall see that the elements needful for its accomplishment have been brought out by God most remarkably within the last two or three centuries. The Scripture in my thought is Ezekiel 38, 39. Let me make, however, a remark, before we enter upon it. In Jeremiah and Ezekiel we have nothing at all about the new system of the great empires of the world.

Jeremiah deals more particularly with the moral iniquity, the idolatry of Judah, and shows us also the final restoration of the people, and their blessing — particularly that which God will effect when He writes His laws on their hearts. Jeremiah passes over all that intervenes, as Ezekiel does in another way. The main difference is, that the latter does not make, first, the moral condition of the people, and then the spiritual blessing in the latter day, the great points, so to speak, of his prophecy. Ezekiel's main task is about the manifestation of God's glory in Israel. Hence he begins in the early chapters with the living creatures, which finally leave the temple, city, and the land. In the latter chapters they are seen returning to dwell there for ever, when Jerusalem shall be Jehovah-Shammah ("Jehovah is there"). In this prophet, therefore, we have the converse of the Book of Daniel, who gives us exactly what is between the two points. In the four successive imperial powers of the Gentiles there is no such fact as the governmental glory of God manifesting itself upon the earth. It had existed up to the time of the Babylonish captivity; it will be again, when Israel shall be restored to, and planted in, their own land once more. But between those distant points there intervene the times of the Gentiles, which still run on. Meanwhile Christianity also comes in; but this belongs to the New Testament: it is the mystery of Christ and the Church, and is hidden, as far as the Old Testament is concerned.

In Ezekiel 38, then, we have these words: "Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." As Gog is the name of this destined leader of the Gentiles in the north and east and south, so we have his land described as the land of

Magog. There is no doubt that this distant land means what the ancients used to call Scythia, what is now included under the vast European and Asiatic possessions of the Russian empire. But, moreover, there is confirmatory evidence in the names of various races, which fact is somewhat obscured in our version; for it is well to observe, that “the chief prince” should be the “prince of Rosh.” The word h is not only an ordinary appellative, meaning head or chief, but the Hebrew proper name for Russia, or the Russians, in which sense the proper nouns following prove it should be here taken.1 Nor is this at all the mere resource of modern interpreters, after events pointed out the way. The oldest version of the Old Testament is the Septuagint, or Greek Bible of the Seventy, which affirms the sense just mentioned. This, it is well known, is the version which our Lord quoted and the apostles used very frequently. In this case the rendering is simple, natural, and clear. The bearing of the prophecy is, that a certain prince comes up under the name (perhaps the mystic name) of Gog, as to which no theory whatever is pressed or hazarded here. From the land of Magog, or old Scythia, comes this prince of certain races — the Russians (Rosh), the Muscovites (Meshech), and the inhabitants of Tobolsk (Tubal). This personage, actuated by territorial greed and especially of the Holy Land, is to lead countless forces of armed followers against the land of Israel in the last day, but to his own and their total destruction, under divine judgment. Now, what could be less looked for, if we turn back to Ezekiel’s times, than the then delineation of such a power? And what can be of more profound interest to us now? There would not be, ought not, perhaps, to be, the same confidence, were this merely a discovery of the prophet’s meaning

confined to our own day. Not, of course, that this would falsify the prophecy; for his inspired words would be just as true, if no translator or interpreter had given the just sense before Russia began to develop and aspire. But when we see that such is the simple force of this Scripture, when we remember that the oldest version of the passage is the best (a version executed some 150 or 200 years before our Lord lived in the world), when we bear in mind that not only in the day of the prophet and of the Greek translators, but for a thousand years after the last, the races that now compose the properly Russian elements of the empire were hardly beyond wandering barbarians, is not the hand and mind of God most apparent? There was not the smallest appearance of the emergence of the gigantic power that is continually absorbing in the East; that claims equality at least with the greatest powers of the Roman empire; that threatens, too, in connection with the Holy Land. For some two or three centuries we know that it has cherished, religiously and systematically, the scheme of unlimited aggression and progress; that its plans are formed upon the thought of possessing the East to itself, as well as of overawing the West; and that, being a power not less superstitious than aggressive, it is peculiarly desirous of gaining and propping up a sacred character by the acquisition of the land consecrated by our Lord’s life and death. It were strange if all these considerations did not invest the prophecy and the races in question with exceeding gravity, more particularly as the days are at hand and the effect of every vision. That these thoughts are set forth as revealed truth, and I trust also in a plain manner, is not at all owing to any events that have of late transpired in the world. It is well known, that the very same truths have been held and

taught long before there was the recent feud about the holy places or any fighting in the East. Still, no one can deny, nor do I wish to weaken, the confirmatory character of that which has been witnessed there.

But mark another thing. This is a power entirely outside the Roman empire, nay, outside all the ancient imperial powers. It is an empire entirely to itself, singularly blending barbarism with civilization, and rude force with subtle policy; beyond doubt, characterized by the lust of territorial aggrandizement, and panting above all for mastery in the Holy Land. Lapse of time only brings out features that fall in most distinctly with the prediction, and prepares the way for the final struggle, if men want confirmation of God's word in its clear, simple meaning. No dispassionate mind can say that this part of Ezekiel has been fulfilled as yet. Gog, his hosts and allies, come down when Israel (more or less represented) are in their land. The previous chapters (36, 37) also point to this distinctly. Thus Ezekiel 36 presents a view of Jehovah, not only bringing back His people to Palestine, but acting, graciously on their souls — according to the figure, sprinkling clean water upon them, exchanging their stony hearts for a heart of flesh, and putting His Spirit within them. The bearing of all this is unquestionable, or at least should not be questioned: God will restore Israel and convert them in the land. Next, in Ezekiel 37, we have a fresh picture of the power and goodness of God in their favour, under the figure of the valley of dry bones, and then under the two sticks emblematically joined in one. On the dry bones the Spirit breathed, so that flesh came, and breath subsequently, and they all stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. This is divinely explained to mean

the revival of the whole house of Israel, and their return into the land. But something more was necessary. What about the union of the long-divided people, the twelve-tribed nationality of Israel? The answer is given in the same chapter, under the symbol of the two sticks, henceforth united together. The Spirit of God leaves no room for doubt or speculation. The meaning is, Israel and Judah united as a people under one head, who is figuratively called “David,” the beloved, their king Is it not evident that all these chapters dovetail into the whole blessing of the latter day for Israel and the Gentiles, not the Church? They suppose a new action of God, for which the earth has yet to wait, in which He will bring back, then convert, and after that unite, the tribes of Israel as such under one beloved King, who will diffuse and secure divine blessing through His people, and, as we know from elsewhere, throughout all the nations of the earth. It would appear to be at the beginning of this very dealing of God, when Israel, in part at least, are in their land, that Gog comes down upon them, seeing the land unprotected by the ordinary munitions of war. He counts it the fairest opportunity for at last consummating his long- cherished plan. He has no faith in the reality of God’s presence with, and protection of, His people. But he comes down to his own irreparable ruin. This is described most fully in the latter part of Ezekiel 38, as well as in the next chapter. We need not linger on the details. But as a further following up of the prophecy, and more for the purpose of leading persons to search the word of God than of saying much about it now, I would refer to the weighty fact of the long-departed glory returning (Ezekiel 43, 44) to the earth, and resuming its place in Israel, only in an infinitely more blessed way. (Compare also Isaiah 4) All

this furnishes the most evident proofs that a future time of blessedness is in view - often promised, but, when it comes, surpassing every expectation, if not also the very promises themselves.

Let me, before closing, touch on one prophecy more towards the conclusion of the Old Testament We have some points of remarkable interest in the latter part of Zechariah. In Zech. 11 is predicted the Saviour's rejection; and then, by one of those transitions so characteristic of Scripture, we have another, not the true Shepherd, but one designated the idol shepherd. "Lo," says Jehovah, "I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." Who that reads the Scriptures with an intelligent eye, can fail to see that, as we had first Christ despised, so at last have we Antichrist? The Good Shepherd was refused — the evil shepherd is accepted. God thereon deals retributively with His guilty people. In the next chapter (Zech. 12) we have the nations gathering against Jerusalem. The reception of the Antichrist, as the sequel of rejecting the Christ, is the ground of God's terrible judgments. But it is added, "In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people." If they assemble themselves, and God uses them for dealing with Jerusalem, He will turn His hand and use Jerusalem for dealing with the nations. The axe shall not boast against Him that hews with it. There is a

double process going on. It is the time of universal judgment of the quick; but if He chastens the Jews, assuredly the nations shall not go unpunished: “for yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction.” But Jerusalem’s part is notable; for, clearly, it is not only a question of idolatry, but of Christ scorned and crucified. However, it was not merely the Jews who rejected Christ, but the nations too. So that there will be a double reason for the execution of Divine judgment in the last days — idolatry, and “not this man but” Antichrist. The Gentiles will share with Israel in both respects. There is some difference as to this with the nations, as indeed among the tribes of Israel, which we need not stop to discuss particularly now. Suffice it to say that all the nations are here gathered in hostility to Jerusalem; and this is the language in which the Spirit of God expresses it: “Jehovah shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall Jehovah defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Has this, or anything like it, been accomplished yet? What has taken place since Zechariah? The defilement of Antiochus, the siege of Titus, and the like. In which of these, or, on what occasion since, was Jehovah saving Jerusalem and its inhabitants? There has never been the smallest approach to a fulfilment. Reading a little further, we are told that “it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem.” What then? lies the prophecy failed? Not for a moment. The prophecy supposes the Jews returned, and of course, therefore, is not yet accomplished. The conclusion is equally simple and certain; it must yet be fulfilled. Then mark further. It is not only that there is a

great execution of divine judgment threatened on all nations, which has never yet been, but Jehovah here says (vv. 10, 11), “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” As yet, the very reverse of this has been true of Jerusalem and the Jews. It is a future scene in all its parts, and with genuine marks of singularity: for though that day is ushered in with clouds and darkness, none the less will there arise a Sun of glory that never sets. When that bright day comes - the day of Jehovah, and not of men — there will be a mighty action of the Holy Ghost; and, as is always the case where God acts in men, it is not alone the heart that is moved, and the affections kindled towards Himself and all that is good; but, inasmuch as grace is dealing with sinful men, there will be true and deep repentance, a real ploughing up of the soul, an appropriation of sin: and wherever it is so, it is individually felt and confessed. Each is alone with God. If we assert the truth of God as to these magnificent scenes of the latter day, when God will deal with the Jews and the nations, let no one suppose for a moment that He will give up His personal claim upon the heart and conscience of man. There will be, no doubt, an universal dealing with Jews and Gentiles; yet, after all, how the mighty work of the Spirit of God individualizes, and necessarily so! For as we read, not only in that day shall there be a great mourningr in Jerusalem, but it is added, “And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and. their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their

wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." The closest relationships will not interfere in the least degree with the call of God, when each soul, as it were, shall stand before Him in conscience; and, although they are brought into joy, it will be surely to rejoice with trembling. Such will, then, be the searching work of the Spirit in the Jews.

Mark, again, how evidently this is a future scene. We, have David's family and Nathan's family apart. Who can tell the family of David? or the family of Nathan? It is the very thing the Jews cannot settle. Their genealogies are lost — these records exist not. They may form indistinct notions here and there, but they cannot know for certain. But this will be a day when from God secret things will reappear, as it is the day when man's conscience will be wrought upon by the Spirit of God. Is it not always the case where grace really works? But how wondrous the scene, when in the midst of that mighty work of deliverance God will deal with the conscience! There will be those that derive their lineage from the great king David, and others too who claim kin with the prophet who convicted David of his sin; but in that day, whether it be the family of the rebuked king, or that of the rebuking prophet, there will be no difference. The descendants of both will be there; but they are alike bowed down in the presence of God's grace and a pierced Messiah. Each confesses his sin. Whatever may have been the distinction in their forefathers in the wonderful scene of David and Nathan, there will be "no difference" in the future day as to their descendants; all feel their sin — each acknowledges his sin before God.

Again, in the earliest hours of Israel's history, there was another scene, when two heads of houses or tribes of Israel joined together in a cruel vindication of their injured sister, and caused the name of Jacob to stink among the inhabitants of the land, instead of being an attractive light to the nations of the earth. In this day the sons of Shimei [Simeon] and the sons of Levi will be there; but there to give an account of their folly — to mourn and weep over their sins before the Lord — each apart, and their wives apart.

Is there a heart that would blot out this blessed and most touching witness of God's faithfulness to His people, and of the wonders His mercy will yet work for Israel? Do we think to enrich ourselves by taking it all from them for ourselves? In truth, where men do so, it is not merely stealing that which is God's own gift, pledged, so to speak, to Israel, but by a just retribution they hinder the blessing of the Gentiles also.

In Zech. 14 the nations re-appear once more, and Jehovah goes forth at the head of His people and overthrows them. The nations may seem at first to succeed. They take Jerusalem, and half of the city goes into captivity; but, nevertheless, the nations are discomfited for ever immediately after. When has there been the very faintest appearance of the accomplishment of this prophecy? But there is more than this. It is said, "In that day Jehovah shall come, and all his saints with him." Has this too been fulfilled? Still more, as if to confront the thoughts of man, as if to stamp the dreams of rationalism with evident folly, God will not leave the mount of Olives without an everlasting token that the Maker of heaven and earth is that glorious One, whose feet stand there in that day. Is

Olivet cloven now? Clearly not. What can you make of it by the so-called spiritual interpretation? Absolutely nothing. No matter who or what you are, sure I am that mysticism fails, and here, if anywhere, it ought to confess its fault with shame. The undivided mountain rises up to condemn those false interpretations, and is a silent standing witness that the prophecy is not yet accomplished; before God and man the fact declares that the prophecy awaits its fulfilment. When Jehovah does come to accomplish it, the mount will part asunder, and there shall be a very great valley between the northern and southern fragments. You who would unwittingly make this prophecy of private interpretation, weigh the fact now before us. Can you etherealize, so to speak, the mount of Olives? Can you turn it into a myth? Impossible! God condescends to map it out, so to speak, that there may be no mistake. He is pleased even to give the geographical position of it (v. 4), as if to expose and refute all such mysticism for ever. Then we have the effects of the appearing of the Lord on the mount of Olives. Not only are the nations defeated, but, besides, "It shall be one day which shall be known to Jehovah, not day nor night, but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Instead of day succeeding night, as has always been the case in the world's history before, when one might expect the night, it will still be the light of day. There will be an exceptional interruption of the ordinary change of day and night, marking the presence of the Lord God of the world. One feels how right it is that it should be so. How could the sun go down, so to speak, if the Lord be no longer hidden, but come in His glory? "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward

the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be." In this we have the sign of refreshing fertilizing power that goes out to the mass of people, even the most hopeless, and this, independently of times and seasons henceforth. "And Jehovah shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and His name one." There is also the witness of the authority of God in what He will do. He will judge the nations that do not come up to Jerusalem. (vv. 12-19.) If the world is to be blessed, it cannot be at the expense of His honour or His sovereign choice of Jerusalem as the earth's metropolis and sanctuary. (vv. 20, 21.) Jehovah accordingly shows the unmistakeable tokens of His future day for the earth, a day without parallel. If it be perfectly certain that all this does not suit the time before or since Christ's first advent, is it not evident that it must refer to the age that follows His second? Further, is it not equally plain, that it cannot be the Lord God at the end destroying the earth and heavens that now are? Have we not seen that He is King in that day, and that blessings flow out from Jerusalem? Have we not even geographical signs as if to put to flight every tendency to a mysticising of Scripture? This is not a scene far away from this present creation; it is not possible to be said of the heavens, but only of the earth. It is admitted fully, that our place will be above with the Lord; but what reason is this against the Lord's having also the throne of His father David on the earth (Isaiah 9), or filling it with the knowledge of Jehovah's glory, as the waters cover the sea? (Isaiah 11) And so we find it here — "All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon." "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day,

that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." (vv. 10, 11) It is not the earth dissolved, it is not the elements melting with fervent heat, but the earth that now is blessed, as it has never been since the curse fell upon it. The language of Scripture is as precise as that of a chart. How evident that it is not the epoch of the burning up of all things, when every landmark necessarily disappears. The clean contrary is the case. The well-known spots that every Israelite treasures in his memory are found once more: only are gone the marks of desolation; no longer the signs of Gentile oppression appear, but the blessing of the Lord God given to the people of His choice, the whole earth sharing the joy and peace of that day.

But no more on this subject, save to commend it to your attention. It necessarily involves appalling judgments on the Gentiles; but, as we have seen, Jehovah in the midst of judgment remembers mercy. He puts down evil solemnly, unsparingly in that day; but He also diffuses countless blessings for those that are spared on the earth, as He will have filled the heavens according to the counsels of His own will, and to the praise of His glory.

1 See Appendix on the Rosh of Ezek. 38 and 39.

The Church of God in Relation to the Coming of the Lord

Lecture 4 - Titus 2: 11-14.

On a previous occasion we have seen the primary place which Israel had in the earthly purposes of God. Upon their land the eyes of Jehovah rested continually. Although for a season, to outward appearance, Israel lost their place, and the land itself has been the scene of continual devastation and of Gentile triumph over the ancient people of God, yet God Himself has never surrendered His plan — has only postponed that firm and first intention of His, as far as the earth is concerned. For all hope for the world, every approach to universal blessing upon the Gentiles, is bound up, not only with the restoration of Israel to their own land, but with their conversion to God in that land.

In explaining the subject of the Jews and the Gentiles, it has been already pointed out that there is an immense gap to all appearance, and indeed, in reality, in the ways of God — a gap which God's word had left room for and predicted. During that interruption for the time being of the original plan of government, there has been a most important application of other truths, and a bringing to light of another system entirely distinct from the normal idea of Israel as the centre of the nations for the earth. While God refuses to recognize the Jews as His people, He has transferred earthly power and authority to the great Gentile monarchies. This will have consequences of very deep interest; for, when the Lord comes and takes up the governmental plans which had come to

nought for the present, wholly frustrated by the unfaithfulness of both Jew and Gentile, God will hand over, if I may so say, these broken tables to His Son, who will make good at His coming and reign, first Israel, or rather Himself as their King, the true Messiah of Israel, the spring and channel of blessing throughout the chosen people of God, who will then be fitted by grace for it, and so cause the stream of blessing to flow around among all nations; but, besides this, He will accomplish in His own person the other and larger glory, which answers to the exalted head of the Gentile world. Thus the two streams of blessing will flow peacefully around the Lord Jesus, the centre as it were of two concentric circles which will then expand to His glory, and fill the world with divine blessing. He is the Son of David for the smaller circle, and the lower of the two; He is the Son of Man for the larger, all-embracing government, which will then be established under the whole heaven, and not only over the land of Judea. The rule of the heavens in His person will enfold all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, and so ensure righteousness and peace throughout all the earth.

We have now before us another theme of still more surpassing interest, especially to those who know themselves the members of the body of Christ. It will be my business to show that as there is something yet more terrible than the Gentiles' abuse of earthly power, which at the destined moment God will judge and replace by the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven to establish His own universal kingdom, so there is a blessing incomparably higher than, and entirely distinct from, anything connected either with Jew or Gentile. For disclosing this secret God in His wisdom selected that

moment when the ruin of man and the world was evidently complete. It was not only the Jew rebellious and idolatrous, and the Gentile presumptuously and profanely denying the source of all his power; but when Jesus was in this world, when not merely law, the measure of human duty towards God, but the fulness of divine grace and truth came in the person of Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father. And when the perfect divine goodness manifested in Him was hated of man, and drew out his fierce and increasing opposition even unto death, the death of the cross, then it was that God was pleased to bring a new thing to light. It was no longer that which was connected with the earth, not even His own appearing from the heaven to control and govern the earth; but He that ascended, rejected of the earth, into the heavens, went there as no private but public person, on the ground of redemption now accomplished. He "by [or in virtue of] His own blood" entered into heaven. That blood, or rather the person of Him who shed it upon the cross and rose again, became the foundation of the Church of God. It was a work done on earth, but in itself and in its results infinite. It was a work which brought out the depth of what God is in holy grace to sinful man, the basis of His righteousness in justifying the believer. But more than this: God raised Christ from the dead, and set Him, not upon some earthly throne, nor even on a heavenly throne in connection with the earth, but at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, as "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."

This was entirely unprecedented. When had been seen anything even remotely resembling it before? Mercy was no new thing; promises were not new, still less the

kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for those blessed of the Father. None of these things was a mystery. On the contrary, God showed mercy to fallen Adam and his sons, gave promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prepared a kingdom, as we know, for the faithful of the nations, not to speak of His dealings with Israel; but when had He a man exalted above all in heaven? When One who entered there with a perfectly efficacious sacrifice, and in risen life before Himself, as the head of a new system, head of a body on earth? Up to that time there had been nothing of the kind. So far from it, that we are expressly told in the word of God it is a "mystery," or secret (for this is the meaning of the word), which God hid, not in the Bible, but in Himself — a secret only now divulged to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. Types or shadows there might be, which, when this secret was made manifest, were found to receive an answer in certain of its parts or elements. But, as a whole, it was an absolutely new thing, never made known either by man or to man, till the Lord Jesus Christ went up into heaven and sent down the Holy Ghost. Thus, as it was not only a divine person, but He as man, dead and risen, who is the foundation of the mystery, so there was to be another divine person sent down by the Father and Son upon earth to communicate the knowledge, and make good the blessing, and bring souls into the enjoyment, of God's infinite grace in Christ, as well as of the glory which is proper to Him. This is the Church of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost; such is its portion even now.

You will understand, therefore, that when we speak of the Church of God now, when we read of it in the Bible, we are not to suppose a mere aggregate of individuals

who are regenerate of the Spirit and look to Christ for salvation. There never was a time since sin came into the world, that God did not work in souls. There never will be a time, till the new heavens and earth, but there will be a line of such believers on the earth. We speak now of that which Pentecost beheld — a sight absolutely new, yea, not even revealed in the Scripture. The testimony of the New Testament is abundant, explicit, and decisive about it. A few remarks may tend to make this plain. In the great body of the Old Testament we have the Jew, by God's institution, kept entirely distinct from the Gentile, without a question as to the character of the Jew or the faith of the Gentile. There were believers, of course, among Jews, as there were certainly, from time to time, believers among Gentiles. The word of God proves this, so that it ought not to be a matter for debate or doubt; for it is a fact in His ways and a certainty in His word.

But believers did not previously form one body; and more than this, there was no such thing ever promised or thought of in the Old Testament times, as any one forming a part of the body of Christ. Not only none of the saints, whose experience comes so largely before us in the law, psalms, and prophets, ever so speaks, but no prophet ever contemplates our proper oneness with the Lord. The attempt so to apply the expression in Isaiah 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," is (if it may be so said without offence) an evident absurdity. The Church is not a dead body, but expressly in living union with the Head. We are "quickened with Christ." It is an abuse of all propriety to allow for a moment that the Holy Ghost, who dwells in the Church, would ever be supposed to fill a body that is

a mere corpse in the sight of God. The truth is, as may be seen another time more fully, that in this verse God speaks by His prophet to the Jewish people, and that they, as we know well from many parts of the word of God, are treated as now utterly dead. It is not that God will not raise them out of the sleep of death; but just as the Lord, in going to raise the daughter of the Jewish ruler, dealt with her that slept, so will it be with the Jewish people by and by. But the Church never is, under any circumstances, so described; it had no relation to God before it is called by grace into living union with Christ. And I venture to ask, In what sense could it ever be described as His dead body? It is of the dead body of Israel, then, that Jehovah thus speaks. It is not a question in Isaiah 26 of the Church, the body of Christ, the living Head in heaven, any more than in Ezekiel 37, Daniel 12 and Hosea 6 (Compare, for the Assyrian, Nahum 3:18, and for the world, Romans 11:15.) Israel had to Jehovah the relation of His people, which they forfeited under a broken law and a rejected Messiah, till divine mercy again raise them as from the grave and Jehovah own them as His: “My dead body shall they arise.”

To this, then, I would call your attention. The parenthesis of judgment has been already shown to exist in God’s dealings with Israel, during which the literal seed have lost for the time their standing and title of God’s people in the earth; namely, from the Babylonish captivity till the Saviour, welcomed in their hearts in the name of Jehovah, re-appear and own them, and establish His kingdom in their midst with visible power and love. Besides, there is another parenthesis, which may be called the parenthesis of grace. This begins with Jesus

rejected even to the cross, and raised up from the dead; but not yet to judge Israel and the Gentiles that have been guilty of that foul sin of refusing and putting Him to death. It is Jesus raised up and taking a new place in the fullest mercy in heaven, not only sending far and wide the message of grace to sinners upon the earth, but the Holy Ghost Himself sent down, and uniting those who now believe in His name both to Christ and to one another, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, thus by the Spirit baptized and made one body, even now first upon earth, but surely never to be severed in heaven. But then for the first time is seen upon earth that strange spectacle and wondrous reality of divine grace, the Jew and Gentile joined together upon the common ground of union with Christ by the Holy Ghost.

And what a mighty preparation for this new work of God! Redemption accomplished, forgiveness and justification enjoyed, access into the holiest of all given, risen life and sonship made known, earthly priesthood, sacrifices, temple, everything that was connected with that mere visible and tangible scene here below completely disappearing, and these saints not in possession of the privileges here named individually alone, but united as a body to Christ the Lord at the right hand of God, conscious of their union with Him, waiting for Him to take them to Himself, to be with Him in that heaven where they know Him, and to which their hearts continually turn as their own proper home and portion — theirs because He, Christ their life, is there. Nothing of this did or could exist in the days that preceded Pentecost: not even unbelief can deny this, though it may display its blind baseness by treating it all

as a mere question of circumstantial differences. Thus it is strictly, what I have called it, a parenthesis of grace; for it runs on from Christ's going up to heaven, and terminates with His coming again from heaven to receive those who are waiting for Him upon the earth. But when the Lord renews His connection with the Jews, and establishes His kingdom, the kingdom of the heavens, over the earth in the age to come, there will be no such fact as a head in heaven, nor, consequently, saints on earth joined in any such relation to Him as His one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Is it, that there will be no such blessing as the Holy Ghost then poured out? Assuredly there will; but we must remember that, before Christ came, the Holy Ghost had ever been at work, for there was no dealing of God in the ancient world, from creation down to our Saviour's presence and departure from it, without the agency of the Holy Ghost. It mattered not what it might be, judgment, mercy, power; skill, or wisdom, He was always the active Person of the Trinity. His it is evermore to deal with soul or body. I do not say that He is the object before them: the grace of God has given us this in Jesus Christ the Son; but the Holy Spirit is the inward agent who acts on and in men, and the power that effectuates, let it be in creation, providence, redemption, government, or any thing else that God accomplishes in the earth. Not only will the ordinary action of the Spirit abide, but there will be an effusion of the Spirit of God even more largely than ever in the millennium. How, indeed, could it be otherwise in the day when our Lord Jesus Christ will govern the earth, and cause blessing to flow as a river everywhere! We

know that the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. (Joel 2)

There will be a diffusion of good in power all the world over, richer far, at least in point of extent, than has ever been experienced here below. But it will not be, in most important respects, the same character of blessing as now. Christ will have come once more in person, and will visibly govern the universe. It would be presumptuous and vain for any one to attempt to define details; but we have, on the warrant of God's word, the assurance that our Lord Jesus will come, will sit as a Priest on His throne, will reign in righteousness over the earth, and thus be the head not only of Israel but of the Gentiles too. All this is certain, and along with it we again find both a land and a people peculiarly holy and specially near the great King. We have others, too, owned and blessed, a little farther off. That is, we have Jews and Gentiles separated as of old. I do not mean that things will be resumed absolutely according to what was under the Levitical system; for the new covenant and the Messiah reigning in glory involve great differences. Nevertheless there will be certain fundamental points of community between the two.

At the same time God, having once caused the tide of blessing to flow toward the Gentiles, will never depart from His grace, save in execution of judgment on adversaries. In the millennium, whatever may be the blessing of Israel, He will hold to it that the Gentiles are to rejoice with His people. But then this in itself is a very different thing from its present realization in the Church, wherein Jewish and Gentile distinctions disappear, and those who now believe are, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, made members of the risen

exalted Man, Christ Jesus in heaven, the Holy Ghost being not merely poured out, but personally sent. The mission of the Comforter in person from heaven is the true distinction between the action of the Holy Ghost now, as compared either with the Old Testament times or the wide-spread blessing of which Scripture assures through Him in the future. Hence the presence of the Holy Ghost personally sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1) subsists now in such sort as was not true before Christ, and as is not to be after He comes to reign over the earth.

The truth of this (precious as the outpouring of the Spirit may be by and by), as it has often been before us in various forms, so will appear from many of the Scriptures which will come before us in the course of these lectures. Indeed, any one familiarly acquainted with the Word of God will allow (and the more familiar, the more easily he will see and allow), that, in uttering what has gone before, a vast body of Scripture proof has been before my eyes in making these general observations.

Some very important consequences flow from this revelation of the Church of God, on which I would now say a few words, and on the hopes that are proper to the Christian. The statement of the truth as to this will of itself expose what it must necessarily displace and overturn — the earthly unfounded expectations which have been associated with the Church, because its heavenly character was unknown. My object is to prove and render evident that these truths are not merely important in themselves, but that they carry with them practical effects, not only for our outer walk, but also for the affections and inner discipline of the soul.

First of all, for all just laid down as to the Church of God, I appeal to the New Testament as a whole, and to every passage in detail which treats of the Church. Let me point also to the patent facts of the Old Testament, in contrast with what cannot be denied to be the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the New. If these things be so, let me ask how far our souls enter into this astonishing place of holy intimacy and near relationship to our God and Father, as well as to Christ our Lord. Have we weighed what becomes of those who even now are one with Christ members of His body, who have the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in us? You will have noticed how it is assumed in Scripture, that this relation to God and Christ in the power of the Spirit supposes the consciousness of our union with Christ. How is it, then, that there can be members of Christ's body who have no such apprehension of their blessedness? The sad fact is, that the greatest mischief has been done to souls by mingling the hopes, the experience, the thoughts, and feelings too, which are produced by the revelation of Christ and the Church with the experience, the expectations, and the ways of God's dealing that attach to the Old Testament saints. The Old Testament is as divine as the New; there is no part of it but what is of God. No one, therefore, can justly weaken or undervalue one word of either. But they are not the same. They differ, not in measure or degree only, but in character. Does this grate upon any heart here? Are there those who feel it to be unduly strong to affirm that the Church of God is, in its own proper nature, an absolutely new and heavenly thing? Let me ask such, if it be not worthy of God that He should put honour on His Son — His Son crucified upon the cross? Is it not worthy of God that, when all which the Old Testament would lead us to

expect connected with the Messiah was rudely dashed to the ground in the cross, when the Jew and the Gentile emulated each other in hatred and contempt of His Son, — is it not worthy of Him, and due to His own Son, that He should make that moment of all others to be the one for bringing out counsels hid in Himself from everlasting, which alone involve and manifest an adequate value for Jesus and Him crucified, for the Son of God, who had hung in shame, sorrow, and suffering, judged even of God Himself, for sin, yea, for our sins?

If earth refused Him, what did heaven? It opens and receives Him. Heaven had opened before when Jesus was here: now it once more opens to testify, not merely the complacency of God the Father in the Son, as He walked upon the earth, but what the feeling of God the Father was about the Son, when, having been crucified, He was raised from the dead. It became then a question what God would do for His Son. What could He do for Him in that nature in which He had been despised, and had suffered to the uttermost? He set Him up “far above all principalities and powers in heavenly places.” Was that enough? It was not enough. Take the very worst, the vilest of men, and He will prove who the Son is; He will show what the value of that cross is; He will show the power of the precious blood to cleanse from all sin; He will show what the power of that life which is in Him is to them. The consequence is, that God then brings out counsels which He had kept secret before. He had promised the earth to Israel; He had ensured blessing to the Gentiles through Israel and in them; and all was necessarily connected with and dependent on Christ, because it was only so that either Israel or the nations could be blessed. But to whom had He ever promised

the heavens? There all, as far as the Old Testament is concerned, might have seemed reserved for God Himself. No, He first puts the Second man above the heavens; for the wonderful truth is, that it is not merely in Christ viewed as the everlasting Son, which of course He was, but that which now shines out in the truth is, that all glory is conferred on man. It is in human nature that Christ is raised and exalted into the highest place in heaven. Let all the angels of God worship Him.

It was not enough that Jesus personally should be thus in heaven; but what was the value of His work? That work was for sin; it was for sinners; it was also for God's glory, vindicating His character in every respect about sin; and now sin, awful as it is and destructive without Christ, becomes the occasion for God to display how Christ and Christ's work and Christ's blood triumph over every trace and effect of sin. The consequence is that now God could bring out the wonderful and hidden counsel, that whosoever believes in Christ is not only saved, is not only quickened, pardoned, justified, but has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. So the Holy Ghost unites him to Christ.

Let us carefully warn those who hear or read. You often find persons talking about being united to Christ by faith. It is an unfortunate phrase. There is no such thing as being united by faith It is the Holy Ghost personally given who unites to Christ. It is the bond of One who is divine, and not merely of faith. It is admitted that faith is the gift of God. It is produced by the Holy Ghost, of course; but, beloved friends, to form a union between Christ and men upon earth, there is much more needed besides all this. If this be so, it evidently and at once sweeps away the theories of men about the Church of

God. According to Scripture, His assembly in the New Testament consists not exactly of believers, but of the believers who live now that the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, baptized them into one body. The Holy Ghost is now given as the seal of redemption and the earnest of the inheritance. There was no such state of things before Christ died, rose, and went to heaven. There was the Spirit regenerating or quickening souls by giving them faith in Christ; but He could not be the seal till the redemption was accomplished, of which He is the seal. Again, there will not be the earnest of the inheritance, when the inheritance of glory is itself come. There we have the two ends, as it were, on either side of the Church completely put out of sight and reckoning. When the glory of God illumines Zion, when the knowledge of His glory fills the earth, as the waters cover the sea, the time for the joint-heirs to take with Christ the inheritance will have arrived. Where would be the want or wisdom of an “earnest,” when the inheritance itself is enjoyed? The truth is, that then the Holy Ghost will no longer act after this sort at all. Now He is the Comforter, or Patron; now He intercedes for us, yea, in us, with groanings unutterable. Why? The saints are in sorrow and trial; they are supposed to be always suffering, yet looking forward to reign with Christ; but when the Lord reigns, when the earth is blessed and the enemy bound, the action of the Holy Ghost, will, of course, take a shape in accordance with so complete a change. There will be no need to give a divine stamp to the groans of men on earth, when there is really nothing but joy, and gladness, and peace, and righteousness everywhere. When all is thus bright, and evil is kept out, it is not the season for One to come and console the heart with the hope of future blessedness

and glory on high. It is clearly another character suited to the new state of things, as Scripture abundantly proves.

Thus the Church differs essentially from the Old Testament saints; though they were as truly regenerate as we are, and just as certainly looking to, and resting upon, Christ alone: else they would not be saints at all. So, in the millennium also, clearly there will be a divine knowledge of God in Christ, with self-judgment in His sight, or repentance, in every one who is born of God. The fact that Christ will be then displayed in glory, will not set aside the need of the operation of the Spirit in the soul, any more than when Christ was upon earth. Then, as before, the Spirit of God had to work in quickening power. Nevertheless, who can deny that the Lord Jesus distinctly intimated to the disciples (who had received Him, believed in His name, and were born of water and of the Spirit,) that there was some further blessing to be conferred on them shortly, which they had not yet got; that it was expedient for them, not merely for Him, that He should go away (for else the Comforter could not come); and that He, when He went, would send the Paraclete to be in them for ever? We can all understand that it was expedient for Christ to enter into His glory above, but it was also expedient for them. The expediency lay in this, that else they could not have the Holy Ghost in that personal way in which He was to be given and sent down from heaven. Christ went up, and the Holy Ghost came down; and now, from that day to this, the Holy Ghost dwells in every believer who rests on redemption in Christ; He dwells also in the Church of God. (John 14 - 16; 1 Cor. 3, 6, 12; 2 Cor. 6)

It would divert me from my present aim if I entered into the ecclesiastical bearings of this weighty matter, such as the gathering together and the worship of God's children. I am now viewing the Church in connection with the ways of God, so as to develop the ground of its distinctive hope. Viewed as it may be, it is evident that there is an entirely new creation brought to light upon earth answering to an entirely new thing in heaven, — a man, a glorified Head there, who is God too. As Christ never before was a Head, as He only became Head when He went up to heaven after redemption was accomplished, so there was no such thing before on earth as the membership of His body. With this is bound up the Holy Ghost personally sent down, who makes us to be members of Christ; as it is said, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." It is not here a question of "one faith," but "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;" it expressly concerns the Holy Ghost working in this new and intimate manner. Not merely by believing, but "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. 12:13.) This supposes the presence of the Holy Ghost, who is now given to be in the believer, and joins in one all believers, no matter what they may have been previously. (See also Eph. 2)

This, then, is what, so to speak, makes the Church to be the Church. It is the prime, capital, constitutive element of God's Church, as the New Testament puts the case. But, moreover, the Holy Ghost is not here to draw attention to His own presence, however truly He is here and should be felt to be here. In fact, it is not so that He works at all. It is certain that He was sent down, and that He is here; it is very important, too, that the believer should own, know, and enjoy His presence; but

still, the way in which He asserts His power is by exalting Christ. Hence, among His other glories, He maintains that Jesus is Lord, and consequently that there is no room for the allowance of human will in the Church of God, or for the interference of any authority as to divine things from without. Nay, more than this: all interference from within, save just so far as it is the Holy Ghost controlling the members of the body for the purpose of glorifying Christ (which conscience, guided by the word of God, has to discern), is a thing offensive to God and destructive of the very object of His Church upon the earth.

But if this be the character of the Church, and the power that works in it now, if herein lies the great test to decide what is of God and what is not, namely, the exalting of the Saviour, I would ask, What does Scripture reveal as to the course and hopes of the Church of God here below? The New Testament, far from being silent, speaks much of both. Was the Church now to abide triumphant in unbroken progress? Was it infallibly to accomplish its immense work of worthily representing the grace and glory of Christ? Certainly Israel had broken down in its fruitless task, as the Gentiles had, as to their responsibility, wrought still more abominable corruption. What was to become of the Church of God? First of all, it differs widely from all others, its predecessors. The Church of God is not of this creation in any true sense. It is a stranger on the earth. It belongs to the heavens, where its Head is already, and whence the Spirit of glory and of God comes to form and fill it. Hence the New Testament continually keeps up this immense and fundamental truth, although the members of the Church of God may take up a certain

place in the earth as for the moment succeeding Israel. The Jews were the people of God before, the members of the Church are now; the baptized are responsible to be witnesses for God upon the earth. Although there are some privileges and duties which they have in common with those who went before, they have a special character attaching to themselves alone.

This meets the difficulty which some minds feel in looking at Abraham's seed (Gal. 3) and the olive tree. (Rom. 11) It is quite true that we do follow Israel in these particulars and more. They were the seed of Abraham after the flesh; those who believe in Christ now are Abraham's seed quite as truly, though after another and spiritual manner. We have Christ; and as Christ was, in the highest sense, the promised Seed, in whom are all the promises of God, he that possesses Christ has all the promises already; for whatever promises there are, in Him is the Yea, and in Him the Amen, for glory to God by us; and in Him God has established us, who also has sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

There is more, however, to be noticed. Not only are the true believers thus Abraham's seed in a yet better and closer way than the literal Israel, because they have all in Christ; but also professing Christendom, or that which confesses the name of Christ here below, has an important place. This is the solemn matter treated of in Romans 11. The men of Israel were unfaithful to their trust, and made God's law odious and contemptible. The Gentile now, or professing Christendom, baptized unto Christ's name, is responsible to bear witness to God's goodness in the gospel; and, in point of fact, whatever light there is, whatever testimony in any way for God, is

found, not among the Jews, but among the baptized. The Jews are hard, dry, blind, and dead, as their own commodities and pursuits. They understand not the very Scriptures they vainly hold in their hands. They are ashamed, abashed, and confounded even before the feeblest true confessor of the name of Jesus; for it is too evident that, whatever may have been the light of Israel in olden time, it is now extinct and gone. The faithless Jewish branches are withered, and broken off: It is on the shoulders of the Gentile profession that any true testimony to God is borne. I say the Gentile "profession," because even those nominal Christians who are not born of God still have the outward light, which the Jews lack. Among them exclusively is there any recognition of the grace of God. There only is the gospel preached, and more or less truly even by unconverted people. They may not follow Christ, they may not receive the truth in Him; but still there is the holding out the word and name of Christ, especially His cross. But then all the mass of outside profession of Christ, although there is truth in it which is found no where else, is fast vanishing away, and we are now living in days when Christendom hastens to its ruin; and the strange sight grows apace, not merely of infidels (for there have been at all times plenty of infidels), not merely of profane men who mock and triumph at the abuses of Christendom, but of men who are apostates, though in every imaginable position of the Church so-called; not only professing the name of Christ, but setting up to be the teachers, chief rulers, and pillars of the Christian profession. Thus we have not alone the gross men, who deride the Bible and every truth in the Bible in proportion to its value and its glory, but (woe is me to say it with the sad conviction of its certainty!) the defence of the truth seems yet more

ominous than even the attacks upon it. It is the pitiably feeble resistance to these assailants under the Christian name and garb; it is the lax and compromising style adopted by those who are accepted as orthodox and true men; it is the letting in of the fatal principle, that Scripture contains errors, demonstrable errors, they will tell you, and this not coming from the rationalistic party, but from those who boast of the gospel, and who in the same context profess to be the champions of inspiration: these are the signs which portend the speedy “falling away.” What must be the result? If these be the thoughts and words of men who stand for revealed truth, what can be expected from the advocates of free-thinking? If such is the actual state, what may be looked for in Christendom, when God sends strong delusion that men should believe a lie?

But along with this, God has sent forth a cry at midnight, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh.” And the good and gracious One who, thereby, has awakened souls afresh, and awakens them everywhere to the return of His Son from heaven — He who has wrought, spite of every hindrance in the way of indifference, scorn, and opposition, has also now vindicated His word, as it never was vindicated, since the early Church turned aside to mingle fables with it. The earliest writings of Christian antiquity evince the awful tampering by Judaisers, Gnostics, and superstition-mongers with the purity of the word of God; the latest writings, in the midst of approaching apostacy, are by contrast the best of all “evidences,” not only to His word, but also to His Spirit’s grace in the recovery of long-lost and precious treasures.

In very deed, God is now graciously recalling souls; and mark His way. To what does He arouse them first of all? To Christ in heaven, to the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, filling hearts on earth with the consciousness of their relationship to Christ and of His love. And what are the effects? The perfect, happy, holy liberty of the Christian, heavenly joy in certainty of the Saviour's love, and of communion with Him in thorough growing separation from the world, in every shape of it, that hated Him. And what then? Has all this no bearing on the Lord's coming? God forbid the unbelieving thought. Surely it has much every way. When has there been anything like the present expectancy of Christ? I am aware that speculative men will tell you that cries have been heard continually in seasons of agitation among men, that the Lord was coming. But I am bold to affirm that there never was anything like the present attitude and tone of waiting for the Lord. The truth is, that there has been, from time to time, no small panic. Men have quailed, fearing that the day of judgment was just at hand. Is this the same thing as the bright, joyous hope of the Bridegroom's coming? Is this going out to meet Him? No doubt at the year A.D. 600 a general alarm pervaded Christendom; and the year of grace 1000 witnessed a still more violent fright (for it really was unworthy of a better name). They shuddered at the thought that the Lord was just coming to judge the world. Since these days there have been times, generally of external change and confusion — states convulsed, revolutions of kingdoms, etc., and the poor children of men and of God, too, frightened like hares, have thought and feared, ay, feared, that the Lord was at the doors. But can any fair man, with a judgment formed on the word of God, confound these painful rumours, these

humiliating panics about the day of judgment, with the Lord calling out the virgins to go in with Him to the marriage?

It is not merely, you will observe, that they are awakened by the cry heard at midnight: this but recalls the virgins to their original position, which they had abandoned to sleep more at ease. Grace reawakens them; and they retake their lamps now trimmed, with oil in their vessels' end once more go out to meet the bridegroom. They do not stay where they were; they leave all that had detained them from their proper object; they burst through all earthly impediments; they cast aside the rags of human tradition. It is the prophetic picture of the recovered hope of the saints, acting on their hearts after a long eclipse, of souls neither excited nor alarmed, but in sympathy with the love of the Saviour, and awaiting His coming with peace and joy in their souls. Is there nothing like this going on now? I appeal to those who love the Lord and the Church; and the more they know what is going on in the Church, and the more honest they are in answering, the better. Is not the midnight cry being made? Is there no going forth to meet Christ? It seems to me there can be but one answer, wherever spiritual intelligence and honesty are found. Since the apostles passed away, never till now has there been the appearance of any such awakening in the hearts of the saints all over the world; never before this joyful welcome, taking the place of sleep that used to be only disturbed by dreams of distress.

And another thing is in its way to be marked. It is not a set of persons satisfied with themselves, or wishing to use this cry in order to make a party. God forbid such a

misuse! The cry goes out from the saints of God, wherever they may be, and penetrates where it is least expected. It has been heard in Catholicism. It has rung through Protestantism. Neither nationalism nor dissent have been able to stifle the call. Despite of all past sloth or present barriers and stumbling-blocks, the wise virgins go out to meet the Bridegroom. It is for none to say how far the Lord may carry the call, or to what extent He may give it effect. I do say it is a dangerous thing for souls to wait to see this or that result produced, before they go forth with oil in their vessels. Let the eye be only on Christ. Let the heart ever rest on the precious truth that we are one with Him, joyful in the taste of His love by the Holy Ghost now, and we shall soon reciprocate the longing of His heart who says, “Behold, I come quickly.” If we know what He is to us here, we shall earnestly desire unbroken fellowship with Himself in heaven. And if saints only in a larger measure enter into this most precious portion for the heart, they will not be able to rest where there is not a practical testimony to it in their hearts and their homes, in their walk and their worship. The hope is just as practical as the faith of God’s elect, and must be carried out into the details of each day. It is, indeed, the necessary homage of the saint, and due to the Lord and His truth. Therefore every time when they meet together as children of God, those who are conscious of such a call to go out to meet the Saviour, cannot do without the assurance that they are on such a scriptural ground, and so guided by the word and Spirit of God, as to leave them happy in welcoming Him from heaven.

One may gather then what is the position of the Church in reference to Christ’s coming, even from the very

cursory sketch that I have been able to give to-night. Only the general thought of the Church and its hope is here presented, in contrast with Jew and Gentile, without entering as yet into the rapture of the saints, or any question as to those who must pass through the future tribulation. As this is reserved for another occasion, I must for the present pass over many Scriptures of deep moment, content with no more than the broad and general aspect of that which the New Testament predicates of the Church. I trust however that- every Christian here, small as may be his spiritual discernment, may see that such a new and wondrous relation as the union of the Christian and of the Church with Christ opens the door for a hope that is no less precious and special. He must be dull indeed who recognises nothing more in John 14, for instance, or in 1 Thess. 4, than that which was expected by the saints of old, and expressed in the language of the Psalms and the prophets. Far different is that which the New Testament presents to the heart. What is the hope of the Church there? Is it social improvement or human progress? Is it even spreading the gospel throughout the whole world, and the conversion of the Jews? Not one of these things is our proper hope.

Do I mean, then, that it is not the duty of the Christian to preach the gospel, or to further the preaching of it, to every creature? Far from it; yea, in this as in other respects, I say, the Church is guilty; we ourselves, we are guilty. When I think what the Church was and will be, when I think what the Saviour was and will be and ever is, and then of what we have been and are, I for one cannot but confess we are verily guilty for the poor, scant, feeble testimony to God’s grace we tender to

every creature. Bear with me if I say, beloved friends, that I believe we have, in the present condition of Christendom, peculiarly to watch against a snare that is incident to the true position most of us are in. Beware of substituting a judgment of others, in their wrong ways of doing God's work, for your own loving sympathy and right service. May we all have grace earnestly, humbly, self-denyingly, to help on the work of God ourselves. May we rather search how to help and sympathize with our brethren? It is an easy thing comparatively to criticise the various religious societies — for instance, those for missionary purposes and Bible circulation. It is not difficult for one to discern ways, means, and objects even, which are contrary to the word of God. Nor do I wish to weaken godly feeling as to all this for a moment. No doubt, the way in which the world is appealed to and mingled with the Church is a fatal vice, ruinous to the testimony of God, and contradictory to the whole character of His Church. It is the same kind of sin as for the wife of a loving husband to play him false, giving herself up to that which is as shameful to her as contrary to his honour and love. Let no one infer the least indifference to the sin of Christendom, to the duty of entire separation of the Christian from the world in doing the work of God. But this does not alter my conviction, that we ought to be ashamed on our part that we so little feel our identification with God's testimony on earth, that our sympathies are so dull and intermittent for His workmen and His work in every form, that we have and show so little self- renunciation, so little energy of heart in throwing ourselves into every movement of the Spirit of God whenever it may be done with a good conscience. Let us remember, "For My sake, and the gospel's." (Mark 10) What an answer in the day

of the Lord, to say that we have not done this, and we have kept from that! It is quite right that we should not be drawn into unscriptural and offensive ways; but we ought surely, when we separate in sorrow but none the less thoroughly from that which is evil, to look up to God for grace that we may know His way of doing His own work, and that we be found in it heartily. “Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.”

The Church from the beginning has reason to be ashamed. We ought more thoroughly and universally to have carried out the gospel to every creature. It was, it is the business of the Christian here below — not the whole business, nor yet the most blessed part; but still a most sweet privilege, a most suitable and bounder duty; for duty we have just as much as privilege. We ought then and thus to have been found in our measure scattering the good seed throughout the field of the world. Let us own that it has not been done, and that we have our own great shortcoming to confess.

What, then, is the present state of things? and what does the word of God warrant the believer in expecting? Exactly what has been, growing declension — at last, apostasy. The apostasy may not yet be complete, but it is ripening. The “mystery of iniquity,” as the apostle himself says, “doth already work.” The secret mischief was going on in his days; and what more solemn than the inspired intimation that the mystery of iniquity, even then at work, would go on till it ended in the apostasy, and in the revelation of the man of sin who should be destroyed by the manifestation of the Lord’s coming? There is thus an uninterrupted chain of evil, first in the hidden form, and then in full development, never to be

set aside by the gospel nor any energy of faith in the Church, but to await the final personal judgment of the Lord Jesus at His appearing. Here, then, not only the hope of the Church, even Christ Himself coming as the Bridegroom, but also His appearing in the way of judgment, are connected. The Church should joyfully, but patiently, wait for the one; Christendom cannot escape the other by false expectations and evil ways which only hasten that day.

It is evident that the practical effect is immense. Suppose, for example, that I am looking at the Church as having a vast future before it in this world, that it is to triumph over all adversaries, that it is to fill the whole world with the fruit of divine blessing. What will be the effect of such an expectation? Why, I cast myself into every kind of instrumentality for the purpose of bringing about these desired results. But if one knows that, on the contrary, the evil is going on rapidly to ruin, that it began in apostolic days, and that it is irreparable; if one knows that the lawlessness of Christendom is surging up higher and stronger than ever; if one knows that every moral sign around betokens the speedy outburst into a flame of that which is now in preparation for the great catastrophe; how will all this affect the spirit? Of course I shall rejoice in having the Saviour as the hope of my heart — a hope shared with every saint of God, whether living or fallen asleep. But if I know that He is coming to receive us, and then in due season to judge all that is found here below (Christendom the most severely of all, as being the servant that “knew his master’s will, and did it not”), what will be the effect? That I shall seek to separate myself from every act, habit, course, or association which the word of God condemns to my

conscience; that I shall desire to be found with loins girded and light burning, and myself like one that waits for his lord.

Other opportunities may offer for drawing out the rich, practical consequences of this truth. Tonight I would leave the great but simple fact resting on the minds of those that are listening to me; and I pray that God Himself may lead all our souls to look well to it; first, that we are really appreciating the place which grace has given us as members of Christ's body, the Church of God; that, if we do value it, we may be found carrying it out, not merely now and then, but every day; and that we allow nothing to draw us aside from the practical expression of our hope, and of our allegiance to our Lord, as of our thankfulness for the infinite mercy shown in bringing us into God's Church. The great bane of Christendom from the beginning has been either slipping into the world, courting it, valuing earthly objects on the one side, or on the other taking up Jewish elements, which is a mere religious, vain show, and now treated by the Holy Ghost in us Gentiles as no better than idolatry. (Gal. 4) But whether it be the Jewish element or the worldly conformity, they are alike destructive of the real separate and heavenly character of God's Church.

Again, we see that there is a hope which fits the Church of God. As Christ is the Head of the Church, so He is its hope: it is His own person and His own personal coming, to be with Himself above. It is not merely our going, but His coming for us; neither is it alone the individual soul happy and delivered from the sorrows and trials of this world, but every member of His body changed into conformity to the body of His glory — the dead raised,

the living transformed; and both caught up with joy to the Saviour, our life and our Head, come from heaven to receive us unto Himself, and present us before the Father in His house on high.

With remarkable clearness does the apostle distinguish the hope even from the inheritance of glory in the prayer which closes Ephesians 1 “That ye may know,” says he, “what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.... and you,” etc. The calling of God is detailed in the earlier verses of the chapter; the central verses develop the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance (which He takes, not immediately and personally, so to speak, not in Christ alone, but also in the saints, who are not the inheritance, but rather the heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ). Then this prayer asks for them that they might know, not exactly God’s calling, but the hope of it, — their bright future portion in Christ suited to it when every thing inconsistent with the divine nature and our relationship to God shall have disappeared, and all shall be actually and only in full flow, fruition, and harmony with Him in whose presence we shall be. Next, it is sought that they might know “the riches of the glory of his inheritance,” which, boundless as it is in glory, is nevertheless a prospect inferior to the “hope,” inferior even to the saints who are the objects of the love of Christ and of the Father, with which “the hope” connects itself. The third request (on which, however, I must not now enlarge) is, that they might know what is the exceeding

greatness of God’s power towards us who believe, even that the self-same power which raised up Christ is that which has quickened us together with Christ, raised and seated us together in heavenly places in Him. How blessed and special then is the hope of God’s calling, as well as all that follows! Nor is it surprising after all to those who know who and what God is, and what is His love and value for Christ, seeing that He has given Him to be head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The hope must be and is worthy of such infinite love and blessing.

Such is the Christian hope. Distinctly and in due time there follows also the manifest execution of His judgment upon that which bears the name of His Church, but is not - upon everything in Christendom that is false and contrary to His glory. He will judge the world. He will judge, but not as unhappy men of Christian antiquity imagined (which I just mention by the way, to show the early, rapid and dreadful defection from the truth). They actually thought that if a man were ever so wicked but baptized, he would be better off in the day of judgment — better off even if cast into hell-fire than a mere Jew or Gentile. What a clear proof that these men, miscalled “the fathers of the Church,” but really its corrupters, polluted the sources of truth from the beginning, and contributed amazingly to the ruin of Christendom to this day! This is not said from prejudice, nor from a mere dip into their writings, but from some acquaintance with the best. That gross error, inconsistent with an adequate knowledge of Christianity or any right moral measure, is found in those who are considered the chief. Does it not prove how rapid and deadly the departure was from the deposit of God’s

truth? In fact, it was the working of the mystery of iniquity, or part of it. Now things become bolder; now the apostate character, and not corruption merely, becomes more and more apparent; the hatred, the scorn of the Church's true character, and not merely of its privileges (for, alas! they are unknown), but even of the common principles which a Jew would have known and valued as his heritage. If this evil is notoriously going on, even in those that profess to be the defenders of the truth, Christendom is assuredly ground that bears thorns and briers, is rejected and cursed, whose end is to be burned.

In presence of such facts and such a future, what is it which every soul that has not faced these truths in the light of God ought to feel? Let the heart search and see that there be no object between it and Christ, that He can be welcomed day by day as the immediate hope of the Christian. I do not use the word "immediate" to fix a time in the least; but would add this remark, that when Christians talk of not fixing the time, they often mean in reality that they do not understand the question. In heaven, and for heaven, dates have no place; and our hope is a heavenly one. It is on earth, and for earthly matters, that we find the importance of times and seasons. They may be and are measured by the orbs of heaven, but still it is for an earthly people and that Christ is not coming yet. Now, I protest against such a ground of objection, however I may repudiate the fixing of a date. Undoubtedly most who speak about fixing, or not fixing, the time, prove earthly hope. If our place be with Christ on high, we are above them. We are one with Him who sits at the right hand of God. Times and seasons have no value nor bearing there. Whatever

delay may be now, the reason is, not a date, but God's long suffering in saving. It will close when God the Father has called out the last member of the body of Christ. It is not that He is "slack concerning his promise;" but when all are called out to heavenly association, Jesus will come to receive His saints who are waiting for Him.

Do you say that there are many saints of God who are not awaiting Him? I dare not say so. I believe that every saint of God loves the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many a saint may be obscure, he may hold wrong theories, he may insert a millennium between himself and Christ's coming, and thus fall under an immense incubus; but he has Christ as his hope for all that, if he loves Christ. It may be a poorly understood hope; there will surely be but a defective display of it; there must be a very partial enjoyment of it; yet it cannot be but that he who has Christ for his life, delights in and longs for the seeing of Christ, and the being with Christ and like Christ. At the same time, I admit, of course, the utter wrongness of interposing a delay by these prophetic misinterpretations; I warn against the admission of any earthly objects whatever between the heart and the coming of Christ. Depend upon it, that it is a great and frequent snare to guard against. It is not merely that some put a millennium between the present moment and His coming; but others again confound their position with Jews and Gentiles, and imagine a fearful tribulation for Christians between the present and the coming of Christ. Those who thus shake souls (2 Thess. 2:2) are just as guilty as others who take the world now, antedating the millennium (1 Cor. 4:8) The great tribulation is no more suitable a preparation of the Bride

for meeting her Bridegroom than is the millennium. The truth is, Scripture interposes nothing between the heart and Christ. It speaks much of these things, but it never substitutes either of them for the coming of Christ. This too will come before us more fully another time; but I wish to leave on all a sufficiently plain and distinct view from God's word of what the Church is, and of the hope which suits so blessed a relationship to Christ. May it ever be in our ears and hearts!

W.K.

The Rapture of the Saints Raised or Changed at Christ's Coming

Lecture 5 - 2 Thess. 2:1-12.

It is a matter of thankfulness to God, that the very adversaries of the truth that will be asserted tonight are compelled to correct their own theories. The force of that truth is such as cannot be honestly gainsaid. They cannot but acknowledge that the coming of Christ in person is the true hope of the saint. Time was (and most of us who have been at all versed in the spiritual history of God’s testimony during the last quarter of a century or more can well remember) when it was otherwise. All who can carry their eye back over that brief space, or who have had occasion to acquaint themselves with the facts, will know that it was once far different. Even among true children of God the almost universal notion was, that death, in order to the departure of the soul separate from the body to be with Christ, was the hope, and that this was really meant by much of Scripture which spoke of the coming of the Lord. Others, too, were not wanting who indulged in a still lower expectation; and, I am sorry to add, that the faintest of all hopes is far from exploded yet. Are there not Christian men looking for a world-wide triumph of the truth on the earth by missionary effort and the like? Are they not on the rack to imagine such destructive blows to be given the mystery of iniquity by the advancing gospel, and by providential events, as shall establish the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ without let or rival here below?

Nevertheless, even for the measure of homage which has been reluctantly paid to the truth of God, we may be, and perhaps ought to be, thankful. It is the pretty general acknowledgment among believers, that the Lord's personal coming to receive His saints, then glorified, is the only adequate answer to the Church's hope. Still, one cannot but feel that it is only a comparative comfort, because of the large admixture of human thoughts and expectations, which goes far practically to nullify that seeming admission of the truth in the hearts of many children of God. For what avails it for the soul's condition, what for the testimony of God's truth, if there be the holding of the truth just so far as not to be an infidel to it, while the affections (for there are divine affections for the new life) are not heartily enlisted and in full activity? what can be the result, where the ordinary thought and the habitual teaching tend to turn away the eye from Christ and to fix it upon intermediate events? These events, by which the enemy seeks by all means to distract us from the true star of our hopes, may be either triumph in the world for the truth on the one hand, or sorrow, distress, persecution, terror, produced by Satan's power among men, on the other. It is difficult to say which has the worst moral effect upon the soul.

My business now will be to prove from the word of God that every theory is false which turns away the heart of the Christian from Christ: that it is a matter of comparatively insignificant moment whether one anticipates a long period of unprecedented prosperity, or whether another looks with dread for a shorter hour of equally awful trouble. In either case it is not the hope Christ has set before the Church, though there is a

measure of truth in both. We all believe that there is a long reign of peace and joy for the earth. At least I may assume that all, or almost all here, believe it, as every Christian does who is not corrupted by the rationalism of the day, or by some peculiar fancy prejudicial to the truth. Again, we all believe that there is a day of darkness, of special Satanic power, for the earth. It is not, therefore, that one disputes the fact, either of the brief season of Satan's rage and man's trouble here below, or of the long triumphant display of Christ's power when it shall be established everywhere over the whole world; but what we deny strenuously is, that either one or other is the proper hope which the New Testament puts before the Christian man.

Now, in the goodness of God, we have very full instruction upon the subject, and this remarkably compressed in two epistles, from one of which the introductory portion has been just read. It was remarked on a previous occasion, that the coming of the Lord is no mysterious subject, involved in clouds, beyond the spiritual capacity of even the babe in Christ. The first chapter of 1 Thessalonians disproves it. The Thessalonians were converted, not only from idols "to serve the living and true God," but "to wait for his Son from heaven." They were right. The Spirit of God sanctions such waiting — never in a single instance condemns it. The Spirit mentions it to their praise. It was His own power and mighty testimony to the world. Nay more, it is the instinct pertaining to the child of God. There is no Christian that would not ardently await the Son of God from heaven, unless he were turned aside by the false teaching of men. The Thessalonians accordingly were thus expecting the Son from heaven;

yet were they ignorant as to the details of the Lord's coming, and of its relation to other portions of the truth, especially to the prophecies. But it is of immense importance that it should be held distinctly in the soul, that the hope of Christ is no mere prophetic event, does not, properly speaking, belong to prophecy, though, of course, connected with it, but is in itself apart from the revelation of the events that are to take place upon the earth, of which it is the province of prophecy to treat The hope, on the other, is the consummation of the spiritual desires implanted in every Christian's breast; and therefore one sees at once with what sweetness and propriety our Lord Jesus, who is the object of our faith, is equally that of our hope. It is no mere prospect of getting something, no mere expectation of deliverance from sorrow and trial, or of enjoying circumstances of glory and triumph in the earth.

All these things are beneath the purpose of God for us; founded, no doubt, upon snatches of revealed truth, which, in the enemy's hand, serve to supplant that which the Lord puts before us, and the Holy Spirit forms in us, and every simple, unspoiled soul necessarily tends to — the desire that Jesus should have His glory, joy, and love, without a check or cloud, for those He loves best — the desire after that precious time when every thought of His heart shall be accomplished in His Bride, as well as for the kingdom here below, to the glory of God the Father. What a change will this be from the circumstances of sorrow, and need, and shame, through which we are passing; though, after all, His love is just as perfect towards us now as it can be then. But He is not content with the present result; He always looks upon us according to that which is given us in purpose,

according to the full fruit in glory of His work, His cross, death, and resurrection Then He will have those He loves together; He will have them near Himself where He is; He will have them in the house of His Father; He will have them above everything that could cause a pang, or be productive of shame to themselves and dishonour upon His name. Surely this is a hope suitable to the heavenly Bride, because it is worthy of Him who died for us and rose again, and is coming back to receive us unto Himself. He is coming, that He may have all that are thus loved, all that are destined according to the will and counsels of God the Father to be with Himself above. And thus it was accordingly that the Thessalonian saints waited and looked, though they little understood the hope, and were not acquainted with the details of prophecy, and had a great deal to be instructed in as to the effects of the coming of the Lord, its bearing both upon the dead and the living (as you may find on the dead saints chiefly in the first epistle, and on the living very particularly in the second). Still were they right in the simple, living, habitual expectancy of their Lord, and thoroughly owned of the Holy Ghost in that attitude of their souls. Of course, this was no more than the general truth. Without enlarging on each passage in these epistles which touches the Lord's advent, I would particularly notice now what has been just alluded to, their error as to the dead saints. This drew out a remarkable and new revelation of the Holy Ghost through St. Paul. I say a "revelation," because he intimates as much himself.

In the earlier chapters there is no such revelation about it, though, of course, it is all the inspired word of God, every whit of it; but in chapter 4 there is a positive

communication of fresh light, not before possessed by the Thessalonians, and most needful for the Church at all times. They were so full of the expectation of a returning Saviour, that they never so much as contemplated the thought of any from among them dying. They were just then startled by the fact that some brethren did fall asleep. Apparently they were stumbled, and certainly they were yielding to undue sorrow. This might expose them to the tempter. The Holy Ghost therefore writes by the apostle to correct the error. They imagined that the dead saints must lose a large part, if not all, of the joy of welcoming the Lord when He comes from heaven. It is not that they so far forgot the truth as to think their companions had by death lost the blessing of eternal life. No persons knowing the gospel as they knew it could harbour such thoughts about believers. If they were sure the Old Testament saints would be saved, they could hardly imagine their own dead brethren who knew and loved the Lord would be lost. But still they thought that there would be a serious drawback from full joy and triumph. They thought that they could not have the sweet privilege of receiving and being received by the Lord at His coming from heaven. On this head they are set right, and with much positive instruction otherwise, in these terms: — “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are sleeping, that you sorrow not, even as the rest also who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those put to sleep through Jesus will God bring with him.”

Such is the first main thought here presented, — that God will assuredly bring with Jesus those put to sleep by Him. They had doubted this. They had feared it could

not be. That in some manner the deceased Christians would be brought into blessing afterwards, they of course may have believed; but they never had conceived, as indeed they had not yet been instructed, how dead saints could be with Jesus at His coming. Here the Spirit of God explains how it would all be effected. “For this we say unto you in the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise prevent” (or, I venture to suggest, instead of this, precede) “them which are asleep.” It is well known that this is the true force of the expression. Indeed “prevent” is merely the old English word; so that it is not a question of a different rendering, but of substituting modern English for that which is somewhat obsolete. Thus, surviving saints on earth are not to be before those who would be then asleep, i.e. dead. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, the living, who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” That is, if there be a difference, the dead will rather be before the living, so far from the dead saints missing that joyful hour and its precious accompaniments, and the full enjoyment of the hope for which the saints had been waiting in life. They, though they had passed away from this world, are not viewed as, properly speaking, dead, though of course there was the fact of death; but they are described as those that are fallen asleep, and this by Jesus. The grace of Christ had given death this character in their case. But, moreover, they should be brought with Jesus. How could this be, seeing that they were departed? In order to be brought with Jesus, we are next

told that He Himself would descend from heaven with a shout. There is not a word of any saints with Him then. He is alone, as far as His risen people are concerned. He is then coming to raise them. He descends from heaven with a shout, and this “shout” has a very special character. It is the word of a commander to his own troop, of an admiral to his own seamen, or, in fact, of any one, who is in a position that gives him authority, to such as belong to him. It is the summons to His own, the arousing word of command, the effect of which is that the dead saints instantly arise from their graves. “Then we, the living who remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall be caught up together with them.” There is nothing like an interval which you can call appreciable, except to faith; because the dead saints raised, and the living ones changed without passing through death, are “caught up together to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” This then accounts for God bringing them all with Jesus. Such is the manner of it. The Lord Jesus having first come, awakened the sleepers, and changed those alive, translates them both to meet Him in the air. “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” The apostle explains how it comes to pass that, when Christ does come in His glory, and all His saints with Him, the dead shall be there just as much as the living. The reason is that, previously, He comes and raises the dead, changes the living, and has them at the same time caught up to meet Him in the air.

How important and fruitful a Scripture this is, need not be said; yet I would call your attention particularly to a few points. We are told that the dead in Christ rise first; then, not they who may be alive and remain at His coming, but “we.” Why this language, if it was the mind

of the Spirit of God to challenge the attitude of the Thessalonian saints — to say that they were excited about the hope, too much occupied with it, improperly looking for it as possible in their own day? Did he tell them they lacked sobriety, because a long period must elapse first, numberless events be fulfilled, visible signs appear; and when they had seen one, two, three or so on of these signs, then they might begin to look out with the intelligent conviction that the coming of the Lord was at length drawing nigh? Had they been in the main mistaken about the matter, could any occasion more demand its correction than this? The Spirit of God was correcting an error of detail; why not deal with it all, root and branch? Why not lay the axe of the word to the root of this tree of human imagination, if such it were? So far from this, the Holy Ghost puts His seal upon the substance of their expectation. They were waiting for Christ to come, and so was Paul; and the apostle, instead of seeking to alter their attitude as an error, puts himself along with the Thessalonian saints in the looking for Christ as a present, continual expectation of the heart. “We which are alive and remain” does suppose the hope from day to day though it does not mean what wicked rationalism imagines, that the apostle Paul gave a date for the Lord’s coming. Scripture never fixes anything of the sort; but what it does, and what the apostle Paul evidently shows here that it does, is to sustain souls in constant hope. It not only sets the saint to wait for Christ, but it keeps him waiting, and condemns every thought inconsistent with waiting for Him. It corrects whatever of error may have encumbered the hope, unsparingly cutting it down; but it confirms the great fundamental truth which the New Testament establishes in the heart of the believer, the continual expectancy of

Christ as a present hope. This is not confined to one portion of the word of God. The gospels taught the same; further developments come out in the epistles. Our Lord invariably directed the heart thus even where He was not distinguishing between the expectation of godly persons in Israel and that which gradually dawned when Jewish hopes waned away. He has not forgotten His ancient people, as we saw the other night; He remembers and provides for Israel. He has shown us what their hope is, and has maintained it in the New Testament, lest there might have been the notion that the Old Testament hope was a thing for ever gone by, because of the wickedness of Israel. The very New Testament, which shows us the introduction of another building of God, the Church, and the hope that is in its fulness characteristic of the Christian, demonstrates along with it that Israel's expectations are still kept for them, until they are awakened by the Spirit of God to long for, appropriate, understand, and enjoy them.

In the Gospels our Lord presents things at first after a general way. He does not enter with that particularity where He presents His coming, so that you can easily say for whom specially it is. The effect is, in divine wisdom, that while much suits the Christian, there is instruction for the godly Jew of the latter day also. But, at the same time, this one grand feature is found to pervade all our Lord's instructions on the subject, well worthy of note, that whatever He says, even if it were in a parable, the language is so constructed as to keep him who believes the word of God on the look out for Jesus. The uniform object, evidently, is to forbid such a thought as a long period elapsing first as a necessary barrier. Take, for instance, in Matthew 24, the household

servant, who is put in a position of authority in the absence of his master. Where is there a hint of another servant, and then another succeeding, and another? The very reverse is true: as far as the parable bears upon its face, you could not gather but that the Lord was to come in that very generation. Am I denying then that God foresaw the long time the Church was to abide in this world? Not at all; but this was the sole, or at any rate the chosen method, according to the wisdom of God, in which the saints could be always expecting the Saviour. Therefore you cannot draw from these parables, or others kindred to them, the smallest allowance of the thought, that the believer ought not always to expect Jesus during his own lifetime. Such, on the contrary, was in fact the cherished hope of the earliest believers after Christ's death and resurrection.

Again, in the parable of the virgins, there is the same analogy. As far as the parable states, it is the same virgins who went out first with their lamps, then went to sleep, later on were roused from their sleep by the midnight cry, "Go ye out to meet him," and finally went in with Him to the marriage. Of course, the parabolic scope is not limited to the letter, and room is left for continuous application. But there is no ground whatever, on the other hand, for the supposition, that these parables expressly insinuate a long succession of ages and centuries to elapse before Christ could come. But then, while this is true, mark the exceeding perfectness of the word of God. If the Bridegroom should tarry, still the truth remains the same. If the Lord delay what might seem to be a long time in the life of a single virgin or a single servant, or if He in fact (not there stated) spanned over many generations of believers, still the

hope remains to burn brightly again. As far as the word of God is concerned, Scripture thus invariably keeps before the believer the Lord as at hand. Therefore every theory is a falsehood which implies that it is wrong to expect Christ habitually, or that there are certain revealed events that must happen first, requiring the lapse of many years, or ages perhaps; that only then, when these events are accomplished, or these ages expired, can we soberly and truly look for Christ to come. Such a theory, I repeat, is contrary to every one of those plain Scriptures, which some inconsiderately allege to prove a necessary delay.

How, could the Holy Ghost have written such words, “We which are alive and remain,” if He would have us know that Christ could not come soon? Are we not to gather that He had an object in His phrase? — that, knowing the truth and the future perfectly well, His blessed aim was to settle the believer in the habitual expectation of the Lord Jesus Christ, whatever excuses the unbeliever may make? And so it will be found with the various parts of Scripture that treat of this weighty theme. It is remarkable, (and I would warn you of the fact, having been struck with it only lately in considering the subject,) that the objections usually alleged by those who look for the great tribulation as that which must be gone through by Christians before they are entitled to expect the Lord for their translation to heaven, are precisely the same sort of difficulties as the adversaries of the pre-millennial advent produce against that scheme as a whole. In a word, when men essay to prove that we are not to be expecting Christ’s advent continually, that we are not warranted to look for Him as the proximate hope of the heart, their plea for

intervening events assumes pretty much the same shape as that of the men who do not believe He is coming until the thousand years' reign is over. What are we thence to infer? That both parties are actuated by the self-same spirit of unbelief; that they are the antagonists, I am grieved to say, of the truth of God, as far as this grave subject is concerned.

We may learn much from the first parable we referred to — the household servant. What is the virus of his wrong? What stamped him as "that evil servant"? No doubt his conduct betrays these two fatal blots: he beats his fellow-servants, he eats and drinks with the drunken. There is a haughty self-exaltation towards those put by the Lord on common ground with himself; there is also association and fellowship with the world. But what characterized the laxity and perverseness of his soul? That which was within led to these outbreaks of evil; for never does evil begin in external conduct of any kind. The mischief is always within in the first instance. How, then, does the Lord characterize that inner spring? He, the Judge of all, knows the principles of the heart. How does He describe this man's inward departure before it is developed in those evil forms of an external kind? "He says in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming." Are there any persons here that say in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming"? There are many that think so everywhere: how many, alas! say so in Christendom. The Lord is not describing the profane world, but those that bear His name: He is in this part portraying the professing system that bears His name. He has done with the Jewish branch of His subject before He presents the parables we have touched on. Within the range of Christendom He gives us, as the first picture of

evil, this deep-seated, wide-spread root of mischief, that certain, professing to be His servants, cherish as the thought of their heart (and there is nothing more fatal), "My Lord delayeth His coming." It is not a merely mistaken notion, it is the heart that is utterly wrong. One might ignorantly admit some perverse doctrine on the subject, and this, of course, would hinder the soul; but here, as in all real mischief, the affections are thoroughly wrong, the judgment is consequently darkened, and the whole moral life becomes the expression of those corrupt affections and that false judgment.

This first picture among the three parables that refer to Christendom is much to be noted. Dark as it is, the Lord Himself is He who draws it for us, under the unfaithful servant saying in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming." Various paths may lead a man into such a thought, as the deliberate feeling of his heart: the Lord does not warrant us to ask how it came to pass. If such is the fact, the results are beyond measure fatal. The servant's heart was proved not to wish for his Lord's return. He made up his mind, therefore, that Christ was not coming shortly; he did not love His appearing. Why should he? How could he? He might have been interrupted in some of his plans and projects by His speedy coming. He therefore said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming." But it was a false heart, caught by a device of Satan. Morally it was the forerunner, as far as this parable declares, of the spirit of self and the world coming in to ruin the ministry of Christ and turn what ought to have been a service into a lordship, making a human "clergy" out of a divine ministry. I wish to hurt nobody's feelings, and beg the forbearance of

such as might conceive themselves attacked. Nevertheless it is due to the word that I should affirm what I believe to be of God from it — that there is a false position in this respect in ominous vicinity to the heart's putting off the coming of the Lord.

Let us look a little more into the parable of the virgins. It has been already cited for a particular purpose. We may now enquire into its general bearing upon the subject. Some there are who apply it to the Jewish remnant; but this is a palpable mistake. There are excellent reasons which forbid its reference in any just sense whatever to them. First, there is no ground in Scripture to believe that, when the Jewish remnant are once called out, they will ever go to sleep before the Lord comes. The circumstances they must encounter would make it a very extraordinary issue if they went asleep; and those who affirm this ought to produce some proof of it. The Jewish remnant go asleep! Men called to face sufficiently imminent danger every day of their lives, until they fled from the sharpest trial since creation! The great crisis of their history may be short; but as long as it lasts, they are nursed in storms and tempest, with death continually before their eyes. Will they then go to sleep during that brief period of at most seven years? Their fiery trial is not to be above half that time; but take the largest possible reckoning in which they can be spoken of. In point of fact, during the first three years and a half, as will be seen more fully on some future occasion, they are not distinguished properly, Morally alone are they a remnant, or in the sight of God; they may not come out distinctly as such before men until the last half week. What can be more opposed to fair inference from every Scripture that speaks of them, than

to suppose that such men, at such a crisis, could go asleep? Moreover, take notice that the parable speaks of the whole mass. It is not merely the foolish virgins, but “all” who slumbered and slept. Now, the remnant, as far as I know, has no false profession in its midst, has nothing answering to wise and foolish — to those who had and those who had not oil. Looking at Christendom, on the other hand, one can see perfectly how this has been verified. And this is not the only reason. Other remarks I may add by the way, though it is a little digression from the subject, that the truth may be cleared, and the distinct force of this parable may be maintained upon the Christian conscience. This must plead as my apology for dwelling on the subject, and rejecting utterly every attempt to turn it away from Christian profession, as its proper object.

The virgins, first of all, went out to meet the Bridegroom. It is not so with the Jews. They will never go out to meet the Bridegroom. The very principle of their call is rather to stay where they are, and there will the Lord bless them. Even if you consider their fleeing from Antichrist in his time and the unparalleled tribulation, it is not going out to meet the Bridegroom. But what we have in this parable of our Lord is a most instructive picture of the Christian position in relation to the coming of Christ — the virgins going forth to meet the Bridegroom. It is supposed, again, that some are mere professors, for they are with-out oil in their vessels. This, as remarked, will not be the case with the Jewish remnant. Further, whatever they may possess, Jews can hardly be described in this way as having oil in their vessels. This is really a beautiful emblem of the Christian, characterized by the unction of the Holy

Ghost. Though the remnant be under the hand of God's Spirit, this does not answer to having oil in the vessel. The washing of water by the word may be theirs, but not yet the outpoured Spirit.

The more you look at it, proofs will multiply that Christianity was meant by our Lord in this parable. Thus all go out to meet the Bridegroom. They quit everything here below, not to escape from evil or trouble, but attracted to an object of joy and blessing. It is the power of Christ and the character of Christianity, from the first moment that the great principle wrought in souls upon earth by the power of the Holy Ghost. In Abraham there was a calling from country and kindred, as far as that was concerned, but no going forth to meet the Bridegroom. In Christianity this received its bright and only real illustration. The Lord, before He went away, put this before the sorrowing disciples: "Ye believe in God: believe also in me." It is as if He had said, I am not going to be the visible Messiah upon earth, as you expect; I am going to be invisible, even as God is; I am about to disappear from the world. But if I go away, my heart and thoughts are with you. In my Father's house, whither I go, I am about to bless you even more than if I stayed here. If I do not set up my earthly kingdom according to the prophets, I am going to what is far better — to the Father's house; and if I go and prepare a place for you (for this was one object of His going, as He states it here), "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." In this you have exactly the Christian hope. It is the Lord Jesus leaving this world for heaven, giving them the certainty that He associates them with Himself in His heavenly place, and, moreover, that, when the place is ready for

them there, He will come again for them. John 13 shows, that, all the time He is in heaven, He is preparing them for the place; chapter 14 shows that He is preparing the place for them: that done, He will come again and receive them to Himself, that where He is, they may be also.

Far from there being anything Jewish in this, it is, on the contrary, the contrast to everything of the sort. It is the proper Christian hope; for the Lord comes, and this, not to bless us in our place by putting down evil, and making this world a sweet and precious abode, where the fragrance of His goodness, power, and glory will be shed universally. This is the Jewish expectation, which the holy prophets continually present. But here it is quite new and heavenly, the Father's house, and a place for them as much as for Him. there. Who had ever heard such a thing before? When, where, had there been the most distant hint? Now the Lord divulges it. It is not, of course, that the mystery hid from ages and generations was yet brought out; but He did announce the proper Christian hope, which they would understand better when the Holy Ghost was come. And so they did.

Then, in the Acts of the Apostles, the general thought is set before the disciples in their approaching testimony to their Master unto the ends of the earth. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" I admit that it takes in the establishment of Christ's power and kingdom here below; but it is only the broad truth for which I now quote it. Still, it is at bottom substantially the same thing. The disciples were to look for Jesus from heaven. It is not great doings here below: but the Christian, associated with Christ in the

testimony of His grace now, is to look for Him coming from heaven This, you see, connects itself with the virgins going out to meet the Bridegroom. The New Testament, as a whole, enlarges and illustrates this most precious thought. It is not so much the blessing of men upon the earth, nor the reduction of the power of Satan here below in binding him and putting him aside from the earth, as the taking away of the believer out of the world to be with Christ in the Father's house. Only in the epistles of Paul this becomes still more evident. Now this is what we have to seize. Faith goes out to meet the Bridegroom, before He really comes and accomplishes the desire of the heart. Such is the character of the call of these virgins. It is not abiding where they are, to be blessed on the earth; but going forth to meet the Bridegroom. It is, in principle, going forth unto Christ without the camp, as in Heb. 13, to be blessed with Him in the heavens, as it is to share the reproach of the cross in this world. So we find every provision for sustaining in them this hope. They had not only the lamp of testimony, but the oil of the Holy Ghost, to keep up the light burning brightly in a way which, I believe, is characteristic of the Christian.

Spite of all, however, they go asleep. The Bridegroom tarries; the Christian, true as well as false, forgets his hope; but the mighty grace of God makes the solemn cry heard at midnight, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" We are not told who is the instrument. Enough for us to know that the cry was to be, and that the effect would be believers abandoning whatever had detained them before, and going forth once more to meet the Bridegroom. It is the resumption of the original attitude of the Christian in this respect. The true hope of the

Church stirs the long sleeping disciples. The Christian hope is revived in the saints. The Spirit of God shows that His power would not permit such a hope to expire finally in the Church. At an undated time is the cry heard once more.

The cry at midnight I believe to be of the most solemn importance. Just before the Lord Jesus Christ was to return, there is the cry heard, and not till then. The virgins, even the foolish as well as the wise, aroused by the cry, trim their lamps; but only they that have the oil in their vessels are in a condition to be received. The others are occupied by their wants, seeking here and there to find that oil which they have not. The Lord comes at the critical moment, and the wise virgins alone go in to the marriage.

Mark another thing. They went forth again to meet the Bridegroom. The Christians at this time, and at this time only, since their early turning aside to slumber, return to their original position of going out to meet the Bridegroom. They leave all for Christ once more. Have you done it? Can you say that you have gone out to meet the Bridegroom? Are you detained by old habits? Are you kept back by the traditions of men? Have you got so accustomed as to like the state of decadence into which Christendom has fallen? Do you prefer to sleep at leisure? Or are you roused at the cry that grace has sent forth again? Have you gone forth to meet the Bridegroom? If so, happy are you! If with the oil in your vessels, the consciousness of your relationship, the enjoyment by the Holy Ghost’s power of that which you are called to, you can stay and sleep where you are, be it so: for my part, it seems wiser and truer, not to say due

to Christ and His love, to go forth with alacrity of heart, and await His coming in peace.

The next parable does not call for many words just now. Without repeating the common truth, it may be remarked, that here we have a vivid account of that which pertains to Christianity on the active side. When Christ ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men. Never was, and, I believe, never will be seen, the same fulness of blessing of this kind as is known in Christianity. There will be a brief, wide, energetic testimony everywhere at “the time of the end,” no doubt; but still, this trading with the various talents which the Lord gives — to one this, and to another that — is characteristic evidently of the Christian ministry. Accordingly you have the servants found in the active use of these different gifts of the Lord’s grace, who calls them to render Him an account, at last, how they were used. Still, throughout, whether it were household servants, whether virgins, whether men trading with talents, there is this one stamp imprinted on these as on all other parables that bear upon Christendom. There is no revelation of such a delay as necessarily implies a succession of servants from age to age, no disclosure of the almost double millennium of Christendom which has transpired in point of fact. Just so far is a delay spoken of as might give occasion to the progress of permitted evil in Christendom. And is it not remarkable, that the apostolic hour does not close till the last survivor of that holy company could affirm that the worst character of evil was there already, whereby it was known to be the last time? (1 John 2) Take any other prediction you please, as, for instance, 2 Tim. 3: “In the last days perilous times shall come.” What does the Spirit of God

expressly add? That these times were a long way off? On the very contrary, He enjoins, “From such turn away.” Something of it, at least, was there then. There is no delay. Then, again, take worse than that — the mystery of iniquity. It “already worketh.” Where was the delay? Take even antichrists, the worst form of evil that can possibly be save one, the last of themselves: “Many antichrists are already come.” Thereby the apostle knew it was the “last time.” What evils more were to be dreaded? What was there to be waited for? Christ! No events, therefore, are so interposed by revelation as to be a barrier to the return of the Lord in the hearts of the saints. He might delay, in fact; and no doubt these evils, which already wrought, would consequently expand, and become much more definite and appalling. The lapse of time, if God so pleased it, would make their character more and more plain. Most true was His description of these deep and various evils; but the evils were there and then detected, pronounced upon, and judged from the very first age of Christendom. Therefore the expectation of such evils could not rightly act as an obstacle. They were already treated as in existence; they are so described by the Spirit of God. Nothing then can justly detain the heart; for what, according to the word, ought to hinder one from always expecting Christ?

But then it is asked, are not particular cases adverse? Do we not find the Lord telling Peter by what death he must glorify God? Do we not hear Paul telling us that the time of his departure was just at hand? In truth, such objections refute themselves. It proves the very contrary of that for which they are summoned. Would it not sound a very extraordinary thing among men for any man to be seriously told that he must die some time or another?

Ordinarily, people have made up their minds for it as a certainty; they are satisfied that all must die. How comes it to pass in Scripture, that a man who was carrying his life in his hand, like the apostle Paul, needed to have an intimation that his death was nigh at hand? How comes it that so bold a servant of God as Peter, in the midst of hostile Jews, whom he denounced as murderers of their own Messiah, had to be told of the death whereby he was to glorify God? Because at that time the children of God expected not death, but Christ to come in glory. Because their Lord's return from heaven was strongly and universally watched for by every saint of God. So truly was it the sanctioned settled hope of all, that the exception had to be a matter of positive special intimation from God. Again mark the manner in which these intimations are given. There is little reason to suppose that Peter comprehended the meaning of that to him when heard; as the disciples, we know, misunderstood in general the Lord's word to John. It was put in a most enigmatical form, just as John's tarrying was cast in such a figurative mould that the disciples themselves discussed with perplexity what was meant. They conceived that John was not to die. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Thence they drew the inference that John was not to taste death. They were wrong there: did they know the other so much better?

Observe this also, that the Spirit of God in the word never notices Peter's death, so that the Church could know anything about it, till he was just on the point of departure: then Peter says the Lord had told him that he must "put off this tabernacle." Was this to make a sign of it, or to help on the systematic deferring of the hope?

Besides, Peter might have died any day; Though he was not a young man when the first epistle appeared, yet the Spirit of God kept him from writing about it then. — Nowhere else does he refer to it till he was just going to depart. The Church's hope could not therefore be affected by it, for the mention was made only as he was leaving the earth; and the gospel of John did not appear for long after. Just so was it with the apostle Paul. He names something similar, but when? He was not even aware that he was going to die when he wrote his epistle to the Philippians; or rather, he was sure he was to live a little longer, though stating it in one of the last of his writings. It was only at the end of all, when he was on the point of being offered up, that he declared his departure was at hand. What sort of proof is this that there are intervening events revealed in God's word which ought to hinder a Christian from continually watching for Christ? It is really strong presumption in a direction exactly the reverse.

So everything that is hastily caught at to prove that our Lord delays His coming, when duly examined and understood, will be found to fall in with His own condemnation of that sentiment, and the general strain of the Spirit's testimony to the clean contrary. Have we not all experienced man's unbelief to be so blind that the very reason produced for rejecting the truth is, when viewed in the light of God, the weightiest ground for receiving it? Take, for instance, rationalistic attacks upon Scripture, and especially their efforts to lower the Gospels. What is the fact? The discrepancies in the Gospels demonstrate, not only the veracity of the writers, but the beauty and perfection of the truth. Even a simple Christian man, it is to be hoped, speaks

conscientiously the truth. Such assailants never knew or practically forgot that God wrote the Gospels. They are under the illusion that it was, but Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John who did the work; whereas, employing whom He pleased, it was God who wrote them. This truth the Christian accepts without controversy, and would never dream of questioning, unless beguiled from his simplicity by the spurious theories of men who know not the Scriptures nor the power of God, however conversant they may be with the externals and accessories of the Bible. The alleged discrepancies are not in the smallest degree due to human infirmity; they lie not so much on the surface as in the depths of divine purpose, as the fulness of Jesus is variously viewed and depicted. No one evangelist could suffice. Hence to each it was given by the Spirit of God to bring out the glory of Christ, as it pleased Him, though suitably, no doubt, to the vessel employed. Thus the points of difference in the scope, manner, and expressions necessarily spring from this rich and varied exposition of the truth as it is in Jesus. The simple Christian receives it all, and enjoys it; but the more the truth is sifted and appreciated, the more triumphantly it is vindicated. This, of course, supposes not only faith, but a certain spiritual intelligence which you must never look for in the self-complacent rejecter of revelation. The intelligence of faith turns the objections into deepening proofs of the divine value of God’s word.

No otherwise is it with the objections that are often brought against the constant hope of the Lord’s coming to meet the saints. They, when dispassionately and intelligently looked into, turn out to be proofs that God so wrote the New Testament, by the evangelists, as they

are called, and by the apostles, as to keep the soul in its first bright impression expecting Christ from day to day. There is no such idea as fixing a special time, whether you put it at one epoch or another. The whole system of measured dates or equivalent signs. to decide about the coming of the Lord is false. Some have pointed to A.D. 1867. Then, when we approach the year, they begin to shift the time somewhat farther off, and say that it is but “the beginning of the end.” What is this but saving their own credit at the expense of Scripture? To sober, not to say reverent, men, it looks like unworthy dealing with the word of God; and the source of the error, I am not afraid to tell them, is ignorance of the word of God, and especially of the Church’s calling and hopes.

The word of God is pure, being the reflection of His truth and holiness. There is no such thing as seeking to make an impression upon the spirit of the believer for the sake of effect. God Himself has purposely put the Christian and the Church to wait for Christ without knowing the time, inasmuch as He reserves all such matters in His own authority, as indeed is most due and wise withal In His grace there is a reason given, which is that “the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation.” Such is the true key to the delay. God is not closing up the number of the elect before the time. He will not shut into narrow limits the rich grace which has gone out so far and so actively, and already called in not a few. God is magnifying His Son. He is slow, therefore, so to speak, to foreclose the period. He is widening it rather, as it were: He enlarges less for greater bounds. He has allowed a time to pass, no doubt, which would have surprised the early Christians; but when you examine the word of God, there is not a trace of a thought which

fixes or limits the time. They were always expecting Him, but at the same time without knowing when He might come. And what is the cause of this? Why is there the absence of a date? The Lord was continually presented as coming quickly, at hand, &c., and it was His will that the Christian should be always looking for Him.

Let us turn to the portion of the word of God read to you to- night. This Scripture has been made to teach a palpable error, through an unfortunate misconception on the part of our admirable translators. Nor were they singular; for the same thing pervaded almost every version in this particular until a recent date. It is no wonder that, thus prevalent, this mistake has been so largely the means of misguiding or perplexing the believer. Some here might be astonished to hear that there are those who consider that 2 Thessalonians was written to correct an error into which the saints addressed had fallen through misinterpreting its predecessor. The first epistle is supposed to have produced the hasty and erroneous expectation that our Lord was at hand. The second epistle is supposed by these to have been written and sent to correct this, to reprove them for their feverish state, and to declare that the Lord was not at hand, as the enthusiasts imagined. This explanation I denounce as contrary to the word of God. One proof that it is false and unsound lies in this, that it sets Scripture against Scripture. The truth always harmonizes. The moment fresh light is seen, it removes that darkness which made one part of the word of God inconsistent with another; and there is no more common or surer evidence, that the soul has been led, by influx of light from above, into acquaintance with the mind of

God, as revealed on any given matter, than this power which puts facts previously disjointed in texts of Scripture into order and clearness as a living whole.

What the apostle is really correcting by the second epistle is an error wholly different from that which is attributed to these saints, or those who had led them astray. He had comforted them about the dead saints in the first; he now seeks to dispel their alarm about the day of the Lord on themselves, the living saints. You must remember that the Thessalonians already knew that the Lord was coming, as they also knew that the day of the Lord would be a day of trouble and darkness; so that “when men would say, Peace and safety, sudden destruction would fall upon them.” But how these things were to be put together, they did not know: such indeed is the condition in which a great many Christians are at this moment. They did not understand the relative order of the Lord’s coming and of His day. The consequence was, that, in the case of the Thessalonians, false teachers took advantage of their ignorance to trouble them. It is important to observe, that alarming the saints of God, filling them with anxiety touching God and their own relation to Him, and holding out a disturbing, painful impression of that which He is going to do with respect to them, is one of the plainest tokens of the devil’s work. To arouse unconverted souls, ay, and to alarm them too, may be all quite right; but when a soul has found Christ, and is supposed to be resting upon “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” to overwhelm it with terror or even doubt as to its association with Christ through prophetic events, is the antagonistic work of the enemy. I am not now speaking of the case of a person falling, alas! into sin. It is quite right to rouse

the conscience in such circumstances, and to bring the person to confess his sin; but I allude now to producing alarm in the saints of God, and this through some misused picture of the day of the Lord. It is to falsify in the most intimate relations to Christ; it is to turn the fulness of grace into a source of terror which is most ruinous. This was precisely what these false teachers essayed to do: thus too others have wrought since. They presented the “day” of the Lord before these believers as a present thing, substituting its horrors for the coming of the Lord with its eternal joy and blessedness.

It is carefully to be observed that “the day of the Lord” and “the coming of the Lord” are never confounded in the word of God. What is the difference? The “coming” of the Lord is the general term. It means His presence, in contrast with His absence. That is the literal force of the word, which is, I dare say, fairly enough translated “coming,” because He must have come in order to be present; but it is His state of presence which is the true and genuine force of the word. Now, it is evident that our Lord might change His absence for His presence without manifesting Himself.

Hence, you have this difference — that Scripture speaks not only of the general truth of the presence of Christ by and by, as that which is to be, instead of His being absent as He is now; but it defines a particular part of that presence, which is variously styled, His “day,” His “revelation,” His “appearing,” or “the manifestation (epiphany or shining forth) of His presence.” I am now referring to many Scriptures which any one who is familiar with the word of God will easily enough bear in mind and apply. The great distinctive point is, that, while the “presence” or the “coming” of the Lord is necessary

to all these things, still all these other terms imply notions over and above the thought of His presence. His "presence" is the larger term and leaves room for His coming before the "day," i.e. before He appears, reveals, or manifests Himself.

Is this to draw upon imagination? It is to assert very needed and important truth from Scripture. Take this example in Colossians 3, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear" (or be manifested), "then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Now, there we have, as distinctly as God could put it, the fact of the joint manifestation of Christ and us in glory. It is not that, when our Lord appears, then shall we be caught up to be with Him; for this is false. There is no such idea anywhere taught in the word of God. Where is the least hint that the world and the Church shall behold Christ at the same time? that the first moment of seeing Christ will be the same for an unbeliever as for the believer? The very reverse is true. For the Scripture before us declares that, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." This means, not that we abide upon the earth till He appears to all, and that we are only caught up when He thus appears, but that when He makes Himself visible from the heavens to the earth, then we, too, shall be seen along with Him in glory. We must, therefore, have been caught up to Him before. This exactly falls in with 1 Thess. 4, as has been shown. There, it is said, "Those that sleep by Jesus will God bring with him." The Lord will descend from heaven "with a shout" — such a shout as suits Christ, if He only intended His voice to be for His own. This seems the reason why the apostle singled out a special word. "Shout" (κέλευσμα) is a term

implying the relationship that exists between the Lord and His own followers, like that of soldiers summoned by their general, or seamen by their commander. If nothing more were meant than the loud expression of His voice for all the world as much as for His own people, we might naturally infer this peculiar word would not be used. Whereas the word conveys the thought of a shout from one who commands to those who are commanded; and, therefore, it is mere and ignorant unbelief to press the fact that the Lord so shouts, and then to conclude that all the world must hear Him at that epoch. It is contrary to every analogy, that the world will be witnesses of the Lord's coming to take away the believers. It is easy to conceive that the Lord could conceal it if He pleased. Of course the world may be alarmed and astonished for a while by the fact of the disappearance of so many. That there will be a great effect produced in the world by it, I am not in the least disposed to deny; but I believe that the simple and natural interpretation of the terms employed in this Scripture supposes a special connection between the Lord and those for whom He comes, and that the choice of the expressions limits His action in sight and sound too, as well as in effects of deeper moment, to those whom it all concerns. No more at present would I deduce or assert.

But the false teachers, who found the Thessalonians so bright and happy in their hope (particularly now as their anxiety about the dead had been dispelled by the first epistle), began to alarm them by their doctrine about the day of the Lord. "Oh," they may have said, "see these troubles come upon the Church now; see the havoc that has been made; see all those disasters which are rife in

the world." It would seem, from the first epistle, there was a great deal of persecution at that time; and the opening of the second epistle confirms this. We find that there is much allusion to those who harass believers. We learn from the Old Testament that the day of the Lord is characterized by darkness, trouble, and anxiety — a day of clouds and darkness. These false teachers consequently said, "The day of the Lord is come" (not coming). This is the error that the apostle is combating. Is it a rendering confined to a few individuals? I remember the time when it might be doubted very much if there were six men in England that accepted it. I doubt very much whether there are six men in England, who, having weighed the subject with due care, would care to dispute this now. They would not agree with all that I have drawn from the passage; but it is remarkable how God has vindicated the truth of this very Scripture, even now, by those who have no particular theory whatever about it. Nevertheless, they contend for this view of ἐνέστηκε,1 in 2 Thess. 2:2, as a matter of plain and fair interpretation of the words of the Holy Ghost. I question if any able man, competent to pronounce upon such a matter, unless previously and much biassed, would any longer argue that the English version is correct in its representation of the last word of the second verse. Every intelligent person, who is not under strong prejudice, will readily own the passage means that the day of the Lord is (not "at hand," but) actually arrived. This was the error which the apostle sets himself against. The false teachers said, "The day of the Lord is there." The apostle proves, on the contrary, that it cannot be present before certain facts which did not yet appear.

First let me state the circumstances of the case. The same word, translated “at hand” in our version here, occurs in some six or seven other places. It appears in Romans 8:38, but there it is “things present;.” In 1 Corinthians 3:22, it is just the same, “things present.” In 1 Corinthians 7:26, it stands, “present distress.” So again in Hebrews 9:9, it is translated, “for the present time.” Again, in 2 Timothy 3:1, it has a different form - “perilous times shall come,” but it is not “shall be at hand,” which would give a totally unwarranted sense, or rather no sense at all. I have no hesitation in saying, therefore, that there can be no legitimate doubt that the true meaning of the word everywhere is “present,” and that here it means “the day of the Lord is present.” What confirms this is, that the apostle elsewhere insists that “the day is at hand.” (Romans 13) What day? The day of the Lord, of course. Did he then teach afterwards what he denounced in the misleaders of the Thessalonians? This is what the false version does; it puts the apostle in opposition to himself, and it makes him take up the error of those Judaising teachers. In truth, he does nothing of the kind. He denies in 2 Thess. 2 that the day of the Lord was come. He declares in Romans 13 that it is at hand. That day meant the day of fearful judgment, even the execution of God’s wrath upon earth; and this he denies to have arrived, contrary to those who troubled the Thessalonians.

The error he proceeds to meet by two considerations. First of all, he presses a motive for the heart; and, secondly, he reasons from the positive facts of the case. The motive was this: “We beseech you, brethren, by2 the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind,

or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter." They pretended in various ways that they had a revelation for it. They even alleged Paul himself as the author of their error. He utterly denies it. It is no question at all of the former epistle. He does not say, "by the letter from us," but "by letter as from us." It was a pretended letter from the apostle, teaching their false thought; not the real epistle, which teaches nothing but the truth. The suppositious letter contained the error that the day of judgment was actually there (not at hand merely). It was a forged letter, and a false doctrine. "Don't you know," he intimates, "that the Lord is coming and is to gather you all to Himself?" Such is the motive by which he appeals to the heart: it is the means by which he rouses their spiritual feelings against the cheat. When the Lord does come, the first thing He will do is to gather those He loves to Himself.

But there is another ground of argument that he takes. He reasons upon the matter of fact, and demonstrates that the day of the Lord cannot come except there be the apostasy first, "and the man of sin be revealed" — the lawless one who shall exalt himself in opposition to God. When this display of lawlessness on the earth is full (the man of sin, as being evidently the expression of human evil: the one who sits in the temple of God, as the height of Jewish pride and antagonism against God; and, beside all this, he that sets himself up against all that is called God, or object of veneration, which comprehends God's government in the world), then the day of the Lord3 may, not to say must, come. Everything of God connected with the Gentiles is thus gainsaid; all the testimony to God in Israel is set at nought and defied; the final issue of the apostasy in Christendom is there.

The man of sin confronts as it were the Man of righteousness, who thereon bursts in upon the guilty scene, consuming with the breath of His mouth, and destroying by the appearing of His coming. For all is out that demands divine judgment — human evil, Jewish evil, Gentile evil, and the evil of Christendom, the culmination and concentration of the whole being this personage whose coming is after the working of Satan in every kind of power, and signs, and wonders of falsehood. I verily believe in the full force of the word. Whatever may be the form of evil by the way, there will be this person at length manifested as the antagonist of the Lord Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, the Lord over all peoples, and nations, and tongues, the Head of the Church, and, more than all, the true God and eternal life. Then will come to pass Satan's long-planned effort and display on earth against the God of heaven, who will come in avenging glory in the person of Jesus, as once He appeared in the grace that brings salvation. Can the issue be doubtful? The lawless one (for such is the meaning of his title and character) is in a moment hurled to destruction, being cast alive into the lake of fire.

Thus the apostle, by a twofold process, positive and negative, puts an end to the delusion whereby false teachers harassed the Thessalonian saints. Christ must first come and gather His own to be with Himself safe and sound. Then again the development of man's and Satan's evil combined must be full before the world can be judged. In the dealings of God it is ever so. He would not allow even Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed till their iniquity was proved to be intolerable beyond possibility of doubt. He would not command the

Amorites to be smitten before their cup was full. So it will be in the end of this age. When patience is exhausted and the worst corruptions of the best blessings are manifest, then the Lord will arise in His power and put down all His foes for ever.

Thus, the passage closely bears upon our present subject, and, when rightly rendered and applied, strengthens, instead of weakening, the Christian's constant expectation of Christ. And one error leads to another; for those who have translated wrongly have also fallen into the mistake of confounding the coming of the Lord with His day. Now the coming (παρουσία), no doubt, embraces the day of the Lord as one of its parts, yet is only a part of it. Accordingly the coming of the Lord directly involves the dealings of grace with the saints, such as their gathering to Christ or translation to heaven; the day of the Lord never does. Grace is in no way the aim or character of the day of the Lord. It will be their manifestation in glory, if you will. It will be the righteous adjudication of that which is now a scene of weakness, perplexity, sorrow, sin. It will be not only the putting down of the world's pride, but the Lord will also then assign to His servants, to each man according to his own labour, or, according to the style of the parable, He will give to one five cities, and to another ten. Thus, I do not in the least deny that we are to have the reward of the inheritance in that day, even as the world will then be judged of the Lord. But with equal assurance, I must affirm that Scripture never represents the coming of the Lord for us as an object only to be expected after certain events have transpired.

Thus, we have the two series of facts in Scripture: the coming of the Lord, which is always set forth without

dates; and the day of the Lord, which requires some momentous events to be accomplished first, and therefore implies dates more or less. How are we to judge? There is nothing simpler. Admit both; allow each its own proper sphere without confounding them; and all becomes easy and plain. The coming of the Lord, in its bearing upon the Christian, is our hope — the hope of the personal presence of Jesus to take His saints out of this world, and translate them to the Father's house. Never, in any passage of the word of God, is a single incident put before it as necessary to be accomplished before the Church can legitimately look for Him. The alleged cases of Paul and Peter are just the exceptions which prove the rule; the Christian and the Church even then looked, not for death, but for the coming of the Lord. They were right. The one unvaried object of the Saviour first, and of the Holy Ghost afterwards working by the apostle, is to keep the hope of His coming as the immediate prospect before the saints. I use the word "immediate;" for the practical aim was that, when the Lord knocked, the saints should open to Him immediately. It is merely a question of His presence, and their instant reception of Him according to the figure employed.

Lastly, when we come to the final book of the New Testament, surely here, if anywhere, we might expect the detailed mention of preparatory events to usher in the coming of Christ, if such circumstances were revealed as necessary to precede it. It is the great book that predicts the closing scenes of man's day, and the judgment of the Lord. If these last revelations were meant to hinder the looking for Christ as a present continual hope; if I ought to wait till all the seals were

opened, all the trumpets blown, and all the vials poured out, and then, not before, really to expect Christ, here was the occasion to correct any unseasonable enthusiasm. I might get into all sorts of confusion as to where I am in the book, or what seal, trumpet, or vial I am under. Who may not lose himself in such a laborious investigation? Where do you find two men of independent judgment agreed on these points? Any two of the firmest and fastest disciples of the historical school would be found to differ considerably, each from his neighbour. Scripture is plain that the disciples were set to wait for the Lord, and that the Holy Ghost confirms it: can they believe that the book of Revelation was meant to come in and swamp their whole hope? Are we to say to you that have been looking for the Lord, all this is to happen as a prelude, and you must gaze on the changes in the world till all the predicted preliminaries have been accomplished, and then you may begin to look for Christ shortly? Is not this what the confusion of unbelief does?

But are we, on the other hand, to thrust aside the book of Revelation? Assuredly not. But still we assert again, that the hope of the Christian is distinct from any dependence on the accomplishment of intervening events. It is a question of the [father sending the Son in His grace to receive us, and therefore kept in the word of God entirely apart from the evolution of earthly affairs. Will any contend that there is the smallest contradiction in God’s revelations? There is none whatever. We find in the beginning of the Apocalypse the seven churches mentioned, and thenceforward no more about them till we come to the closing chapter, when a message is sent again to the churches. After the “things

that are" (or the time-states of the Church) are done with, heaven is opened, and soon the prophet sees there a new class described very completely. They are seated upon thrones; they are clothed in white; they have crowns on their heads. They enter into God's character with the utmost intimacy of knowledge, and answer to the glory of God in every point. Who then can these be? Who are these four and twenty elders? They were never heard of before in heaven, as far as we can gather from Scripture. We have many visions of heaven in the Old Testament, and more or less distinct. We have also striking glimpses into heaven in the New Testament. But here, for the first time in the word of God, we hear of a number of persons who clearly are redeemed men in heaven. For, allow me to say, these were not spirits. The description differs from that of separate spirits, which are nowhere said, as such, to sit on thrones, and are never represented acting above, as these are said to do.

Is it asked respecting these redeemed persons that are crowned, enthroned, and exercising a kind of royal priesthood in the presence of God, Who are they? The message to the seven Churches told us, that those who overcame would be blessed of the Lord with Himself above. We need not now enter into the particulars of the promises. Have we not here that which, as far as it goes, makes good what the Lord puts before us? No doubt much remains to be fulfilled; but still, how much will then have been done for the dwellers in heaven! But, moreover, we have these elders represented as four and twenty. What is the meaning of the symbol? Clearly, it seems to me, that they are the heads of the royal priesthood. When David and Solomon arranged the priestly race of Aaron, they were arranged in twenty-

four courses. Accordingly there need not be a doubt that the twenty-four elders are a symbol that alludes to these classes of priesthood. Why in twenty-four classes? Why not in one, or in twenty? The four and twenty appear, I apprehend, because the saints glorified above are viewed as heads of the priesthood. The central part of the book of Revelation shows that there will be saints on earth during the great crisis. Yet after this, as before, the four and twenty elders are seen in heaven, neither more nor less. Clearly, therefore, you have to account for these two facts — the absence of the Church upon the earth after Rev. 3, and the presence of the elders in heaven from Rev. 4. Is it possible to avoid the conclusion, that the true members of the Church of God are in the interval between these two chapters removed out of the world, and taken to heaven, and seen there under the symbolic twenty-four elders? And they are complete, which can only be after the Lord has gathered the saints to Himself above. Before that, some of the heavenly saints being above and some below, there would be no propriety in the use of a symbol which requires all to be included.

It was not fitting or required to give the description of our Lord’s coming to remove them to himself in the Apocalypse. Let it be remarked, that, no matter what the scheme of prophecy be, nor what view is entertained of the Revelation, there is no vision given in the Revelation of the Lord’s coming to take the saints above. If you make the Lord delay the removal of the saints till Rev. 19, no account is there found of His coming to receive the saints for heaven, any more than there is in chapters 3, 4. Observe, too, that if you suppose the rapture delayed till chapter 19, you do not account for the vision

of the four and twenty elders all through. If you say that it is that part of the Church which is gone to heaven now, I am obliged to reject the idea, and for this reason, that a part does not meet the symbol of the twenty-four elders. They are the heads of the complete courses. But you can never have the heavenly priesthood completed in its heads till those sleeping are raised, those alive are caught up, and all translated to the Lord at His coming. It is only thus and then that there is the required completeness; and therefore it follows that, if the twenty-four elders be the heads of the heavenly priesthood, and if the Church now on earth and then caught up, answer to them, the Lord must have come between those two before-named points to receive the saints to Himself. I apprehend that the reason why the Lord's coming to translate His own to Himself is nowhere described in this book is grounded upon the principle, that the Revelation is occupied with judgments rather than with a display of grace. The fact is there made most evident, that the heavenly ones are somehow gone on high; but the Lord's presence and their gathering together to Him above would not fall in with the general character of that book. While they are in heaven, the providential judgments under the seals, trumpets, and vials run out their appointed course here below; but the elders are in their places during the shifting scenes, and never leave heaven; neither do we ever trace the least addition to their number. The emblem was complete from their first appearance in Rev. 4. Does not this entirely fall in with the truth that I have endeavoured to present this night? The Lord keeps His coming to receive His saints as a distinct hope of the heart, apart from earthly events. When they are, at His

coming, translated to heaven, then the earthly tide of events begins to flow.

Hence, a further stage of Christ's coming is called "the appearing," "the revelation of Christ," and the other terms which imply manifestation — among the rest, "the day of the Lord." Where do you find the counterpart of this in the Apocalypse? It is given in Rev. 19, where we see the heavens open, and the Lord coming in judgment. The Lord is described as the Word of God emblematically riding on the white horse; it is the image of aggressive action, of a prosperous conquest over His foes. Such is very simply the meaning. I am not advocating a mere literal way of interpreting the Revelation, which is a capital blunder; for it is allowed to be a symbolical book. Here then we have the Lord represented as coming from heaven. But does He come alone? The heavens that let out the Lord are also seen to let out the saints, the hosts that are in heaven, who follow Him upon horses, robed in fine linen white and clean. "Who are they, and whence came they?" They are saints, and they come out of heaven. Of what is their garb, white linen, the symbol? The righteousness of saints. They are not angels then. This is entirely corroborated by a previous intimation in Rev. 17:14, which announces the Lord's coming from heaven for the judgment of the world, where the beast and the kings were seen joined together against Him. It was said that they should "make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb should overcome them." But who were the parties? "The faithful, and called, and chosen." This is not a description possible, as a whole, to be applied to angels, but only to saints; for we never hear of angels described as "faithful;" still less could they be described as

“called.” The call of God could not be predicated of an angel, though of course he might well be said to be “chosen.” There are elect angels, but they are never said to be called. For calling implies grace entering the world and separating unto God, bringing out of the condition in which people were. This could not be applied to an angel, for an angel abides in his antecedent state, save the fallen ones; but a poor sinner is justly said to be called, who is made by grace a saint of God through faith in Christ. Therefore I have no hesitation in affirming from these inspired statements that we have come to the second act, so to speak, in which the Lord manifests His presence. He appears from heaven, and the saints, already risen and changed, already taken up to be with Him above, come along: with Him from heaven. It is between His coming for the saints and His coming with them from heaven, that the earthly events transpire, with various signs and tokens — never of His coming to receive the saints, but of His coming to judge the world. In short there are no defined periods or visible harbingers to intimate that He is coming to receive us, but there are manifold and manifest signs before He comes with the saints in the execution of His judgment upon the world.

Some perhaps may inquire how this change comes to pass; and what is the moral meaning of these signs being withheld now and shown afterwards. The answer is simple, and, I believe, certain, from the word of God. It is in that precise interval that God will begin to work for and in His earthly people. It is during that very season that the Jews will be touched by God’s Spirit, and their hearts turned towards their long-despised Saviour. Objects of mercy as the remnant may be, the nation will

have to pass retributively through an hour of fearful trial, danger, and desolation; but they will be wrought upon, and so prepared, that, even before the Saviour does appear, their hearts will welcome Him in the name of Jehovah. They will be the nucleus of His earthly people round their Messiah. They will not of course come from heaven, as do the risen and glorified saints with Him; but He comes to take the earth as well as heaven (Rev. xx.), though He does not mingle these risen saints, or others who will then be raised, with those who yet abide in their natural bodies upon the earth for the millennial reign. Blessed association there will be, but no confusion of earthly and heavenly.

But I do not enlarge on the subject tonight, partly because the hour admonishes me that I have already spoken at length, and partly because details will come more properly before us tomorrow evening, if God will, when we shall see what light is afforded as to the great tribulation that is coming upon the earth, and who they are that must pass through it — whether they are Christians, or whether persons to be called after all Christians are taken away from the earth. I will therefore add no more now, but pray the Lord to bless what has been before us, and use it in clearing away doubts, and difficulties, and clouds, which may have shrouded God’s light from any hearts willing to bow to His word.

1 It is true that Liddell and Scott, misled (I doubt not) by others, up to 1865, have given in their Greek Lexicon “impending, Lat. imminens,” on the authority of Aristoph. Nub. 779, Isaeus, 88 40 and Demosth. 896 29, though admitting “present,” as another unquestionable meaning. Having satisfied myself that these excellent

lexicographers were mistaken, as not one of these three passages has any other sense than the regular one of "present," I wrote to Dr. Scott, who, after taking time to weigh them, as the point was of evident importance, had the candour to answer in the following terms: "On consideration of them, I am disposed to admit that there is none which seems necessarily to refer to a state of things not yet commenced." In their 6th edition (1869) they give, for what I have quoted, "pending, present, begun." Any one who can afford the leisure to search may see ample examples of the word in such authors as Polybius, Dio Cassius, etc., whose Greek is of great value for illustrating the New Testament. I have myself searched in vain for a single occurrence that bears the sense of "imminence." Messrs. Webster and Wilkinson are therefore quite in error in speaking of "the more ordinary classical meaning 'imminere,' to be close at hand." This is the meaning of ἐφεστώς (as in 2 Timothy 4), not of ἐνεστώς, which Schweighaeuser (a very different scholar from the slipshod Schleusner) pronounces (in Lex. Polyb., and, of course, in its ordinary classical usage) to mean "non instans vel imminens, bed qui coeptus est, i.e. praesens." He mentions no exception; nor have I observed one. Mr. E. Elliott labours to dilute the force of ἐνέστηκε by the use of πάρεστιν in John 11:8. he does not of course perceive that his own illustration (even if it were granted that the two words are precisely parallel in the latitude allowed them) is destructive of his defence of the authorised version. For the Lord, in John 11, had left the place where He was previously, had come into Judea, and had reached the outskirts of the village, though not yet in Bethany. So I do not doubt the false teachers had sought to terrify the Thessalonian saints with the notion that

the day of the Lord had begun its terrors, and had occasioned this or that judgment, though it had not reached its height at Thessalonica. That is, they taught that it was come, (not “at hand”) though not yet displayed in its full strength of judicial visitation.

2 The apostle had not been presenting the truth of the Lord’s coming in the preceding chap. 1, but the real moral character of His day, as the display of retributive rest and trouble to the saints and their enemies respectively. Hence it cannot be said with truth that he is entreating the brethren touching either what he had just taught or what he was going to teach. With verbs of beseeching ὑπέρ is not equivalent to περί, but means “by,” “by reason of,” “on account of;” whereas περί, in such a connection, as is plain from its frequent use in the New Testament, is simply “concerning,” or “in regard to.” Where there is a motive prominent with ὑπέρ, we can say, “on behalf” or “for the sake of;” but with supplicatory verbs like ἐρωτάω, “by” is the natural meaning. Compare Matthiae (Gr. Gr. II. § 582) and Jelf (Gr. Gr. II. § 630.)

3 The unquestionably right reading is “the day [not of Christ, but] of the Lord,” τοῦ κυρἰου, as the oldest MSS., versions, and other witnesses show. This, as being the well-known Old Testament theme (referred to in 1 Thess. 5), makes the distinction from the παρουσία still more apparent. It sometimes in prophecy has an inchoate sense, as in Isaiah 13 and elsewhere; and this may have been taken advantage of by the false teachers. In the New Testament it has always and only the complete meaning.

The Tribulation, and those who are to pass through it

Lecture 6 - Matthew 24:15-32

The subject for consideration tonight is the great tribulation, — the light which Scripture affords as to those on whom it shall fall, and as to those who shall escape it, though destined, according, to the word of God, to be then on the earth; and, consequently, its character and object in the mind of God.

That the Christian must make up his mind to endure tribulation in this world is unquestionable. Our Lord prepares His disciples for no other portion. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation,” said He: “but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The question, therefore, is not at all whether the Christian is to expect tribulation as he passes through this world: there is no doubt of it. But an important inquiry arises as to that specially defined trouble at the end of this age, of which the prophets speak in the Old Testament, and on which, in two of the Gospels, our Lord instructs us. More than once is this, as a connected fact, alluded to in the last prophetic book of the New Testament.

My business now will be to present, with the Lord’s help, His own unerring testimony; for we have no liberty to speculate on this subject any more than on others. That there is to be such a final tribulation, we only know from God Himself. Nothing but His word therefore can tell as clearly ascertained and certain truth, who they are that are concerned in the tribulation. Anything else

is but fancy, feeling, or a priori, reasoning, and therefore impertinent and worthless. One main purpose of Scripture is to deliver the soul from speculation. When men do not seek to understand the prophetic word of God, they more or less begin themselves to prophesy. If they do not set up to be prophets, at least they ought to be prophets, if they presume to speak about the future apart from direct and positive Scripture. Now the Christian man is not to anticipate the future, but with all simplicity to believe what God has said and given him. This is the true cure for speculation. No doubt, in examining the word of God, we need to approach it with chastened dependent spirits. In this there is no preparation to be trusted except that which is of the Holy Ghost, who works in two ways, more particularly, to bring about this right condition of soul. The first is through Christ known and realized as our portion. No man is in a competent or suitable state to enter, as one ought, on the study of prophecy who is not at rest as to his own relation to God in Christ. There is another thing also needful, — the spirit of self-judgment and self-distrust, which guards one from haste, and from confidence either in one's own thoughts or in the opinions of others. God alone is able to keep and guide such as we are; but: He has proved His willingness to lead us on, because He has spoken so freely in His word, and also given us His Spirit, who searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. God has lifted up the veil from the future; He has opened to us that which must have been otherwise in darkness impenetrable, so that it would have been mere folly and presumption for us to essay a look into the future. The Spirit now shows us things to come (John 16:13): are we glorifying Him and the Lord Jesus by hearkening?

There was nothing which more distinguished God, as: Isaiah (12, 44, 48) tells us, from the vain idols of the nations. Which of them could disclose the future? Their seers might guess; they might embarrass with ambiguous oracles. God alone could speak with plainness and unhesitating certainty of that which was not yet accomplished; and He has been pleased to communicate to His children the future as known to Him; and this touching the earth and its inhabitants at large, not merely that which concerns themselves. It is a most striking proof of His confidence in His people that He lets us see that which affects others. He tells us of Israel; He tells us of the Gentiles; He tells us of the world outside and its destiny; Just so had He dealt with Abraham of old: He spoke to him not merely of what touched himself and his family, and the line of the promise that was theirs; but, after He had set his heart clear, straight, and free by loving communications that showed His deep personal interest in himself and his posterity for ever, He also spread before him the judgment impending over the world of that day, over Sodom and Gomorrah, where the flagitious ways of man so loudly cried for divine vengeance.

This, and more than this, God now does in the New Testament. First of all He reveals His son, and that Son utterly rejected of men, and, if there was any difference, specially of the Jew. Then He leads those to whom grace gives eternal life in Him to know, that upon the rejected Christ, the Son of the living God, His Church was built, as we have seen. But having brought the Christian to a knowledge of redemption, even the forgiveness of sins through His blood, having given him a new life, even Christ Himself risen from the dead, having sent down

the Holy Ghost from heaven to unite the believer with Christ at His right hand, then it is that pre-eminently the Christian is introduced into the confidence of God's thoughts and counsels. Having already blessed the Church with the very highest blessing, it is not merely a question of unfolding to her that which is her own portion; but in truth all the plans which circle around Christ to His own glory. The Church is already compassed with favour and privilege to the very utmost already loved so that God Himself could not love the Christian more. I say it reverently, but withal boldly, that God, infinite as His love is, will not love the saint more in glory than He loves him now in the midst of all his daily shortcoming, infirmity, and failure, with the continual need of humbling himself in His sight.

It is in presence of the certainty of such perfect love as this, of the consciousness of union with Christ in that new nature which sins not, but loves all that is in God and of God, which lives from Christ and in Christ and to Christ, the Holy Ghost indwelling there — it is in presence of all this that God can tell out His thoughts to us, treating us as friends, even as our Lord Himself did and said; for whatsoever the Father had told Him, He told us. The moment we understand this wonderful truth and depth and extent of His grace to us in Christ, we wonder not, because it ceases to be a question in the least degree of our desert or competency. Does not Christ deserve it? Is not the Holy Ghost competent? And thus you will see it is entirely founded on the precious truth, that the Church is Christ's body and bride. Now it is the way of one who loves his bride to open out the secrets of his heart to her. (Strange if he did not!) And certainly, whatever an earthly bridegroom may do to his

bride, we are always sure Christ duly estimates what is involved in the relationship, and never fails in anything. Moreover, the blood of Christ has washed every believer so clean before God, that the Holy Ghost can come down in virtue and witness of it, and take up His dwelling, as sent from heaven, in the believer on the earth. It is not in heaven that we receive the Holy Ghost, but here on earth. Divine person as He is, how can this be? Because we deserve it? Nay, but because the blood of Christ cannot deserve less. Therefore is it that the Holy Ghost can come down and have perfect sympathy with the new creation which we are made in Christ, and can righteously and holily dwell there, because of the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin.

Hence it is to crown this astonishing place of blessing and privilege, which is ours in Christ, that it has pleased God to remove the veil from the future: He lets us know that there are others that He is interested in as well as ourselves. Time was when we should have been envious and jealous; for what is man? Time was when we, even as believers, were so full alas! of our wretched selves, that we should have thought there was something taken from us, had we heard that there were others entirely distinct from us, yet as truly objects of His love. Is it so now? Far from it. Thank God, we can delight in Him, and in all He feels and does. Let the Lord love as He alone can love, we rejoice the more. We are sure it is for His own glory; we are sure Christ is magnified the more. The consequence is, that the Church, confident of the love of Christ for herself, of His perfect matchless affection for the Christian, delights in the outflowings of His goodness, whatever they may be. It is the joy of those who are the body of Christ, the habitation of God

through the Spirit, to know, that before these high privileges were imparted, known, and enjoyed, there were those He truly loved in the world who will be in heavenly glory.

The Old Testament saints are never spoken of as Christ's body, or God's habitation through the Spirit. Be not alarmed. Probably all you mean by "the church" the Old Testament saints did possess. Are you sure you understand what Scripture means by the Church? You consider it, no doubt, to be the aggregate of the redeemed, of all who are loved by God and born of the Holy Ghost, of all who believe in Christ and have therefore eternal life and are to be in heaven. Now I entirely agree with you in predicating all this of the Old Testament saints: only you are mistaken in calling them therefore the Church, the body of Christ; for none of these privileges, rich as they may be, is the peculiar blessedness of the Church, nor do all of them combined make it up. If I am right, you plainly ignore the Church's nature. And it is evident that there is not a single blessing that you claim for the Old Testament saints that I also could not affirm about them. The difference does not lie here; but it remains true that there are distinctive blessings, through the incomparable grace of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption, a risen Christ and the indwelling Spirit, into which many Christians have feebly, if at all entered.

I do not say this in the smallest degree as a reproach to any. There is no person here, unless he have a short and treacherous memory, who cannot look back and remember when he knew nothing more about it than his neighbours. It is God then who has been awakening His children of late to much momentous but forgotten truth.

And what; I think, ought to give an inquirer confidence in seeking to examine the word prayerfully is this, that the lately recovered entrance into the special privileges of the Church is ever inseparable, if it be God's teaching, from an understanding of redemption more fully, and consequently from a deeper enjoyment of peace and liberty in the soul's relations with our God and Father and the Lord Jesus. A practical separation from the world beyond our previous experience is the precious result, and a simpler more devoted service in testimony to Christ.

It is fully admitted, that nothing but Scripture can decide this, as every other question; but here, too, I think we can speak of an enlarged perception of the truth of God in general, as the fruit of seizing the mystery of Christ and the Church. But let us now look back a little at the time and circumstances when our Lord pronounced the wonderful discourse from which a few verses have been read as a preface; it will tend to make the whole field of view more distinct.

In what condition were the disciples when our Lord laid bare the future so fully on mount Olivet? Did they then know redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins? Had they the Holy Ghost the Comforter at that time? Had they the Holy Ghost sealing them, the earnest of the inheritance? Were they baptized of the Holy Ghost into one body? They were believers, no doubt, and had life eternal; but they had none of these further blessings referred to. They were waiting to be redeemed, to know their sins forgiven as a present thing.

Am I speaking without the Bible? I am simply expounding the truth the Holy Ghost has laid down in

Romans 3:25, where He by a peculiar word distinguishes between the relation of the Old Testament believer to redemption and that of believers now. This ought to surprise no person; for, if I may be allowed to use the name of any man on such an occasion as this, I may mention that a well-known dignitary, who cannot be imagined to sympathize with my views or position, admits this fact fully. The Archbishop of Dublin's book on the Synonyms of the New Testament is familiarly known; and no one can accuse that author of advanced thoughts as to prophetic or dispensational truth. Consequently he may be accepted as sufficiently unbiassed to lay down the meaning of the word in the clause which is translated in our common version, "the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Of course, it is no way a question of human authority, nor, if such an authority were possible and admissible, is it needful; for the fact is abundantly plain and certain. I merely allude to it that others may satisfy themselves that it is nothing recondite, but generally recognised. Dr. Trench then admits, and in strong enough terms, if I remember aright, that "remission (ἄφεσις) of sins " (as shown, for instance, in Ephesians 1:7, to be the present portion of the believer) is quite distinct from what the Spirit says of God's dealing with the Old Testament saints. Theirs was properly pretermission (πάρεσις), ours is remission.

Thus, apart from the Holy Ghost dwelling in the Christian, or his membership of Christ's body, even in the matter of the great work of redemption the Spirit of God has been pleased to employ a peculiar term to describe the relation of the saints of old as distinct from ours. The exact shade of meaning is, that their sins were

passed by, or pretermitted, — not remitted, in the full sense. Indeed you need not go beyond the ordinary English Bible in its marginal notes; for the alternative of "passing over" is there given. That was the time of God's forbearance, which could not be said of this time, when the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. In short, the marginal rendering more strictly interprets the term employed by the Holy Ghost. God would not use "remission" when thus comparing the past application of His righteousness with the present. He forebore of old to look at the sins of the saints; He passed them by. But as for believers now, it is a positive "remission of sins." What is the difference? Ah! is it possible that any child of God, in the face of God's wisdom thus plainly distinguishing His ways, could ask the question, "What is the difference?" Do you ask really to understand the difference, or in a cavilling spirit? To seek to appreciate the revealed mind of God is one thing; it is quite another, without care for the answer, to ask, with a sort of sneer, "What is the difference?" It is the feeling of others again, that provided, some how or other, their own sins are forgiven, and they get to heaven, the whole inquiry is frivolous. Alas! that any child of God should so slight the wise and gracious communications of God. Is not Christ precious to God? Is not His work intrinsically and infinitely precious to God? If God, then, makes a difference, who are we to cavil at it, to treat it lightly, or to ask in this selfish spirit, as if it were merely a question of wrangling theologians, instead of His own most worthy way of magnifying His Son and His Son's work?

Now it is God who has made this difference in His word. God Himself calls His dealing with the sins that are past,

that is, the sins of Old Testament believers in past times, by a different and to us unusual term. “By the sins that are past” He does not mean our past life, but the sins of believers in past times; and God expresses His dealing with their sins as “passing over,” or “pretermission.” Looking onward to Christ, He would not judge the elders. In virtue of the foreseen work of the glorious person of Christ, who, after manifesting perfect righteousness in Himself as a man upon the earth, suffered for sin, and so glorified God in the way it was borne and judged in the cross, that it became a question of God’s righteousness to the believer — in virtue of this it was that God passed over sins in past times. But was there to be no more than this? Is it a bare passing over now? Is it simply God’s forbearance as of old? Mark the change of tone the moment that the apostle speaks of what is now going on. “To declare, I say, at this time” [in contrast with the past] — “ to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness,” without a word added about His forbearance. In fact, to bring in the thought of God’s forbearance now is an impeachment of the infinite efficacy of the shed blood of Christ. Suppose that you have contracted a debt, and that a man of substance becomes responsible for you, it is very intelligible that the creditor forbears to sue you, knowing that your surety is the responsible party to whom he looks. But when the debt is paid, does he or any one talk about his forbearance any more? The credit of the surety was the ground for the creditor’s forbearance when the debt was not yet discharged; he knew that the liability would be met duly. But when all is paid, is there no difference? Where is the forbearance then? Such too is the analogy now. If you knew what it was to be under the pressure of a debt, and, it may be, in prison for it, you would know

the difference between all that and being out of the prison when the debt was paid. Till the work of Christ was done, whatever might be the goodness and mercy of God, it was simply pretermitting sins through His forbearance. At this time, on the contrary, it is the glorious display of His own righteousness, by virtue of which He can afford not only to forgive, but to justify according to all the value of His sacrifice, and all the acceptance of Himself risen from the dead.

All this clearly shows that the disciples, however they were blessed of the Lord when He was upon the earth, were to become possessors of yet deeper blessing. For my own part, I count it as one of the ominous signs of this day of ours, that men regard as a strange tale the assertion of these deeper privileges that have come through Christ's accomplished work on earth and glory in heaven. It is to my own mind the saddest symptom, as indicating where the hearts of the children of God really are. But, however this may be, there is no doubt, from our Lord's own declarations, that He could not then send the Comforter to them. He must go away, and thus send down the Holy Ghost. Accordingly He did go away, and the Comforter came, who was to abide with them for ever; and so He does. Is this nothing? Is it only a little circumstance? Is it the essential thing in your minds to get to heaven, instead of being sent to hell? Is this your standard of what is essential? Then I understand you, if I cannot sympathise with such a thought or feeling. For, in truth, you are only thinking about yourself, and swallowed up in it: is God, think you? Nay, He is filled with thoughts of His Son, and so blesses us to the full. Have you ever remarked that when a man searches the Bible simply as ministering to his

own wants, his need is but partially met, because Christ is hidden from him? Neither will God fully bless at His expense. It is not that God will not be gracious to a poor soul that is seeking to know how he is to be saved from the wrath to come; but assuredly it is a contracted blessing that is gleaned where this is all; it is a blessing abridged by his own unbelief; for, just in proportion as self is the uppermost thought, Christ is shrouded. The infinite grace of God is, as it were, straitened to the measure of one's own wants, which is immeasurably beneath the fulness of Christ.

It may seem that these prefatory remarks, now made, are somewhat wide of the mark; but I trust you will find them really to the point when we fairly launch into our subject.

The Lord begins with His disciples just as they are. He addresses them as His followers, the companions of a rejected Christ, the Son of man that was going to suffer on the cross. He takes them up where they then were. In other words, He does not address them in connection with their place in heaven, as members of His body, which they were going to become but actually were not till baptized by the Holy Ghost. He meets them in His grace, occupied as their minds were with the earth and its hopes, with the nation and city and temple of the Jews. As they point out the buildings of the worldly sanctuary, they ask Him when the destruction should be, of which He had just warned them, and what should be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the world (or "of the age"); for it is hardly needful to tell most here that the word (κόσμος) for "world" as a material system is entirely distinct from that here employed (αἰών), which means a course of time or dispensation governed

on certain distinctive principles in this world. The confusion of the two things is one of the unfortunate features of our English Bible, though not at all confined to the authorised version. However this may be, our Lord proceeds to answer their questions about the temple and its destruction, and about His coming at the end of the age, which they put together. His explanation would make evident to them a measure of mistake mingled with these questions; for in this discourse He unravels what was all tangled in their thoughts. He bids them beware of being deceived; for many should come in His name, saying, “I am Christ.” Let me ask if this be the character of the Church’s deception! Is this the kind of thing Christians are subjected to now? Has it ever been the case in what is called Christendom? Clearly not. So-called Christian lands have not, as a rule, been tried with the question of men pretending to be Messiah in person. No doubt there have been many who have exalted themselves, and virtually claimed what is His prerogative; but they never dreamt of setting up themselves, nor did their devotees set them up, as Christs. We all know there are not a few who, through intellectualism and self- confidence in divine things, have introduced false doctrines; but the assumption to be the Messiah has been confined to a crazy fanatic or two, as it certainly seems to be a character of evil suited to the actual condition and circumstances of the Jews far more than to Christians.

Our Lord then, opening the subject, explains that all the general troubles He warned them of — nation rising up against nation; and kingdom against kingdom — were but the beginning of sorrows. Then He comes right into the centre of such specific details as ought to leave

beyond question what He has in view. Verse 15 gives us a most distinct intimation. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” Is this a description of the position of the Christian or the Church? What in present circumstances could bring the Church back to Judea? Why should all the Christians in the world gather into that spot above all others? The very question suffices to dispel the entire fallacy of a thought so gross. The Lord is not at all speaking of Christians as such. He is describing persons about to find themselves at the end of the age in circumstances analogous to the Jewish disciples who then surrounded Him. The Jews, few or many, are supposed to have a temple in Jerusalem, and, of course, to be in their land; and some of them will be godly men. It is a scene of the latter day, because it is clear that the Lord speaks of His own coming in the clouds of heaven as immediately after the tribulation of those days.

It is, therefore, impossible to apply this prophecy in its full extent to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, or the troubles they endured in consequence of its fall. Indeed, it is evident that the question was about the end of this age; and clearly this has not come yet. As being a sample of a similar class of believers who are yet to rise up in Jerusalem and Judea in the latter day, He prepares them for certain peculiar deceits which might at any time since His rejection affect the Jewish mind, and which will by and by have imparted to them special power, by apparent, and, in a sense, real signs and wonders to mislead souls. He furnishes them with

certain tokens by which they might escape the delusion as well as the tribulation of those days — “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation.” What is the meaning of the phrase? “Abomination” in Scripture is habitually the word for an idol; as those of Moab and of Ammon in the Old Testament. There is no ground to suppose it means anything else in the New Testament. In the account given of Babylon in the Revelation, there is no doubt at all that she, the mother of harlots, is there described as also characterized by her abominations or idolatries. So alas! we know it has been in Christendom. The city that sits upon the seven hills has always been famous for her idolatries: as in Pagan times, so now; and so it will be to her judgment by God. Even if Babylon should assume a new form adapted to the last days, there will be a similar badge of inveterate idolatry to the close. Here too I think there can be no question whatever that our Lord meant an idol. But then this should be accompanied by a certain peculiarity. Not merely an ensnaring object, but one that would ensure desolation in its train; for the Lord calls it the “abomination of desolation.” Then again it was “spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” who defines the time, place, and circumstances in chapter 12. To this special attention is called by our Lord, not by ecclesiastics, as some have strangely conjectured, against all evidence and every fact. Further, it was to stand where it ought not, “in the holy place;” which, it appears to me, notwithstanding the absence of the Greek article,1 beyond all fair question, must mean the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

Thus the Lord is speaking about Judea, of Jewish disciples, of a special final object of fatal idolatry; and so

here He speaks of it as standing in some part of the temple, which was, of course, a familiar sound to the disciples. Had any other sanctuary or spot been intended, it must, I conceive, surely have been defined more carefully. When they saw that idol set up there, spoken of by Daniel the prophet (which they would do well not only to read but understand), let it be the signal for instant flight. We shall find the importance of this in a few moments; but, on the face of the Scripture, the warning of the Lord was there. He foresaw that it would be misunderstood. He knew that Christendom would ignore and forget Israel, their dangers and their hopes; that the Gentiles (wise in their own conceit (Rom. 11) of being the end and scope of prophecy, as if Israel had fallen irrevocably and they themselves had a lease for ever of God's calling,) would be absorbed in their own circumstances. They would apply passages like these merely to what is past, as to Jews and Pagans, or, perhaps, if keen controversialists, they might see in them a cloud overhanging Protestantism, if Papists, or the converse. The Lord accordingly recalled the disciples to the prophet Daniel, who speaks of this desolating abomination as 1290 days before the closing scenes of Israel's deliverance, not at the Roman captivity and dispersion. With exact conformity our Lord speaks of its setting up before the unparalleled but short tribulation, which is immediately followed by His ingathering of elect Israel. Clearly therefore it is the same scene, and yet future.

The setting up of this idol in the holy place is the Lord's appointed signal for the disciples to escape. "Let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains." Further, so rapid was to be the flight, that a man was not even to

come down from the housetop to take his property from his house — was not even to return from the fields to take his clothes. Not a moment was to be lost for bare life. Sorrow, sorrow to those who had babes unborn or lately born; for how could they thus flee? Again, they were to pray that their flight might not be in winter nor on Sabbath. How comes here the Sabbath-day? It is well-known — I trust every believer here knows it — that the day for us is the Lord's-day. I do not mean by this to lower the sanctity of the day that the Lord has been pleased to initiate and give the Christian, but the very contrary. The difference between the Jewish Sabbath and our Lord's-day, is not that the seventh day or Sabbath is more holy, but rather that its holiness is of a lower character than that which now clothes the first day of the week or Lord's-day in the eyes of the Christian. The Sabbath was a day of external rest; it was a day on which every one, slaves, nay, the very beasts of burden, were to enjoy repose according to commandment. The Lord's-day, as such, is neither of the first creation nor of the law, like the Sabbath. It is characteristically of the new creation and of grace, in contrast with the associations of the sabbath. It is not the epoch in which we find the first man, Adam, an unfallen man, nor is it the sign which God subsequently made so special between Him and Israel; but the infinitely brighter day, that is only known to faith, that was ushered in by the Second man, triumphant for ever over sin, death, and judgment, who, in virtue of His own triumph, has brought those that believe in Him out of their sins, even now to God. Therefore do I claim for the Lord's-day a character of sanctity as much transcending the Adamic or Mosaic Sabbath of Jehovah as the Second

man is superior to the first, as much, too, as grace rises above law.

But it is not the Lord's-day in view of Christians that is spoken of here, but that very different day, the Sabbath in view of Jewish disciples, present and future. Accordingly the context is quite in character with the Sabbath-day. It is a question of those in Judea, and no others, fleeing to the neighbouring mountains, as the sign was an idol set up somewhere in the Temple of Jerusalem. Hence they are to pray that their flight might not be on that day, any more than in winter time. Is there a Christian here who would have a conscience about himself or another fleeing on the Lord's-day, if it were a matter of life and death? Would he scruple for just or gracious reasons to travel ever so many miles on that day? Certainly if the Christian were under the law as to the Sabbath, nothing would justify such breaches of it. Nor does the Lord weaken but maintain its authority by His direction that they should pray for any other day. The question for us is: Are we under the authority of the Sabbath? Or is our day the Lord's- day? Were we really on the former ground our duty would be plain, and we could not on the Sabbath do such things rightly. If it is the Lord's-day, on the contrary, you may magnify it according to what is calculated to glorify Him. Suppose a man could walk twenty miles on the first day of the week, and preach twenty sermons, do you think he would be guilty of a bad work? I trow not: it were assuredly a good and acceptable service if he preached the truth. But here the disciples are manifestly under the law of the Sabbath. How evidently then is it another atmosphere you own as Christians! The obligation of the Sabbath was all right for those who were under the law.

The Christian stands in connection with a dead and risen Saviour, and the Lord's-day is the symbol of his blessing. Therefore it is that the Church universal keeps the Lord's-day, not the Sabbath-day, and quite right too, though (strange to say) so many who do it aver that it is all one and the same thing.

All this then indicates a different character of testimony, and a distinct class of disciples. These will both appear in due time in Jerusalem before the present age closes. This future Jewish remnant is represented by the men that were then before the Lord, who therefore begins, you may have observed, with their place as Jewish disciples. The discourse grows out of their questions about Jewish anticipations. The Lord answers them accordingly. They were thus to pray that their flight might not be in winter (which would create natural impediments) nor on the Sabbath (when the law would bar a flight of any distance worth taking). It is Jews, not Christians, who are thus in the mind of the Lord and the scope of this part of the discourse. And so the great point here is to escape with the natural life. Do you not know that the language of the Spirit to the Christian is wholly different? It is the greatest honour for a Christian to die for Christ. In his case, therefore, who looks for resurrection and heaven with Christ above as his proper hope, it is no question of flesh being saved; but here it is exactly this. What am I to infer from it all? That it is not a description of Christians, which the Lord is here pursuing, but of godly Jews, and at the end of the age especially. These two are disciples, but their associations and expectations are Jewish. The land, the city, the sanctuary, the law of the Sabbath, plainly mark them out. The salient points, not only of outward

circumstances but of their soul's experience, and walk, and worship, are rather in contrast with Christianity than in accordance with it.

"For then," our Lord says immediately after, "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be." Am I not thoroughly warranted in saying, that there is no evidence that this tribulation falls upon Christians as far as this passage goes? The foregoing indications point clearly and exclusively to Jewish disciples who will be found in Judea in the latter day, cleaving to the law and to the testimony keeping the commandments of God, as is said elsewhere, and having the testimony (i.e. the prophetic testimony) of Jesus Christ, but, notwithstanding, or rather because of this, not in the full privileges of Christians now. They will be Jewish disciples in relation with the holy place, and so resenting an idol there; they will be keeping the seventh day, and not the first. These in Judea, and these only, as far as this Scripture proves, are to flee to the mountains, and so escape this fiercest of all tribulations;2 for it is expressly said to exceed all from the creation to the end of time. Not a hint of Christians is to be traced where it is here spoken of.

This conclusion is entirely confirmed by what follows; for our Lord tells us, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." It is the life of this world; and the importance of the natural life to the Jew is, that he expects the Messiah to come into this world and reign over Israel. And so the Lord will reign. But if the Jew desires to wait for Him, it is to bless him as a living man in the world. That is, it is a saving of flesh, as here. He looks for the Messiah to exalt their

nation, bless their land, vanquish their foes, and confer every other good in that bright day of glory which is to dawn upon the world. And it is quite true, as far as it goes, though the truth even for Israel goes much beyond it.

But Christ warns them further — “Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not.” Let me ask if a Christian man would be in danger from such cries as these? Suppose a preacher were to tell you that Christ was in the city, or at Paddington, would you not judge that the man was (hardly a rogue — it is too extravagant for that, but) out of his mind? “The Lord Jesus in the city?” “What! have I to go to Paddington to see the Lord?” “No,” the Christian at once says, “I know He is coming, but He will come from heaven to bring me there; when He descends into the air, I shall hear and see Him and be in that instant caught up, changed into the likeness of His glory, to be with Him where He is, in the Father’s house above.” On the other hand, the Jew expects Christ upon earth, and rightly expects Him there, and another Jewish prophet furnishes the firm ground for it. Has not Zechariah said that His feet shall stand upon mount Olivet? To be sure he has, and therefore if the Jew be occupied with such an expectation, he might not unnaturally look for some preparatory movement before that great public display in favour of his nation. He might readily receive the rumour that the great Deliverer was already in the desert, where the faithful were expected to repair; or that He was in the secret chambers, where they ought to muster around Him. We can easily conceive these impious frauds of Satan to deceive the elect at such a time who had such expectations. Thus they might be

told that their Messiah was still outside, or secretly within, as might best suit the aim of the enemy and the injury of the godly. And we know that there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, who shall show great signs and wonders; nay more, that the Antichrist is to be accepted by the mass as Christ. These things might, if possible, deceive the very elect among the Jews; but could the Christian, ever so weak and uninstructed, credit such delusions? Impossible, I humbly but firmly think. He must have given up all his hopes of Christ in heaven, all the common faith that the Holy Ghost had communicated and confirmed in his inmost soul, before he could be exposed to the influence of these pretensions and rumours, aptly calculated as they undoubtedly are to deceive the Jew. For the prophet declares that they shall have Christ coming upon the earth to the discomfiture of their foes; and they might not unreasonably be led away by reports of Him here or there, before that great manifestation on Olivet. Accordingly to a Jewish remnant all this was of the deepest moment, and the Lord warns them beforehand. (Ver. 23-26.) The Holy Ghost never warns the Christian thus. Like those to us, it is suited to the condition of those who are warned. We know that we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

But the Jewish disciples in that day, though they have no such hope as ours, are not to be deceived by these calls to and fro. They are not to go forth, nor are they to believe what men say of any secret presence. “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Instantaneous and public will it be. All thought of applying this to the past capture of Jerusalem is an utter

absurdity. Did the Romans come out of the east? Did they shine even unto the west? I should have thought their direction was just the contrary of what is predicted here. But when the Son of man comes in bodily presence, such no doubt is the fitting simile to set it forth; lightning-like will be the sudden and bright appearing of the Lord Jesus from heaven. Is that our hope? Does Scripture ever present our Lord as the lightning coming to receive the Church? Is it so a Bridegroom comes for his Bride? On the other hand, if He come then and thus to judge, if the abomination of desolation pollute the holy place in Jerusalem, if a man, the Antichrist, sit in the temple as God, I can understand that the shining of the lightning would be a most appropriate figure for so coming and dealing. Incongruous for the ineffable peace and heavenly joy of the meeting between the Bridegroom and the Bride, it is precisely suited for His presence in judgment which is needful to deliver the Jew.

But more: “Wheresoever the carcase is.” Has it then come to this? The “carcase!” Is this too the Church? Does the Lord call His body a “carcase”? Ah! what folly and ruinous mischief, when men read Scripture according to tradition, or their own will. He that makes self his one object even in Scripture, who leaves no room for the Jew, but finds the Christian here, there, and everywhere, invariably brings a blight upon his own head. Instead of the precious body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost, in union with Him above, this system reduces us here to a “carcase!” Instead of the blessed hope of Him who loves the Church receiving it unto Himself, that we may be with Him in heaven, it is the eagles or vultures gathering together. Others again,

from ancient days to our own, reverse the application, but with what result? Any improvement? It may appear incredible, but it is the sad truth, that grave men have been beguiled into the irreverent exegesis that the saints, the risen and translated saints, are the eagles, and that the blessed Lord (may He forgive the wrong!) is the carcase, the object which gathers these birds of prey together. I do not feel that either explanation deserves more words in refutation; but baseless and even profane as they are, the important point to note is that they appear to be the necessary consequence of applying the passage, as is popularly done, to the coming of Christ to receive the saints to Himself above: and, as I judge, the most offensive of these rival abominations is the more logical deduction from these mistaken premises. Take the text in connection with the judgment of the Jews, and all is clear, solemn, and harmonious with other Scriptures. Where the life is fled, and there is nothing but moral death, spite of high pretension, there will concentrate the instruments of final and divine vengeance. We are upon earthly ground here, and not heavenly hopes. We are looking upon the desperate evil that shall characterize Jerusalem in the last days. Accordingly the eagles come there, judgment unsparing and various proceeds, when the Lord shall purge out every abomination and put an end to every desolator, and aid His elect but long feeble Israel, some of whom had been fleeing in terror to escape the tribulation of the days thus past for ever.

Is it then too strong to affirm that there is not a thought nor a figure that fits in with the Church’s hope, while everything is exactly characteristic of the dealing of the Lord with the Jews in the latter day? It may be said, that

the impression has just been given that some portions of these chapters do really apply to Christendom. It is now reaffirmed; for I have no doubt that this discourse of our Lord is not confined to the Jews. What proves it is, that towards the end of chap. 25 we have a description given of the Son of man sitting upon the throne of His glory when He comes, and all His holy angels with Him; and then shall be gathered before Him all nations. These are not Jews of course. We must, therefore, make room for a larger compass than that which is bounded by Jews, We must, at the very least, let in the Gentiles, all of them who shall be gathered before the throne of the Son of man. It is not the throne in which He shall judge the dead; for it is unscriptural and absurd to imagine such a thing, as that before the great white throne there shall be nations as such. Whoever heard of such a thought or expression as “nations” after the resurrection? Is not the notion of “all the nations” entirely limited and only suitable to men living on the earth? This being so, you have a separation made by the King (for it is in this capacity the Son of man here acts) between those who were proved righteous on one hand, and those who were as manifestly unrighteous on the other; but it is, I repeat, a dealing, however grave and final, with nations. Thus, at the beginning of this great prophetic discourse of our Lord, the Jews are disposed of, and at the end of it the Gentiles. But what occupies its middle? It is the Christian part. Hence that which distinguished the earlier section — the question about the end of the age, a crowd of local and legal associations, as express allusion to the sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the land of Judea, with the neighbouring mountains — all this entirely disappears. Certainly these things have nothing to do with the world as a whole. They belong specifically

and solely to a small part of the earth and its inhabitants, to the Holy Land and the Jews, and, from verse 15, to a short crisis, which brings their disasters to a head, and is followed by their final deliverance and gathering under the Son of man from the four winds.

But perhaps it may be argued, as it has been, that “the elect” must mean Christians. Now I would ask all such if they really think that the Lord has chosen none but Christians? Would they deprive the Lord of His prerogative to choose as He will according to His sovereign will and wisdom? It is plain that ignorance of Him and of His word is the real reason why men take such strange ground, and make such a narrowing of the wonderful purposes and ways of God. It is but another form of that wretched unbelief which kept us so long without Christ, and springs up ever and anon after we have got Christ. But as sure as it does, it darkens the eye and straitens the heart from embracing the vast extent of God’s love, and the various glory in which Christ will manifest His own. In point of fact, Christ will have relations not only with the Jews, but with the Gentiles too, besides the Church, His body. Therefore it is plain that, in order to know who are in particular contemplated in any given Scripture, we must always interpret the text by the context. If the apostle is discussing Christian privilege, and talks of the elect, as in Romans 8, we know that he there means none but the Christian election; but if Isaiah is occupied with the Jews in their day of predicted glory (Isa. 65:8-25), and speaks of “mine elect,” he means only the Jewish elect. The surroundings of the particular text furnish the only sure means of deciding the sense of the Bible; and indeed a similar principle applies to every other book. If so, the

Lord, in Matt. 24, has in view solely elect persons connected with Judea. As He died for that nation, and not exclusively for the scattered children of God, so He speaks now about His chosen Israelites in every land of their exile under heaven. This is confirmed by the fact, that there is no intimation here of any being taken up to heaven. There is no allusion to resurrection whatever. He had spoken of flesh being saved, as we saw living Israelites had to be hidden away from the perils, and guarded from the deceits, of the last days of this age. And now, when He comes at the hour of their deepest need, when they seem on the point of being destroyed for ever, and He suddenly appears in the clouds of heaven, what is the effect? “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” All the tribes of the earth mourn, and this before His elect are gathered by the providential messengers of His will.

Now, if you apply this to the Christian translation, it is obvious that your interpretation makes Scripture contradict itself. For when Paul was writing to the Colossians, he says that, “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear With Him in glory.” Here, when our Lord addresses Jewish disciples upon their future, He tells them of His own visible

coming in the clouds of heaven, and how all the tribes of the earth (or land, as the context would seem to imply it means) will mourn seeing Him thus coming with power and glory in the clouds of heaven; after which He sends out His angels, with loud trumpet-sound, to gather together His elect from every quarter. Evidently the mass will have seen Christ, and be full of anguish at His sight, before the elect are gathered under the Son of man. There is not a hint of their being caught up or of their appearing with Christ. Thus the truth of Scripture is perfectly plain, provided we distinguish the parties that the Lord treats of. If the subject be about Christians, their place is with Him in heaven, and they shall accompany Him when He comes from heaven; or rather, in the perfectly accurate words of the apostle, when Christ, our life, shall appear, they also are to appear with Him in glory. Whereas in Matt. 24 Christ appears, and all the tribes of the earth or land are troubled at the sight of Him; and then the elect of Israel are gathered by angels from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Hence we have to note not identity but contrast between the two parties. They are both, it is true, destined for blessing; but one is for heavenly places with Christ, and therefore they appear with Him when He appears from heaven; the other is gathered upon earth (where they are) by the intervention of angels. The providential agents of God are employed to gather together His people who are scattered over the world. The parable of the fig-tree (verses 32, 33) confirms one in this; for it is the standing badge of Israel nationally. So too “this generation” has nothing to do with the Christian, but means that Christ-rejecting race of Jews which is not yet

extinct. As to all this the Lord's words are sure, whatever theology may say to the contrary: "Heaven and earth shall pass away," but they shall not. Yet it is a hidden day and hour, but as sure as those of Noah, and after that pattern, for the godly remnant that survive shall pass through these scenes of judgment, and live to govern the renovated earth, instead of being removed, as the Church will be, like Enoch, to the realms above. Hence it is the converse of our portion; for here one is taken in judgment, the other left in mercy. (36-41.)

The next three verses (42-44) are a kind of transition, being the just application of what had been urged as a motive for watching and readiness for the coming of the Son of man, and an introduction to what follows. Next, from verse 45 comes the distinctively Christian portion of the Lord's prophecy, consisting of three intermediate parables: that of the Household Servants; that of the ten Virgins; and that of the Talents. These compose the part which relates to Christendom. The order too, instead of being a difficulty as it might appear on a hasty glance, seems to me perfectly beautiful. The Lord begins with the Jews, because the disciples who actually surrounded Him were, practically, in Jewish circumstances then. When He has set out their destiny with special reference to the end of the age and His own coming, He then turns to the Christian part in parabolic language, which would open out on these very disciples when the Jews refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost; that is to say, which drops all allusion to the Jew, and assumes that wide character which Christianity demands. The instruction here is presented in the most general forms, because the Lord is looking onward to Christians in any or every quarter of the earth; and therefore we hear no more of

the unparalleled tribulation, nor of the end of the age, any more than of the land, or the sanctuary, or the Sabbath. Lastly, as we saw, when the parabolic views of the Christian part are closed, a concluding picture winds up the prophecy about the Gentiles who will be gathered before the Son of man when He is come to reign over the earth (Matt. 25:31-46); but this only by the way to give a complete sketch of the bearing of these two chapters.

Let me notice, as briefly as may be, the other Scriptures which refer to the tribulation. What we have seen in Matthew 24 is the most detailed.

The prophet Daniel, you will recollect, is referred to by our Lord in the first gospel; so we can next turn to him. In Dan. 12 (the one cited) we read these cheering words: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” Can there be a doubt what people are meant by Daniel’s people? Were they Gentiles, or were they Jews? It cannot be questioned. It was of the Jews, and their troubles and degradation, that Daniel treated, during which times the Gentiles would be allotted the supreme power in the earth; and accordingly the object of the prophecy everywhere is to show the downfall of the Gentiles, to make way for the Jews in the end. How needed this was to strengthen Daniel, or any Israelite indeed like him, in the face of the troubles that had then befallen and yet awaited the Jews! They had been carried into captivity by the first of the imperial Gentile powers, of whom the prophet receives a measured account in their successive rise and fall during which the Jews were to suffer. But even from the first God would have His servant comforted with the certainty,

that the proud Gentiles must be judged and the Jews at length be delivered. When they came to their deepest strait, Michael the archangel would stand for them against all adversaries. Such is the critical turn of affairs here brought before Daniel. “And at that time shall Michael stand up” (instead of the Jews being allowed to suffer any longer), “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

It is evident on the face of it, how exactly this statement falls in with the plain bearing of our Lord’s prophecy. In that portion of it where He is providing for the special exigencies of Jewish disciples in the latter day (as represented by the four men who were then along with Him), there, and there only, is there any reference to this unequalled tribulation. It is our Lord Himself who quotes Daniel the prophet, with a charge to understand him. We open Daniel, and, as might be expected, the same truth substantially appears. Not that our Lord merely draws on or reiterates His servant’s resources; but He knew His own word, and He at least could not misunderstand. “Whoso readeth let him understand.” It is we who have to take care; it is we who need to understand what we read. How is it that controversial divines have brought the Pope in here? Because they were occupied with their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. This Scripture does not touch the Pope, whatever may have been the long train of impieties and atrocious cruelties perpetrated by the Papacy. I doubt not that it is a system which embodies essentially,

though not exclusively, the mystery of lawlessness, and that the great whore of Rev. 17 finds her centre in Rome. But there is another character of things here. It is presumptuous to determine beforehand that there can be no height or depth of wickedness more audacious than that which has been. It is contrary to all analogy that evil should not be at its maximum when judgment falls. It is vain and unbelieving to reason in the teeth of plain Scripture. “Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.” Idolatry was smitten by Assyria and Babylon, as the rejection of Christ was by the unconscious Romans. What will it be when Antichrist is received? Trouble beyond all breaks out upon the children of Daniel’s people; but it is immediately before the triumphant deliverance of the godly ones. Is it not folly to apply this to Popery? It is quite as great, if not greater, absurdity, on the part of the rationalists, who can only see in it some past siege of Jerusalem. Let them weigh a decisive reason. There have been many sieges of Jerusalem, and one most celebrated since the gospel appeared; but were the Jews then delivered? Did the Lord come in the clouds of heaven to gather His chosen by angels when the city was invested by the Romans under Titus?

It may interest some here to notice the divine accuracy with which our Lord predicted the Roman siege, as recorded in the gospel of Luke. (21) This is quite passed over in the corresponding passage of Matthew, and even Mark. But Luke mentions, as an event previous to the times of the end, that Jerusalem would be seen “compassed with armies.” The Lord singles out this feature. Many sieges of the holy city had there been, but only once, it is said, was Jerusalem thus invested.

Besides, our Lord distinguishes that occasion from the future. Examine Luke 21, and you will find that the compassing of Jerusalem with armies, its fall, and the captivity of the Jews, are expressly before the time of the end begins. (Compare verses 20-24 with verses 25-28.) After the capture, Jerusalem is supposed to be still trodden down during a given though unmeasured period. “And Jerusalem shall be trodden of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” This is going on still. The final scene is characterized not only by such tribulation as exceeds all the past of the Jews, not only by distress of nations, but also by the fact that this greatest time of sorrow is immediately followed by unexampled victory for the Jews. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was followed not by deliverance but by servitude; not by the gathering together of the children of Israel into their own land, but by their being led away captive into all nations. Thus the facts, and above all Luke’s account, enable us to show the clear contrast of what was then with what is to be by and by. The conclusion, therefore, is certain and inevitable to the believer, that the Lord and Daniel both speak of the unequalled time of trouble for the Jew. It is a tribulation which: must fall upon that people, and precedes the mighty deliverance which clearly has not yet been wrought in their favour. Therefore the tribulation must be future because the deliverance is unquestionably future; for the word of God inseparably connects them together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days follows our Lord’s appearing, to rescue them from ruin and every other ill and sorrow. Neither the one nor the other can yet be an accomplished fact.

It is well to remark distinctly, in the Scriptures which have come thus far under review, that the people who are in question, upon whom the tribulation falls, are the Jews. Not a word is said about Christians. No doubt there are some other Scriptures which can be produced. It must be shown in them, if anywhere, that Christians will be on earth at that time, in order to make out the case that Christians are to pass through it. Vague notions will not suffice, nor theories; though I may say that one might well wonder at those who talk about the honour of going through these scenes of earthly horror. Do these speculatists comprehend its moral import? Do they know the retributive grounds of that tribulation? Probably they have not even thought of enquiring. I grant you, that to endure temptation at any time is blessed; to suffer for righteousness' sake does not fail of a reward; to suffer for Christ and with Christ is the precious portion of the faithful Christian. "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," as the apostle tells us; but is any man so uninstructed as to imagine this the character of the tribulation in the last days? If it were the honour and the privilege, which they have so hastily assumed, do they believe that the Lord would tell the disciples how to escape it? nay, make it a point of obedience to flee from it to the mountains? Does this hang together? Does He ever let the Christian know how he is to escape tribulation? No confusion more preposterous in all its parts. The cases are in contrast, not the same. It is the allotted portion, and privilege, and glory of the Christian to suffer for Christ's sake. None should be moved by these afflictions, still less fly from them as if they were an evil; "for yourselves know," says St. Paul to young believers, `' that we are appointed "hereunto." Such is the doctrine of the New

Testament for the Christian. “To you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

How comes it then, that, if passing through this greatest tribulation be a prize, the Lord so carefully instructs His faithful ones how to deprive themselves of that honour? The simple fact is, that the entire system, which thus reasons or imagines, is at issue with the word of God. The tribulation of those days is no honour, but the severest infliction on sin, and unbelief, and apostasy. It is a judicial punishment on the Jewish nation, because they broke the law, despised the Messiah, and will then have received the Antichrist, “the king.” Is it an honour to be buffeted for the most desperate wickedness against God and His Christ? to encounter a trouble that is the divine scourge for all this iniquity? Yet this is the character of the tribulation which some have so inconsiderately thought and called an honour. Accordingly Scripture proves, that the people that rebelled against God, crucified their Messiah, despised the gospel and bowed down to the beast and the false prophet, will in the end suffer this tribulation. It will fall upon them when the Antichrist has set up an idol in Jerusalem, and he thinks to have it all his own way there, supported, alas! by the powers of the West. Such is the future assigned by Scripture to the revived empire with its divided kingdoms of Europe. Joining the apostate Jews (for Judaism and Christendom will yet coalesce), they will be the material supports of the man that will set himself up as God in the temple of Jerusalem, who will none the less also establish idolatry there. To this end everything tends. It is the educated, civilized West that will before the world sustain and

glorify, not the Saviour, but the son of perdition, the final instrument of the serpent's power in deceit and destruction for the last days. The desolator, the Assyrian scourge, will come down upon these victims of Satan. The East, wicked as it is and will then be, is not at any rate prepared to endorse the apostasy and man of sin, and so will pour down its countless hosts on Palestine, in chastisement under God upon the lawless one and his party. Hence Jerusalem in that day acquires such painful interest and importance; for God permits the great desolator (whatever may be his designs) to descend like an avalanche from the North and East. "Behold Jehovah hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand." This attack of the eastern powers will at once arouse and attract to Palestine the West, and there both West and East shall find their doom successively at the hand of the Lord. Before this, however, the eastern power will scourge the Jews; but the faithful ones, if they listen to our Lord's warning, will themselves entirely escape the tribulation. Those in Judea will flee, according to His word, and be hidden from man; so that, when the Lord destroys all the apostates, Jew or Gentile, all His enemies, whether of the West or the East, He will gather back all the Israel of God, whether these or others, who may be then scattered over the face of the earth.

I repeat, then, that in the New Testament tribulation is spoken of as the Christian's daily companion. It is a gift of grace which a saint is not to run away from, but to thank God and take courage for; whereas it is beyond controversy, that when the tribulation predicted by the Lord and the prophets falls on Judea and Jerusalem, our

Lord Himself expressly provides minute directions for the faithful who are there to escape. And this, some people will tell you, is the tribulation we ought all to account so glorious, and which it is such rank cowardice to shirk! Infatuation could hardly go farther. My brethren, if this were but the word of the Lord, not the braying of ignorance, who of us would not, by His grace, welcome fire or water in obedience and love to Him? But it is the very reverse of all He teaches, even for the future Jewish remnant. In truth He has given the Christian something incomparably better, and harder too; not one great trial, but, on the contrary, if faithful, one continuous trial of seduction on the one hand, and of tribulation on the other. To you who know your own hearts I appeal, whether you find it a severer test to bear some sharp, heavy, but single trial, or to wade through and endure never-ceasing shame, loss, pain of mind, and still to be faithful to Christ, through faith rising above the world, and, still in sorrow, to rejoice in the portion God has given you? It is not for any believer to institute a vain comparison, or to disparage that jewel of martyrdom which will never lose its brightness in the eyes of Christ or of those who are His; but methinks, even in the blessed apostle to whom that grace was given, nothing is finer than the love and faith which made his whole life a dying daily. To live Christ is so to die in this world.

On the other hand, in Scripture, whatever men may dream, the last tribulation (Dan. 12, Matt. 24, etc.) is never once presented as an honour to those who have passed through it, but as a deadly scourge upon the ungodly and apostate Jews, because they received the Antichrist after refusing the Christ of God.

There is another portion in the Old Testament which claims our attention — Jeremiah 30:7, though one may be the more brief, because the statement is so plain that argument or even exposition is unnecessary. There we read, “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” It is the one unvarying doctrine everywhere: it is not the Church, but Jacob who is seen in this catastrophe. As certainly is he saved out of it. Here again is a third testimony to the same effect, that the special trouble which will close the age, and, of course, be in this world, falls on the Jewish people, but they shall be saved out of it. It is, no doubt, a short testimony; but can you conceive any other words that could add to its force? There is no allusion to a Christian being there, unless, indeed, in circles where the extraordinary illusion prevails of understanding “Jacob,” and “Israel,” and “Zion,” and “Jerusalem,” and almost everything else, to mean the Christian or the Church. It is that old system over again, against which I have warned you — nothing but self, which so mars and obscures the truth, and well-nigh blots Christ out of the Bible. Make it all the Church, and you most effectually destroy the Church All distinctiveness of truth thereby vanishes away.

We may now return once more to the New Testament, just remarking by the way, that Mark 13 falls in with the corresponding passage in Matthew, without adding anything material for our present purpose. He that reads may satisfy himself that none but Israelites are there intimated to be in the scene of this last affliction. There is a passage, however, in the Revelation which demands a longer notice.

In chapter 7 we have, first, God sealing by a mighty angel a certain regularly numbered complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel. There is no doubt whatever in my mind that those twelve tribes, described as they are there, with their names given, cannot be applied to any but the literal twelve tribes of Israel. There may be a fair question raised why the tribe of Dan is omitted, though I am not going to attempt an answer, and, indeed, it is better to be perfectly plain — I have none satisfactory to give. But the indications that the tribes of Israel should be taken in their literal import are confirmed by the consideration of the vision that immediately follows. For the prophet sees another multitude which none could number, and which is said to be of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. That is, it is as expressly a Gentile body as the hundred and forty-four thousand were out of the tribes of Israel. Now it is of this Gentile multitude that Scripture declares, “These are they which come out of great tribulation.” (v. 14.)

Here let me correct what I presume must have been a very unintentional error in our common version. It is universally admitted by every one entitled to speak with weight on such a point, that the true, plain, and only meaning of the text is “out of the great tribulation.” The difference is immense. If I simply look at the throng, and say, “They come out of great tribulation,” I may spiritualize and say, “Here is the Church: they have always been in great tribulation in the world, and will emerge from it at last into heavenly glory.” The moment you render it as it ought to be — “the great tribulation,” this vague way of understanding it drops as inapplicable. How can the Church be said to come out of the great tribulation? Has it been “the great tribulation”

from before Pentecost till Christ comes? The Jewish prophets, as well as our Lord, proved, on the contrary, that there is to be a short crisis of tremendous trouble at the end of this age; from which, instructed by Christ, the faithful disciples of that day will be exempt. But the mass of the Jews will be visited by it, and taste its appalling bitterness. Those who are true, the Israel of God, will be saved out of it. The Apocalypse adds fresh information; it does not intimate one of the same unparalleled character, but it is “the great tribulation.” Probably before the time of that in Matthew 24: it will be certainly larger in sphere if not so excessive. Out of it come the numberless crowd of saved Gentiles whom John saw in the vision.

It may be well to point out a few distinctive features in the scene in order to the forming a sound judgment of it. First, observe who it is that explains about this tribulation. It is one of the elders, who, as we have already seen, are the symbolical representatives of the heavenly saints viewed as made a royal priesthood unto God. Of this I have no doubt whatever. Of the elders; then, one explains to the prophet of whom this Gentile multitude, now first seen, is composed. The other sealed and numbered company consisted of a body out of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is an innumerable crowd from out of the Gentiles. Just as in the prophecy of our Lord (Matt. 24, 25) there was a need for Christians as well as for Jewish disciples, as well as about Gentiles at the end, so there is here. The elders answer to the Christians who are supposed to be then in heaven, and whose privilege it is to understand the mind of God about all these pages. It is an old and true remark that, whenever spiritual intelligence is called for

in the Revelation, the elders are those to exhibit it. It is not surprising; for God has abounded to us even now in all wisdom and prudence; and surely so choice a blessing will not disappear in heaven. Again, as the apostle Paul says, “We have the mind of Christ;” and the reason of it is, because we have not only a new nature, but the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and the “Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Hence, in St. John’s epistles we find that the whole family of God, even the youngest or the babes in, the family, are characterized as “knowing all things” in virtue of that unction which they have from the Holy One. Circumstances here may impair the display of this power of the Spirit in them, but on high all hindrances disappear. We shall all know as we are known. Whatever is done, the elders understand it: heaven and God’s ways are familiar to them. If the living creatures ascribe honour and glory to God, at once they rise from their thrones and prostrate themselves before Him in worship, Hence too they sing songs suitable to each circumstance which calls them forth. If God on the throne is celebrated, they praise accordingly. If the Lamb takes the book and opens the seals, at once the elders are found with a new song: “Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue.” No matter what the subject, the elders display divine intelligence. Of whom else could this remarkable spiritual intelligence be predicated? What characterizes an angel is his power. They “excel in strength,” as the Scripture says. They are the beings that give effect to the providential arrangements of God. Then we find that the living creatures preside over the execution of His judgments in the earth. Thus, in Rev. 6 the four living

creatures are active on the opening of the earliest seals, and bids each agent come forth successively to do his appointed work on earth. But when the understanding of God's mind in heaven is the point to be shown by any creature there, the elders are the appropriate. They sing the sweetest songs in heaven; they worship more frequently and characteristically than any others. In them combine exalted position on thrones, active office as priests, as well as prophetic intelligence. At home in the presence of God, they have loving communion not merely with the throne and what issues thence, but with Him who is seated on the throne and with the Lamb. Now, what body in heaven is so capable of adequately answering to all these things as the assembly or Church of God taken up to heaven and glorified there? The elders may include the Old Testament saints, but assuredly the Church also, if not confined to it.

At some moment, undefined by dates or signs external, the Church will be taken up to heaven to meet the Lord. The moment the heavenly saints are taken out of the way, God's plans open for the earth. The mystery of Christ and the Church being thus gone, God looks down upon the two public classes of men — Jews and Gentiles. Out of Israel we find severed this numbered multitude. Will God not regard the Gentiles in His mercy to call any out of them? He will call out of them an innumerable multitude. Inasmuch as the great tribulation occurs just before the turning of God's hand for the blessing of the world, just before our Lord comes from heaven to execute vengeance in person, so out of this tribulation a fresh body of persons are seen to emerge, and who are thus specially characterized. They are not Old Testament saints, nor the Church. They are not millennial saints,

but a multitude without number from every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue, who come out of the great tribulation. They do not worship as the elders; they do not sing as they; they are not described as seated on thrones, or as having crowns upon them, or exercising priestly functions — nothing of the kind. In the vision they do not sing, but say, “Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” They are redeemed, of course. They are in bliss, I do not deny for a moment, but it is of a lower character than that of the heavenly saints. Accordingly this further description follows. “These are they which came out of the great tribulation.” I care not what judge you choose: any man acquainted with the language, whatever his views, is enough. I defy any competent man in the world to deny that the meaning is “the great tribulation.” When you have learned that it is the great tribulation, the ground for making out of this a picture of the Church in general is gone for ever. There is no just sense in which all Christians can be said to “come out of the great tribulation;” but in this case every one of these saints comes out of the great tribulation. So, at least, Scripture speaks, and it cannot be broken. The chief mark upon them, which opens the case of these Gentiles, is their coming out of the great tribulation. They are blessed; they are washed in the blood of the Lamb; but they have no distinctive properties of the Church. They are not of that one new man, where there is “neither Jew nor Gentile.” On one side is a body of blest Jews, on the other is this crowd of blest Gentiles. But there is a special place for Christians, who, through

the broken down middle wall of partition, are called in one body to heaven. We are not only strangers here, in the strongest sense, but belong to Christ, as united to Him above all such distinctions as those of Jew and Gentile. On this ground, if a Jew or a Gentile enter the Church, he ceases to be either Jew or Gentile, and becomes a Christian. The old landmarks disappear, for they were earthly; there is now one new man. Christ is in heaven, and we are His members. It is Christ that characterizes the believer now. By and by, as we have seen, God will have a people out of the Jews; He will have a people out of the Gentiles also; but, as we see here, they will not be mingled together. They are distinctly presented in the vision as two separate groups; and both of them quite apart from the elders. Yet, strange to say, the most popular work on the Apocalypse of this day makes out that the innumerable multitude of Gentiles is made up — how? By adding together the successive hundred-and-forty-four thousands of Israel from age to age! I do not know how many times it requires a given number of Jews to become numberless Gentiles. Such is the theory, however, that this crowd of Gentiles, somehow or other, comes out of the carefully measured number of the tribes of Israel. From this reference you may gather how extremely opposed to the truth of God’s word must be any judgment of plain Scripture, where men lose sight of the great truth of the Church as a heavenly body, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile, because we are founded on Christ crucified, and we are united to Him glorified at the right hand of God.

When our Lord died and rose and went to heaven, there was an entire abandonment, in principle, of all

connection with the Jews, whatever might be the patient lingering of God's gracious testimony for a time. The Lord Jesus born in the world was an Israelite, their Head and King, even the Messiah; but "if we have known Christ after the flesh, now henceforth know we him no more." The Christ that we stand related to is no doubt the blessed person who was born in Bethlehem. However, it is not after that pattern, nor any earthly way, that we are in relationship with Him. We have not to do with Christ upon earth accomplishing the promises here below, or at any rate as the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God. We begin with Christ who, died for our sins; for, as the apostle Paul says," I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received. how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." Thence, as it were, we follow Him through resurrection to heaven, and there we find the proper character of the Church in association with Christ and His glory above.

In Rev. 7 appear other facts — an immense mass of Gentiles to be brought out of the great tribulation, distinguished from the sealed thousands of Israel. Where is the Church in all this? Nowhere at all. But not only can you hence furnish no proof that a single Christian (properly so called) will be in, or come out of, the great tribulation; but I can go farther, and give you clear disproof of it. This is not logically necessary on my part. On you lies the burden of proof; if you assert a doctrine, on you is the obligation of proving it. He who maintains that the Christian Church, wholly or in part, is to be in the great tribulation, ought surely to be able to bring some plain scripture — one text at least — for so grave a matter. Why does he believe it, if he can produce none? Because he trusts tradition in his own mind. He

has no scripture for his thought; he refuses plain passages, which show that Jews only have to do with the unequalled trouble, that Gentiles only come out of the great tribulation, without one word about Christians in either case. Yet some prefer to stick to that which others have said, or they themselves have imagined before. I will venture to say, that no one who first searched the Bible to see of whom the Lord speaks, or of whom the prophets spoke as passing through the tribulation, ever drew such a conclusion. The fact is, that people have brought their thoughts to the scriptures, and thence sought confirmation. They have seen that there are to be saved souls, who must pass through that tribulation; these they call the Church, and then they conclude that the whole question is closed in their favour. They are not aware, because of their ignorance of the Church, that the case is not even touched. When the present work of God in gathering out the Church and taking it into heaven is complete, the Lord will enter on a new task with the Jews and Gentiles, because He means to magnify His mercy in respect of them both for the earth. On this very important point I may dwell longer another day, if the Lord will.

But there is, I think, distinct evidence in Scripture, that the faithful of the Church will not be in the great tribulation; and in Rev. 3:10, it is written, “Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them which dwell upon the earth.” Now, it seems to me, that there can be no just question, (although it is not called “the great tribulation” here, any more than it is so styled in Jeremiah 30) that the same substantial fact is included. The passages already

discussed in Matthew 24, and Mark 13, and Daniel 12, speak exclusively of the scene in Judea. The passage in Rev. 7 treats of a more extensive tribulation out of which spared and blessed Gentiles come; but still, I apprehend, it is nearly the same time, though the spheres may be different. Jeremiah speaks of “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” St. John speaks of “the hour of temptation.” The Lord promises to exempt, not merely from tribulation, but from “trial;” and not from trial (of whatever sort, seductive, or even what may be terrible and perilous), but “from the hour of trial.” Out of that hour, containing within it the great tribulation which comes to try them that dwell upon the earth, He will keep such as are true to Him.

Well, what is the force of the last word to all the faithful here? He says not only, “I come quickly” (that is, He puts the proper hope of the Christian before the Christian heart); not only does He say, “Behold, I come quickly;” but, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them which dwell upon the earth.” Does this merely mean preserving power while that temptation presses on man? Where is anything particular in this? The Lord will keep all His own: the sealed Israelites, the innumerable Gentiles, are all kept as far as mere preserving is concerned. Where, then, is the special force of the promise that the Lord here guarantees to His followers, that if we keep the word of His patience, He also will keep us? That is, if we have communion with Christ in waiting while He waits. This, I apprehend, is truly His patience — a wonderful thought: Christ is waiting to come and receive us to Himself. We are called to wait for His coming. The Bride

has communion with the Bridegroom, expecting to meet the Lord in the air; and if we keep the word of His patience, He will keep us from the hour of trial which shall come upon the world. Again, mark it is not merely to keep us during it, but out of it; not only out of its range, but out of its time. What can you fairly gather from these words? I should understand that the faithful, according to the Philadelphian standard and approval, are not to be in that scene or hour at all. It is a promise in view of the Lord's coming to receive those of the Church who look for Him; whereas the great tribulation pertains to that portion of the Apocalypse which supposes the translation to have already taken place, and Jews and Gentiles (not the Church) to be the objects of God's dealings on earth.

Thus Revelation 4 shows us the heavenly saints glorified already above. To the end of Revelation 11 (where the first volume, so to speak, of the Apocalypse ends) we have various visions in which they figure on high. And what is the course of events upon the earth concurrent with their presence above? What is their disclosed character? In regular sequence the prophet has unrolled before him, and for our instruction, the progress of providential judgment — first more general, next more direct and specific. The enemy is not idle, either in violence against saints who suffer unto death, or, in lieu of which, enthralling them that dwell on the earth. It is in short the beginning, I apprehend, of the predicted "hour of temptation," from which the faithful Christians were promised exemption by the Lord. There are disciples after that, as we have just seen; but their testimony differs essentially from ours and far more reverts to the Old Testament type. However this may be,

what may be called the second volume of the Revelation begins with chapter 12, or, more strictly, with the last verse of chapter 11. We go back again in the commencement of that chapter, which presents the symbol of a travailing woman seen according to divine counsel, and opposed by the open hostile power of Satan, in the form of the Roman Emperor. But, spite of his hatred, the man-child who is born is caught up to God and His throne. Who and whose is this woman's seed, this male of might? Unquestionably it is Christ, who was to be born of Israel according to prophecy; and in fact so it was - the man- child destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron. But why is He thus presented here so long after the historical fact? Because it is Christ involving the translation of the saints (in His person as it were) to heaven. The Apocalypse, more especially in the prophetic part, naturally adopts the Old Testament manner. It is the mystical style of showing the rapture of the saints, I admit; of course not the literal one, which does not fall in with the Apocalyptic method. Otherwise there is in the book no allusion whatever to this great event, if it be not thus wrapped up in the person of Christ the manchild, and no adequate reason appears to account for the catching up of Christ at this point. Remark, also, there is no date, though dates begin in the chapter before, and follow after in this chapter and the next. How long transpires after the rapture to heaven, before the woman is in the wilderness for her appointed time and the battle in heaven, is not said; but it is certainly an event, however momentous, which must come first.

Thus the first three chapters of the book are but preliminary to the proper prophecy, and contain the

things seen and “the things which are.” Then, before beginning “the things which must be after these,” from the very start of chapter 4 we see, not the translation of the saints, but the saints already translated and glorified under the symbol of the twenty-four elders. The second volume of the book represents them, we saw, more according to a fashion that suits the Jewish mind. Thus throughout the law or prophets, whenever any type or prophecy may be supposed to apply strictly and fully to Christians, individually or collectively, the Old Testament says of Christ what the New Testament says of the Church. Take, for instance, that bold challenge in Isaiah 1:8, “He is near that justifieth me: who will contend with me?” etc. Of whom does the prophet speak? Of Christ, to be sure. But the very same thing which the Old Testament predicted of Christ in Isaiah, the New Testament affirms of Christians in Romans 8. And this is so much the more striking, because in Isaiah 1 the end of the chapter discloses another class of saints quite distinct: godly Jews of the last days, listening to the voice of God’s servant, walking in darkness and seeing no light. I am aware there have been and are those who apply verses 10 and 11, like the rest, to Christians now; but the reason is obvious - they do not understand Christianity. We read in the New Testament that he who follows Christ shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Such is our Saviour’s description of the Christian. He does not walk in darkness. So Paul tells us, “We were darkness, but now are we light in the Lord.” So, John 1:6, 7. Depend upon it that this drawing back souls to Jewish conditions is Puritan divinity, where it is not owing to the leaven of the Fathers or to what misled Fathers or Puritans. The Puritans seem to have fallen under the law far more than the old Reformers did, who

indeed had somewhat emerged from the influence of the Fathers. But this is only by the way to account for the effects produced, and sought to be kept up in the mind of Christians at the present time.

I close, then, with the conviction, that the view here maintained follows on a close investigation of every distinct passage that Scripture affords upon the subject of the great tribulation. I should be obliged to any one who will produce me other passages that refer to it; but I am not aware of them. I demand of those who have heard me this night, whether they can point out one word which supposes a Christian or the Church on the earth when the great tribulation arrives? Have we not seen that the doctrine of Old and New Testament — of Jeremiah, of Daniel, of the Lord Jesus, and of the apostle John — is this, that, just before the Lord appears in glory, will come the last and unequalled trouble of Israel, though Jacob shall be delivered from it; that there will be, (at substantially the same epoch, but probably somewhat longer, and beginning before it,) “the great tribulation,” out of which a multitude of Gentiles emerge; but that both Jacob and the Gentiles are totally distinct from the Christian or the Church. As regards the Christian, the positive promise of the Lord is, that such as have kept the word of His patience He will keep out of the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

But what about the unfaithful? What about professing Christendom? I have not a word of comfort to say; for as the hour of trial will surely come upon the Jewish nation as a chastening of their unbelief in rejecting Him who came in His Father’s name, the true Christ, and in

receiving him who comes in his own name, so will it also be a time of trouble and of darkness, of terror and ruin, for corrupt, apostate Christendom; even as our Lord warned Thyatira that He casts Jezebel into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation. Believe the word of God. It is slippery ground, and argues boundless confidence in one's self and mankind, to form a judgment of what is coming grounded on what we may see around us; especially if that judgment appear to contradict the clear warning of Scripture. Now the word of God is plain, that God is about to send strong delusion, that men should believe a lie; for He will give up Christendom, as He once gave up Judaism and Gentilism, to its own rebellious perdition. And what does not Christendom deserve at His hands? I speak of the unfaithful profession of Christ everywhere. Dealt with in infinite mercy, blest with the largest favours and the richest privileges, Christendom has lost its way as to truth and holiness and sense of grace and glory in Christ, far more than it has lost ground in actual outward hold upon the world. And yet this is not small; for vast tracts of the earth that were once covered with Christian profession have now lapsed back into heathenism, or Mahometanism. Every person familiar with the facts of early ecclesiastical history knows that this is the truth as to an immense part of Asia as well as of Africa. I am not denying the mercy of God, that works through men who send out Bibles and missionaries here and there over the world in these days; but such societies now are no contradiction, but rather a confirmation, of the sad reality they find everywhere, still less are they a reason why the day of the Lord will not shine with scathing light on the moral darkness of Christendom. On the contrary, here are the too sure

indications of the great final crisis — the mass of men settling down, not only in infidelity, but in that phase of it which takes the character of apostate Christianity; not the profane scepticism of a Rousseau or a Voltaire, but the theological infidelity of the day — that of men who still profess to be Christians, yea, teachers and dignitaries, it may be in high positions, professorial or episcopal. Nor is it limited to one particular body. The working of this evil spirit is well-nigh universal. Romanism cloaks it largely. It has found extensive hiding-places among the Dissenters, as well as in the national establishments of these Protestant lands. Therefore I do not mention the fact to throw stones at individuals, but to pray that those who love Christ may labour more earnestly because they know of the fearful growing swamp of delusion into which Christendom is about to fall. The more I am assured of the love of Christ, the more it will act upon my soul; the more I am assured of the destruction that awaits the world, the greater the need to warn men, if peradventure some may be saved. Therefore may God bless His own truth, and keep His children's eyes on the coming of Christ, free from anxious speculation about the predicted troubles for the earth, as if such must be their pathway to heaven. Waiting for Him in the communion of His patience, we shall be caught up to meet and be with Him, ere the hour of temptation envelopes this guilty world.

1 As English admits of "market," "church," "town," "country," without the article, so did Greek yet more freely.

2 All the description shows that it is a tribulation as brief as it is hot. It is an error, therefore, to look for its

accomplishment in the long history of the Jews scattered over the earth. Not so: it is in Jerusalem that this tribulation rages, for the mountains at hand will hide the remnant; and so awful its fury, that “except those days should be shortened, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect’s sake those day shall be shortened:” language plainly inconsistent with a reference to the protracted sufferings of the Jews in Gentile lands. It is a short and future crisis in the land.

The Appearing and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus

Lecture 7 - Acts 3:19-21.

As my subject tonight is the appearing and kingdom of the Lord Jesus, I have read these verses simply to establish, in a clear and concise form, the distinct proof that the appearing of the Lord Jesus is the introduction of His kingdom here below. I do not deny for a moment that there is such a thing as translation into “the kingdom of God’s dear Son” now. We all agree in this. This therefore is not the question, but rather, whether Scripture does not certainly intimate that the Lord Jesus will, by His appearing, introduce His kingdom over the earth. Not merely will the kingdom be preached, and the word, mixed with faith in them that hear it, bring souls born of God to see and enter that kingdom morally (John 3), which no doubt is true now; but Scripture shows us also a change of immense importance for the world, which the appearing of the Lord Jesus will inaugurate. The apostle Peter, addressing the Jews, called upon them to “repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out, that times of refreshing” [I have ventured to change one word here: it is “so that,” or “in order that” (not “when “) “times,” etc., which is never the force of the conjunction in such a construction] “may come from the presence of the Lord; and He may send Him who was fore-appointed you, Christ Jesus,” or, “your Messiah, Jesus” — I do not wish to enlarge on questions of a critical nature, but just give the true sense as we pass along — “whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which

God hath spoken of by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began."

Now what this passage proves, beyond just question, is this, that God will send the Lord Jesus, and that the sending of the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, according to that fore-appointment which every Jew looked for, will introduce, or at any rate will be simultaneous with, the times of refreshing, of which the prophets are so full. Meanwhile heaven receives Jesus until (not the destruction of the world; not the passing away finally of the heavens and earth; but, contrariwise) the restoration of all things, — the blotting out of the foul stains which cover this world, and the setting in order that which has been confused and dislocated by sin, the mighty power of God (which now works in the salvation of souls and in the blessing of saints by the testimony of His grace and truth in Christ) being then put forth after another sort: not merely in giving eternal life to souls — which will go on of course — but besides in righteous power putting down manifestly every influence, and every person too, that is opposed to the glory of God by the Lord Jesus. His judgment, we know, will first deal with the unseen — with Satan and his hosts; it will, in the next place, purge the earth of its destroyers (Rev. 11), or, as it is said, the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall clear the field, which is the scene of His kingdom — the world - of all stumbling-blocks, and of them that do iniquity. For this unquestionably the saints in Old Testament times were taught by the Spirit to wait. The New Testament in not the smallest degree weakens such an expectation, but confirms it.

It is fully granted that in the New Testament we have higher hopes, which are fully brought to view now that

the heavens are opened; that we behold Jesus at the right hand of God; that we see our own place and portion in communion with Christ there; for grace has given us to look to be with Him, our Head and Bridegroom, in the heavens. I confess that if it were a question of choosing between any earthly power and glory and that which the Holy Ghost now reveals with Christ above, it would be no matter of long deliberation or difficult choice to one. Unhesitatingly, I think, all our hearts ought to answer to such a call, and to say that (blessed as may be the power that will deal with the earth, that will fill the world with the goodness of God, that will banish from it all things that corrupt, dishonour, and oppose the will of God here below,) the heavens are the infinitely higher scene, the only adequate sphere for the full expression of the Father's love to Christ, viewed not only as the eternal Son, but as the risen man, who has glorified God upon the earth in life, and above all in death. According to Scripture, (John 13-17) the only due answer to His glorifying of God in the cross, is heavenly glory. No one, therefore, can fairly object, I am persuaded, that there is any thought of, or even room left for, weakening the true place of Christ's highest glory on high, and the Church's proper blessing in union with its Head. In Ephesians 1:3, we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." I assuredly believe, that the heavenly places, in contrast with Israel's blessing in the land of Palestine, show us the revealed and destined home of our blessing with Christ. It is not meant of course that we are actually there, but He is; and as surely as we are by the Holy Ghost made one with Christ while He is there, so will He come for us that He may

introduce us, according to the fulness of His own grace, into that seat of His glory and of His affection for His Bride. We belong to Him, and we are conscious that we do. “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, ye in me, and I in you.” That day has now arrived. The Holy Ghost, who has come down to dwell in us, is the Spirit of glory, as well as of God. Even as we know our Saviour in glory, and He is our life on the throne of God; so the Holy Ghost comes down from Him thence — not barely from Him while upon the earth, but from Him exalted in the heavens, — and unites us with Him there. And therefore it is but the complement of this astonishing unfolding of God’s counsels in Christ, that He will come to present the Church glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, but also to receive us unto Himself, that we may be with Him in the Father’s house (which is certainly not the earth, but in the heavens); in short, that we may be like Him, and with Him where He is.

But how does this heavenly hope in anywise clash with the further fact that the name of the Lord is to be exalted in the earth, as it has never yet been? How does our blessing above negative that which the Holy Ghost kept before the minds of saints from the very beginning? Does He not take, therefore, special pains to reaffirm it at the very moment, i.e. after Pentecost, when man might have imagined the old expectations of the prophets were completely dead, and gone for ever.

Now there is a true sense in which old things are passed away. That is to say, we have now to do with a new sphere of such surpassing glory in Christ, as quite raises the Christian above man, the Jew, etc. Hence we must not blend past hopes with these new revelations as the proper phase of our blessing. Our relationship is really

with one who was dead, and is risen and ascended into heaven, where, as has been remarked already, we belong to Him. We shall join Him in the air; we shall be with Him on high; but am I, therefore, to deny that the earth also is to be blessed? Do you not rejoice that His praise is to fill this lower scene? Is it not sweet to you that God should show Himself as good as He is? We do well to watch against every look of the evil eye — to hail Him who is always and only good. Will you not allow Him to exalt Christ in this world where He is now despised, where His name is so profaned, and where His truth is so tampered with, defaced, and corrupted? You will not have God to help the thought, neither will His word strengthen you in such an exclusion of the fixed purpose of God.

If ever a time was when the Holy Ghost wrought mightily in the power of divine grace, if ever there was a time when the saints of God on the earth were filled with a sense of His goodness and of that which Christ was to them, (I do not say for thorough intelligence, but for practical power,) it was at Pentecost. For great grace on all, there was nothing like the very hour in which Peter uttered these words. At that day, surely, if ever, it might have been thought that the seasons of refreshing were come by the power of the Holy Ghost upon the earth, that times of restoring all things were then established morally by the gospel. Certainly, if blooming and abundant fruits in souls could account for such a feeling, there was peculiar excuse for it then. But this was the precise moment which the Holy Ghost seized by the apostle Peter to declare in the most emphatic manner that these times are still future; that a further mighty change needs to be wrought; that it is not to be effected

by fresh or repeated missions of the Holy Ghost on Christians or for Christian purposes, but by sending Jesus — that Jesus who is gone away to heaven; and that, when He comes from heaven once more, then and not before shall be the times, not of the destruction of earth and heaven, but contrariwise of the restitution of all things of which God has spoken by His holy prophets since the world began. The testimony of the prophets, thus appealed to, ought to leave the meaning of this Scripture entirely unambiguous. It is not a question of New Testament declarations and hopes, but of that which was already written or spoken by the mouth of the prophets, “His holy prophets,” it is said, “since the world began.”

There can be no doubt therefore that the intention of this statement of the Holy Ghost by Peter was to let the Jews know that their repentance and conversion, that their sins might be blotted out as a nation, is an antecedent condition of the great revolution yet to take place for this world. When the heart of Israel as Israel is touched, when they turn to the Lord — it may be but tremblingly and with very partial understanding of His grace, but when it is a real work in their heart, God shall send Jesus from heaven. Our Lord Himself uttered similar truth in the close of Matthew 23, which passage was before us a short time ago. He left their house unto them desolate, “till” — not for ever, but “till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” When they so say, He is to come. Jehovah sends Him; for their hearts call Him “blessed” as He comes in Jehovah’s name. This answers to their conversion in Acts 3. They judge themselves before God, acknowledge their sins, and find them blotted out by divine grace in the blood of

their own Messiah. There is no other way; but oh, how unspeakably affecting for them above all men! But again, whatever may be the precious power of the blood of Christ, there is no real blessing to any soul at any time save through the judgment of sin — of self — in the conscience. And so we find in the case of Israel: it is strongly enforced upon them, however it may be of grace; for Jesus is a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. In Matthew the point is rather the heart turning to Christ. In the Acts of the Apostles it is rather the conscience clearing itself, as it were, or rather clearing God, — vindicating Him against themselves. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Such is the absolute principle flowing from God’s nature, said of us, no doubt, but ever true. Both are united, and always, more or less, united; and when they are verified in Israel, God will send Jesus, their before-appointed Messiah, and then the times of restitution of all things will begin to run their blessed and blessing course upon the earth.

Nor is this, I need hardly say, a truth by any means confined to one isolated portion of the New Testament. But if this testimony stood alone, it seems to me amply sufficient to exclude as utterly groundless the notion that the times of universal restitution, and of refreshing too, can be brought in, according to Scripture, from any working of God’s Spirit on the earth, without the mission of Jesus from heaven. Were it an effect of the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, it is clear that then these times of refreshing must have arrived. But arrived they were not, as the apostle Peter clearly intimates, when the Holy Ghost was thus producing the sweetest fruit of

divine power and grace which ever grew among the saints on earth. He points for the true epoch to the coming of Jesus; he shows that Christ's presence is necessary, as the prophets also everywhere attest.

And is it not, I would urge, a righteous arrangement that so it should be? Does not this revealed truth, like all others, commend itself to the spiritual mind? For who has not proved the harmony which exists between the instincts of hearts renewed by God's grace, and the precious testimony of God's word? It is not that any one could beforehand have gathered this truth from any feeling of his own; but the heart, once it is revealed and believed, bows to it, and confesses how wisely and well all has been ordered of God. On the one hand, then, here is God's own most positive declaration of His mind and will; on the other, do not our hearts feel that it is exactly what is due to the blessed name of the Lord Jesus? — that He who had the shame, who knew the sorrow, who has been and is so trifled with by men, should have the joy and the glory of introducing the blessed reversal of this world's sad and humbling history? After all, whatever may be the precious functions of the Spirit of God — and it is not for any one here to weaken them for a moment — there was but One who died for sin; there was but One who suffered for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God; there was but One who renounced all His rights here below, that God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — might be glorified in the place where sin had so long reigned in death to man and dishonour to God.

Most righteously therefore it is His coming, who will change all here below — that blessed One who on the cross made a righteous foundation for all blessing, not only for heaven to be filled with its new sons and heirs of

glory, but for the earth at large to sing for joy; not only for the Church to sit down as bride at the marriage supper of the Lamb above, but for that nation also to find its sins, and rebellious evil, and hoary unbelief for ever washed away in His blood. He died for the children of God that were scattered abroad, He died to gather them together in one; but He died for that nation also, and I call your attention to it. It is not merely that He tasted death for every man; it is not merely that in bringing many sons unto glory, He, the leader of their salvation, was made perfect through sufferings. Are these, manifold as they are, all the applications of His everlastingly wondrous and fruitful death? Turn to Colossians 1, and hear what the Spirit of God there tells us of the power of His blood in reconciliation. We are more accustomed in general to think of our being reconciled to God; and surely it is a weighty truth, and of the utmost moment to His glory and our own peace and strength; but in Colossians 1 the Spirit of God, though giving to our personal portion its full place, breaks out into a larger circle of divine purposes; “for it pleased [the Father] that in him should all fulness dwell.”

May I here remark, that it was to please, not merely the Father, but also the Son, and the Holy Ghost? It seems somewhat to lower the proper glory of these equally divine persons to restrict the good pleasure to the Father. Of course, if Scripture really said so, there would be an end of all questions; but it does not. For, as you will observe, the words, “the Father,” are inserted by men (as Tyndale, Cranmer, Beza, etc.). We are always at liberty, perhaps I might say we are bound, to examine whenever these insertions occur. They have no warrant

of faith, though they may be a real help occasionally; but it is well to examine them as mere suggestions in the light of the rest of Scripture. In this case I think it certain that the true supplement is God (not Father), or, supplying no word, that the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Christ. This, however, did not effect reconciliation Incarnation is not reconciliation, though there are not wanting those who will tell you so; but such men either speak of what they do not understand, or they have no adequate sense of sin; that is, no true knowledge of God. The Son becoming incarnate is, no doubt, a marvellous display of grace on God's part towards man; but it does not, could not, put away sin. Nothing but the cross avails, nothing but the blood-shedding of the Son of God; and therefore there was a farther step necessary, not only that all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in Him, but that there should be a work done by Him. And this work is reconciliation by His blood, as it is said, "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself."

It is not persons, but "things" — "all things unto himself:" by Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. It is a most dangerous misunderstanding of Scripture to suppose that men are meant here. If they were in question, we ought all to be universalists, horribly false as that scheme is. No such delusion is taught here, or in any other part of God's word. It is the truth as regards things, the creatures of God's power. The reconciliation is destined to embrace all things He has made. Were there one object in heaven or earth (I speak not of rebellious angels, or of unbelieving man) outside the reach, the efficacious

reach, of the blood of Christ, so far Satan would have won some triumph over God; he would have been just so far the conqueror of the woman's Seed, instead of the conquered. But reconciliation by blood more than meets the ruin. Nothing needed to be reconciled when God made all things good. It was simply creature goodness. As man its head was capable of sin and of death by sin, so was the lower creation liable to be dragged down into decay, or brought more or less under the power of death. And so it was, so it is. The creature is, as Romans 8 calls it, "made subject to vanity." But now the ransom is found, redemption's price is paid. The reconciling power is not yet applied; but the foundation of all is laid, and never to be laid again. The blood is shed: it is only a question of God's time for accomplishing His counsels, for the application of this power to all the creation that groans and travails still — to "all things, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens."

Meanwhile, before God turns to this account the value of the blood of Christ, He brings in, not all persons, but, as He says here, "you." "You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." There it is applied to the Christian, even to the souls who now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: God has reconciled them by the blood of His cross, which has made peace for them, instead of leaving them to make their peace with God. For He says, "Now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death:" not through His birth, nor through their baptism; not through His incarnation, but "in the body of his flesh through death;" and this because death alone, the death of Christ, gives God's holy judgment of sin in grace to the soul who believes. Infinite mercy that it

should be so! The birth of Christ is just the introduction of the person who was to accomplish this truly divine work. It was the manifestation of Him who was God in human nature, which in Him was holy, though in it Adam fell, involving in his own ruin the race and all the creation of which he was chief; it was the manifestation of Him who, though a man, was none the less a Divine person. But now there is infinitely more; now in the body of His flesh, through death, He has effected our reconciliation. Had it not been so, even His manifestation in flesh must have been entirely fruitless for our deliverance. What a proof that in Him there was life without the smallest taint or smell of death! Nothing that was torn by beasts could be eaten, even according to the figures of the law; nothing that had a spot or blemish was capable of being made an offering for sin, even in type: how much more in the antitype! Yet He must die — the holy, harmless, undefiled. No otherwise could we have redemption, because in this way alone sin could be adequately judged — in death, the death of Jesus, the Son of God, and Son of man — in His death under divine judgment.

But Christ is dead. He has already poured out His soul unto death. Reconciliation, therefore, is made for every soul that now believes in Him. “You hath he reconciled.” And this is the condition into which He brings us before God, “In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight.” That is, the whole of our old being is regarded as to faith utterly gone under the judgment of the cross, and we are viewed according to our new nature, which nature we never see aright, save in the person of Christ. We are one with Him who is risen from the dead. There

was no union when He was here upon earth before atonement. There was then seen one unbroken course of moral perfection in Christ; yea perfect Divine beauty; the expression of God Himself in all His ways here below. But the great question of sin with God was not settled; the greatest work of all was not yet done. There was still the hour impending which He so solemnly looked onward to ever and anon, especially when the disciples were occupied with His present power, and the anticipations of His kingdom. He told them, and them expressly, that He was going to suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, etc., and be slain, and be raised on the third day. No wonder then when He did die and the victory was won, when He stood in resurrection — in the power of this new and abundant life to bestow it on the guiltiest of sinners, that the Holy Ghost makes much of it! Do we? It is a serious question, be assured. Remember, it is not a matter only for today, but for ever. Remember that it is not a truth merely about our own souls, nor even about salvation; it is a truth about Christ, by whose death and resurrection God brings us into this astonishing place, “To present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight.” It is not in our sight; for meet it is that we should know ourselves full of evil, judging, both in roots and fruits, the old man in us. We know painfully as a fact, of course, that the old man is there; but the comfort of faith is, that sin is judged in Christ; and it is well to bear in mind that, if it be not judged now, it never can be. If we who believe are not thus reconciled now, when or how are we to be? If we are, how blessed are we! Of course, we are not supposing souls which are still outside Christ; but I say, that for those who have looked to Christ, the work is perfectly done — not merely doing, but done — so that

God Himself could not add to its efficacy. The atoning work is done; the reconciliation is accomplished “in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight.” What infinite grace, to give us the knowledge of it now by faith, before the result appears at Christ’s coming! Still there remains the other truth, that the precious blood of Christ includes, in point of title, the reconciliation of all things, whether in the earth or in the heavens.

Nor does the proof depend upon this Scripture alone, though a single Scripture, if direct, is better than all other demonstration, and more than enough to hang heaven and earth upon. I dare not praise, but rather deprecate the habit of not being content with one Scripture, were there but one. If there be Scripture, it is God’s voice, God’s truth: what else is needed? He who does not believe one plain text, would not believe a thousand. But the truth is that Scripture is full of proofs of Christ’s appearing to bring in His kingdom over the earth. Of these I can only present a few tonight.

In Ephesians 1 is a passage as striking as it is in point. We are told there that God “has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” — toward the saints now. That is, He has not merely conferred on us a measure of creature ability to know and name certain things, as He gave to Adam when each creature came before him, as the appointed lord of creation, to assign its just name. But now to the saints, in virtue of the Second Man, the last Adam, God abounds in all wisdom and prudence. The whole expanse of God’s counsels is spread before the Church now. How can these things be? It is because Christ is the object — because He, the Son of God, has been revealed; and what are all things compared with

Him and His work? Counted as the small dust of the balance. No wonder then, if God have given us Him, if He have united us with Him, that He should tell us all the secrets of the glory He designs to display for Him — all He means to do with everything in heaven and earth for Christ. What, then, is the hope of this boundless scheme for glorifying Christ? God, we are told, has made known unto us the mystery of His will — that secret that was kept hidden in other times, — "according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" — literally, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth — "even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." In this we have a still larger compass than we saw in the Colossians. For, beside the "things in the heavens and the things on the earth" in both, we have here the further intimation that we have obtained an inheritance in Him over all things. So He tells us, a little lower down in the same chapter, God has made Christ to be "the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

But mark the expression in ver. 10: the administration of the fulness of times is committed to Christ. God has purposed in Himself, with a view to or against this administration of the fulness of times, that He will gather all things in one under Christ — that He will put all things heavenly and earthly under His headship, as the risen and glorified man. What a truth! The whole universe of God under man — no doubt in Christ; but man! What a day that will be, and what a state of things! What joy and brightness when a king shall not merely

reign in righteousness in a particular land, but when the whole creation of God, rescued from the usurper and from all the sad effects of the fall, will be under the only man capable of using all and governing all for God — capable, too, of filling it with every element of blessing, and upholding it to the glory of God. In that day Christ will accomplish this. He has undertaken this purpose of God, and will bring glory to Him as truly in this scene of government, as already in grace, when He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He was once offered to bear the sins of many, and perfectly glorified God as to sin. Yet outward appearances, we know, disclose nothing of the kind. Seemingly sin prevails, and Christ is but the rejected man; but faith knows that the only victory which cost God anything (and it cost Him everything) is won. But what joy when it will not merely be an unseen truth known to the soul, but when every whit of God's creation will proclaim that Christ is exalted over all things! We too shall be there: we shall be with Him. It could not be but that this must be a joy to us: it could not be that a believing soul would despise such glory and bliss, or think lightly of it when it is presented to the heart in the word of God. But surely it will be to us even deeper joy that Christ will be over all things to the glory of God, — though we shall be the nearest and most intimate object of His love, His bride in association with Him as Head over all things that God has made — deeper still to be with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory, loved as He was of the Father before the foundation of the world. (John 17) Through this Scripture then we are permitted to contemplate by faith the scene of immeasurable blessing; which not the departure but the appearing of Christ in glory is to introduce and establish. This we have seen already; but I

will cite some few additional proofs which may make it thoroughly plain to those who are little versed in Scripture. Let us take, for instance, Titus 2:11-13; for I wish to show that the epistles prove this truth quite independently of the prophetic Scriptures, against which some harbour an unwarrantable and most ignorant prejudice. Now the doctrinal epistles teach no otherwise. “The grace of God,” says the apostle, “that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men.” This has already taken place, we all know: the all-saving grace of God has appeared wherever the gospel is proclaimed, “teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” But is this all? Is there no portion in hope for us? Is there no expectation which is the proper answer to, and product or at least companion of the grace of God? The authorized version adds — ”looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” For one phrase here I must be allowed to substitute, “the appearing of the glory.” There is no doubt that this is the true meaning. Too much rein has been given to these loose renderings because of imaginary Hebraisms, which fritter away the true force. Hence, competent translators take it (in contrast with the appearing of grace,) as “the appearing of the glory.” The grace of God has already appeared: the glory of God is going to appear; and this is what we look for, i.e. more accurately and fully, “the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And where is His glory to appear? In the same scene where the saving grace of God has appeared. It is not a statement of our anticipated removal into heavenly glory, certainly not this only, but that His glory shall appear.

Take another passage in 2 Timothy 4: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.” Here we have the same phrase as in the subject of this lecture, and in the same order — the appearing of the Lord and His kingdom. It is not the kingdom as simply known to faith, such as we know now. Christ has disappeared from the earth; and we know the kingdom of heaven in a mysterious form. (Matt. 13) It is His kingdom in a way unexampled, unknown, and even unthought of. But here we have the converse truth. It is the appearing of Jesus once more. The judgment of quick and dead is not put after His appearing and kingdom, but at that time, whether we adopt the critical text or adhere to the one vulgarly received. It is most evident that the Lord’s judging quick and dead connects itself with both; even as from Rev. 19, 20, it is plain that the quick are judged at the beginning of His kingdom and throughout its course, the dead at the end. Will a believer dispute this? Can you affirm that it is not the meaning of the Scripture? What other meaning is carried in these words as simply and clearly as the one just expressed? There is no desire to weaken in the least degree any truth as to the kingdom of God as it now subsists. It is agreed on all sides that, for the present, Christ has gone up to God’s right hand in the heavens, and that we have the kingdom of heaven in its actual form of mystery, not manifestation, wherein tares are mingled with wheat, and a continual war is waging between good and evil, where Satan is not bound, but active as the serpent and the lion, and the Holy Ghost makes good the power of Christ only to faith: a state of things characterised by a vast profession without conscience or feeling toward God the Father, most of all

by its dishonouring the Lord Jesus, and by hindering, slighting, grieving, quenching, and denying the Holy Ghost. All this I admit. But here the apostle charges his spiritual right-hand Timothy, “before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at [or, both by] his appearing and his kingdom.” Is it not a wholly different state of things? Is Christ judging the quick and the dead now? Clearly not, but the contrary: He is saving those that are dead in sins, quickening them with His own life. He is carrying on a judgment among those that are spiritually alive now, if you will, but it is another state of things altogether — a practical, present dealing with the ways of His disciples, that they may not be condemned by and by with the world. Here it is the positive application of judicial power at His appearing, when He comes in His kingdom - His visible kingdom in power and glory. These points are sufficiently defined here, and the state of things affirmed and manifest; for His appearing and His kingdom are in the closest association, both with each other and with His judgment of living and dead. But it is not at all “the end” of 1 Cor. 15; for there He gives up the kingdom, instead of appearing and setting it up. When the new heavens and the new earth are brought in, nay, when the old heavens and old earth pass away, there is no hint of Christ’s appearing or His kingdom. Indeed, common as it may be, it is an absurdity to insert the appearing of Jesus then. For to whom could He appear, when all things are dead and gone, dissolved, and vanished away? Never is it so presented in Scripture. What is affirmed in the word of God as to all this, I hope soon to lay before you as perspicuously as I can, when the subject of “the Judgment and the Eternal State” will come more definitely before us. But it is not an uncalled-

for anticipation, if I now remark how manifestly the appearing of the Lord Jesus introduces His kingdom in a distinct and visible character of judgment; whereas now, on the contrary, He is invisible, and His dealing with the world is only grace, in the testimony of the gospel, if they might hear and be saved. But as He once appeared in this world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so He will appear a second time, and this not merely for salvation to those who thus look for Him, but for the judgment of men at large, whether quick or dead. This will be His appearing and His kingdom in their true import, order, and time.

No doubt, preconceived views and traditions of men make this a great difficulty to some Christians. It may be desirable therefore to remove, if possible, some of their chief difficulties. The future kingdom of Christ visibly established over the earth seems to many conscientious souls a step backward. The more you maintain the exceeding blessedness of the Church now, and that form in which the kingdom of Christ is actually known by faith, the more you do violence to their most cherished thoughts and expectations. They look for the stability of that which now is, yea, for its progress. But that seems a going back. They turn our own weapons against us; they ask whether Christians have not now in this world the Lord Jesus Christ known in the most blessed manner? Has not the Spirit of God been poured out personally and in power, so that the believer may walk by faith in the deep joy of an unseen Saviour? Are we not then, they argue, contending for an inferior order of things, for another age to succeed the present, in which sight will take the place of faith, and every natural good will abound to the people of God, and it will be simply power

governing righteously, instead of the Holy Ghost strengthening the saints unto patience and the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, in the knowledge of Himself and the power of His resurrection? Are we not then, they say, pleading for a retrograde movement — a going back, instead of forward, according to the usual principle of God's ways? The answer is plain and conclusive, as the difficulty is only owing to a contracted view of the subject, i.e. to ignorance. Let us seek to look a little more largely and deeply at the manner in which God has wrought upon the earth; and it will soon be seen that the very objection against the truth which has passed before us this night turns, as is so often the case, into a positive argument in its favour.

What has been witnessed in this world? Before Christ's coming Israel was under law; but Israel disobeyed, Israel was broken up and dispersed, because they were guilty of rebellion and idolatry, as they were also of refusing and crucifying their own Messiah. It is plain that nothing could be more miserable — no ruin more complete. Then, after the cross comes another thing. The rejected Messiah takes His place in heaven, head of a new glory, after a manner quite unexpected, not according to Old Testament expectations. I do not mean the bare fact of His going to heaven; nor simply of His taking His seat at the right hand of God; for these things were predicted in the Psalms. Neither do I refer to the bare fact of blessing the Gentiles with His people; nor even to the Gentile call when the Jews were rejected; for the prophets without doubt were not silent on these great particulars. But I mean Christ's becoming the head of a body in heaven, and His abiding there; so that the Holy Ghost should be sent down to form men out of

Jews and Gentiles into union with Himself and with each other, so making one new man, the Church, the body of Christ, while at the right hand of God. All this, I say, is the mystery that was entirely hidden in the Old Testament times, and only revealed now to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. But if we turn our eyes to the Church upon the earth, what witness of a calling so high and glorious do we find now? Alas! the same tale as Israel told before of sin, rebellion, and idolatry; no less dishonour put upon Jesus, no less persistent resistance of the Holy Ghost. And if God spared not the natural branches of the olive tree, will He for ever refrain from cutting off the wild-olive Gentile that He was pleased to graft in? Assuredly He will not sanction the iniquity of Christendom, but judge it yet more sternly. He who abandoned Shiloh, He who profaned His own house in Jerusalem, winks not at all that He beholds now done, under the name of Christ, in every land under heaven. Indeed, He lingered long with Israel, pitying them, lifting them up, and warning them; but still He was there finally as a judge of His people, and in the very Cherubim of glory in the book of Ezekiel was that which told of the wrath that fell upon the people when His glory departed from them for a season. So with Christendom, whatever may be the long-suffering grace of God. I do not doubt there is this difference in Christendom, that the Holy Ghost being sent down to abide with us for ever, never under any circumstances leaves the children of God in this world, any more than He abandons utterly any individual who really belongs to God in this age. Yet, weighing in the light of His word the past and present state of Christendom, I cannot conceive a more heinous insult to His goodness and His holy nature and character, than

the notion that He looks with approbation upon the sinful, distracted, anomalous condition of that which bears the name of Christ upon the earth. I do not doubt for a moment His mercy, spite of all around, His faithfulness in blessing the word, the sure dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the believer and the Church: yet, for all this and more, Christendom's history is the history of foul sin, sorrow before unknown, burning shame, constant dishonour against the Lord.

And how stands in these respects the future age? how "the world to come," whereof we speak? The Lord Jesus comes; and at once — in a moment — those who wait for Him, the faithful in the past and in Christendom, are caught up to be with Him, glorified and translated to heaven. Is not this progress? Is it not a most precious step in advance that the Church, failing, scattered, degraded, and never so much as now, should be thus taken out of the scene of her sins and follies, and be with Christ Jesus for ever in glory? And when He is manifest in that glory, and we shall be manifested in glory along with Him, is this, I would ask in my turn, is this a retrograde step for the Church? Who would not allow that it is the precise contrary? Take again another look. He comes, and all the saints with Him. Forthwith the countless and proud enemies of Israel are overwhelmed and destroyed; the poor trembling Jews are delivered as from the jaws of the lion; the proud chivalry of Western Europe, alas! apostate with the mass of the Jews, perish in their rebellion against the Lord of lords, and King of kings. The mighty one from his fastness in the north comes, hoping to take advantage of that "peeled" people, and so seize the holy and long-coveted land of Israel, not believing any more in the

glory of God to be manifested in Jerusalem, than men believe in the grace of God now; but he, too, and all his company, are humbled and broken for ever. The Lord Jesus destroys all His enemies, inward and outward, near and afar off, down to the last enemy, not merely of the Jews, but of Israel as a whole. The Assyrian is overthrown. Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, the great north-eastern antagonist of Israel in that day, may still remain for a brief space. After the awful judgment of the Western powers, judged still more awfully under the beast and the false prophet, the Lord Jesus will discomfit all the nations, His foes; He will deliver and exalt His people, sanctifying the name of Jehovah in both. He will not only bless Israel, but make them an eternal blessing in the earth. If this be not progress for Israel, what is progress?

And therefore it is that, so far from the administration of the fulness of times (Ephesians 1:10) being an act of retrogression in the ways of God, it is the most real and manifest progress, if anything can be so viewed. But then you must beware of comparing the heavenly body of the Church in its calling with the earthly people of Israel. This has been the source of the mistake. Compare Israel in the past or present with Israel under Messiah and the new Covenant, and then say whether this be retrogression or advance. Take in the fulness of times; view the fulfilment of the entire sweep of the divine purposes; look upon the gathering of all things in heaven and in earth, under the headship of the Lord Jesus, and then you will have the truth simply, but you will have it also gloriously; for then Christ will be the manifest head over all things to the Church, glorious with Him, and, like Him, the sharer of all He has in that

day. Even now, wondrous grace! He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Do you think it is to speak too boldly or irreverently, if I say that He will have no reason to be ashamed of His Church then? Will not the Church be the reflection of His own beauty and glory; all of it the fruit of divine grace to us? How could He be ashamed of His own likeness, then? I ask once more, will this be progress for the Church? Again, when Israel is no longer stiff-necked and self-confident, boasting about the law, and really and ever breaking it; when the law is written upon their hearts; when they possess all the blessings of the new covenant; when they bow before their own Messiah, no longer despised and spit upon, but received, adored, reigning over them and their land — will not this be progress for Israel? Most assuredly and emphatically.

Again, when the heavens are no longer arrayed against the earth, because of the pollutions and rebelliousness of this lower scene; when the prince of the power of the air falls, who with his angels makes the heaven to be the chief seat of his plans and efforts to delude and destroy the world, as well as to accuse the saints of God; when all these higher places are cleared of the foe, and Jehovah hears the heavens, and the heavens (instead of turning a deaf ear to the bad and bold world below) shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel, who shall then be sown and bear fruits, instead of being as now vainly scattered by every wind that blows will not this be progress? And when land or water shall know neither scorching heat nor devastating tempest, when the fruits of the earth shall be no more visited by drought or mildew, by palmer-worm, locust, canker-worm, or caterpillar, when (save as a special curse for contempt of

God) the four sore plagues shall be no more, and health, peace, and plenty shall be everywhere, and the harvest never perishes, and the herds are no more perplexed nor the flocks made desolate, and the beasts groan and cry no more; but contrariwise the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose: for water shall break out there, and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water, and grass with reeds and rushes shall be where dragons lay, and a way of holiness shall be there, an unerring way for the feeblest, and neither unclean man nor ravenous beast shall be there; but the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard with the kid, and the calf and young lion and fatling shall be there led of a little child; and cow and bear shall feed, their young lying down together, and the lion eat straw like an ox, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the cockatrice' den, nor hurt nor destruction be on all God's holy mountain: — will this be progress, or will it not? Manifestly, whether we look at the heavens, the earth or sea, at the Church above, at Israel or the Gentiles below, or even at the lower creation, it is triumphant progress in every sphere and every object, and it is all through Christ, all through His blood, all to His glory and God's glory by Him. If the lack of seeing progress in the millennium has deterred you, if you have hesitated about Christ's appearing and kingdom lest it might be a step backward in God's ways, blame yourself for your ignorance; beware of the false teachers who so misled you; commit yourself henceforth more simply and

fearlessly to God and His word, the only source and standard of truth.

Let me appeal to your conscience, you who accept the truth here insisted on: does it in very deed lower your thoughts of Christ's appearing? does it make you more earthly-minded to believe the kingdom of God shall be thus visibly introduced at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ? Surely you feel, on the contrary, that it fills a void in the future as nothing else can, gives meaning to a vast field of otherwise misunderstood Scripture, and vindicates the goodness, and power, and purposes of God in Christ with manifest triumph.

But there is another remark to be made, in the hope of somewhat clearing the subject. Not only does the Church of God differ essentially in its calling, in its worship, in its present standing, and in its future hopes, from that which existed even for the saints in Old Testament times; but the millennial age, the day of the appearing and kingdom of Christ, will differ quite as really and strikingly from that which is going on now. Among not a few proofs, one plain illustration may suffice. Let me first, however, point out a few remarkable points of contrast by the way. When Satan is no longer free to tempt men, when the power of God will be put forth to bless men, when all creation is delivered from the thraldom in which it now groans, when the earth no longer travails in pain but rejoices, when all that has breath here below will hymn the praise of the Lord Jesus, surely, as we cannot but feel and own, it will be an immense change for good. The men then alive on earth will answer to it, of course. Such a revolution must affect their conduct, as well as their minds and hearts, whether they be of Israel or of the nations in that day.

There will be no longer room for the mighty working of God's Spirit in the midst of sufferings, and faith, and patience as now. Not that there will not be divine knowledge; not that there will not be faith in God, and an intelligence of His mind suited to all that then subsists when glory dwells in the land of Palestine, and the nations gather around that chosen centre. Surely there will be rich and harmonious blessing, and the blessed Spirit, who groans with us in our sorrows, will not absent Himself from their bliss and joy and the affections and ways accordant with it all. But the change will be to us incalculable.

Now Ezekiel brings before us certain points of it in a very unmistakeable way. We are told there what will be the destiny of Israel, who are, of course, in the foreground, because they will be the pivot of blessing and glory for the earth, as it were, around the Lord, viewed as reigning in their midst, but also, of course, in a glory that embraces all the earth. But when that day comes, Israel — the favoured people among the nations, then the head instead of being, as so long, the tail — cannot possess that profound acquaintance with God's grace and counsels in general which ought to be possessed by the believer now, who enters into that within the veil, and has the mind of Christ. In that day, although the sins of Israel will be as truly forgiven as ours, although they will rest upon Christ as really as any souls do now; yet there will not be the same communion, character, or measure in the power of the Spirit formed by the knowledge of Christ. In that day Christ Himself will (not have renounced His heavenly titles, of course, but also) have taken His earthly glory; and it will be in earthly places, not heavenly, that they will know Him,

and be blessed by Him. This makes an all-important difference.

Accordingly, although the Spirit of God will be then poured out upon all flesh, we never hear of such a thing as His being sent in the personal manner in which we know Him present now. We must distinguish between the pouring out of God's Spirit, mighty and gracious an effect of divine power as it is, and the Holy Ghost personally sent down to dwell in believers. Never was there a time, never a divine dealing, in which the Holy Ghost was not active. On the day of Pentecost these two things have to be noted: the outpouring of the Spirit in power and grace, and also His presence after a special and personal sort as sent down from heaven. This he'd never been before; nor is there any ground known to me in Scripture to expect it again. There were not merely signs, wonders, tongues, healings, and miraculous powers of every kind, the samples of that energy which will fill and control the world to come, and so called the powers of that world in Hebrews 6; but there was a privilege incomparably higher than these — the gift of the Spirit to dwell in us personally according to the words of our Saviour. Now, the Holy Ghost will be poured out upon all flesh in the millennium; but it is nowhere written, and therefore not to be believed, that He will take up His personal dwelling-place in Israel, much less in any other nation, then. God will, no doubt, dwell in the midst of His people, but it will be in the way of governmental blessing — a very distinct thing indeed. There will be no such result, therefore, for instance, as Jews and Gentiles formed into one body in that day. All Scripture that treats of the millennium distinguishes between the Jews and the Gentiles then on earth,

however they may be blessed or associated for God's glory.

Along with this may be next mentioned the fact which gives, to my mind, the strongest conceivable exemplification of the difference. Ezekiel lets us know, when that day comes, what is to be the allotted portion of each of the tribes of Israel when restored to their land. All is mapped out beforehand. We can even now say with certainty and distinctness that Judah will be here — Dan and Gad will be there and there. It could not be clearer if we looked upon the scene after it was all accomplished. Indeed, I do believe that it is better, if I may be allowed so to say, to see by faith, i.e. with God's eyes, than with our own. This the believer is entitled to now. The word of God is distinct, and given that we may believe, not wait like the world till it is a fact. But there is much more. In that day a fresh ceremonial of divine worship is prescribed to Israel. Not only will they inherit a new division of the land, different from any arrangement that has yet been within Israel's experience; but, further, the ordinances of their worship will be altered in most important and significant respects. Thus the feast of Passover will be renewed, as also the feast of Tabernacles; and it is certain, from Zech. 14, that all the families of the earth will be summoned to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, at the feast of Tabernacles. But it is a most noteworthy fact that there will be no feast of weeks then. There is the great feast of the first month, there is also the great feast of the seventh month; how comes it that there is nothing that answers to Pentecost? The omission seems to me to denote how completely it had been realized in the highest sense in the Church, which, as it were, had

monopolized it. That heavenly body had come in between the true Passover, and before the verification of the Tabernacles, and had, so to speak, absorbed Pentecost to itself. The Spirit of God had come down in person and taken His place in the Church as He never will again, whatever effusion there may be once more. The fact assuredly is that Pentecost is not rehearsed when the day of glory dawns on the earth. There will be the renewal of the feast of the Passover, because at all times and in every dispensation there is no foundation of blessing but through the sacrifice of Christ. The feast of Tabernacles, again, we can see from Zechariah 14, is characteristic of that day, and then, of course, emphatically is kept a feast in special harmony with the millennium. All men will be keeping the feast of Tabernacles as a kind of witness and thanksgiving for that glory which will be then displayed. But all this makes the absence of the feast of weeks the more striking. Who but God Himself could have thought of such an omission as that of Pentecost six centuries before it was realized so unexpectedly after the ascension? Let me in particular ask you who will have Ezekiel to be spiritually fulfilled in the Church, what you have to- say as to this. Can you account for such a fact? If you were right in your theory that the prophecy of Ezekiel finds its due significance and answer in the Church, Pentecost, it is evident, ought to have been the special feast. Instead of this there is no Pentecost at all. Your speculations, therefore, are entirely baseless. The instance specified furnishes clear, simple, unambiguous evidence, which none but God Himself could have provided beforehand, that prophecy contemplates another course and character of things altogether from anything past, and especially from what exists at

present. For we know that the Church of God begins with that which is here purposely left out. Then “the day of Pentecost was fully come.” Then the believers came together and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, not merely gifts, though it was also true of them. But when the new age comes for this world, the truth of Pentecost, in its highest meaning disappears. There is no longer the personal mission and presence of the Spirit, though an outpouring there may be more than now.

Again, take notice that, according to the book of Ezekiel, the veil is not rent, but still supposed to exist; holy places are once more recognised, and a priesthood on earth, with the various accompaniments of such a sanctuary and such an order. Thus another character of things altogether is seen. In Christianity all this has disappeared. Why? Because we are brought to God by the knowledge He has given us of Christ’s sacrifice in His sight. He has made known to us His own heavenly estimate of it. A heavenly High Priest is associated with those who can go into the holiest. The consequence is that all earthly priesthood completely vanishes; for now the truth is that every Christian is thereby constituted a priest. Who can deny these differences? Scripture is decisive, and the wisdom of God becomes apparent in all. Men may theorise and talk about unchangeableness; they may try to reason facts away; but there the facts are, and God has written all for our instruction. The only priests now upon the earth are Christians. We have a priest, a great High Priest, in heaven; the only other kind of priesthood is that of all Christians. In the millennium it will not be so. There will be again a Davidical prince and a holy people; there will be again a temple; there will be sacrifices; there will be living

earthly priests, sons of Zadok; there will be certain suited feasts of Jehovah; there will be once more the veil. Now, on the contrary, all these are done away in Christ; and so true is this, that as the veil of the temple was rent for us at the cross, so we are given to look habitually by faith on Christ with unveiled face; “we all” behold Him thus, as it is emphatically stated in 2 Cor. 3. It is not a question of arriving at a special degree of power or privilege; but the common privilege of all Christians, in contrast with Israel of old, and far beyond the passing favour shown even to Moses. “We all, with open (i.e. unveiled) face, beholding [“as in a glass,” is a blundering addition founded on etymology] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (or, by the Lord the Spirit).” In the millennium nothing of the kind will be realized even by Israel. The most favoured nation of the earth, the Jews, will still be put, as it were, comparatively at a distance. For this is necessarily the consequence of the earthly temple, priesthood, and ordinances. There will not then be the nearness in relationship and worship enjoyed by Christians now.

On the other hand, the Church which has so intimately known Christ in heaven while itself upon earth, will never lose that sweet fellowship in heaven. Hence we see the notable fact that in the new Jerusalem there is no temple, which, we know, is so prominent in the earthly city, dignified as it may be; for its name from that day shall be Jehovah-Shammah, “the Lord is there.” Assuredly He who is there will justify the glorious name, and prove that it is no mean blessedness for a people to have Jehovah for their God. Still it is earthly, not heavenly; and the glory of the celestial is one, that of the

terrestrial is another even as there are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial. Men may object, and imagine, and reason. They may disbelieve it, but cannot truthfully deny that such is the clear statement of Ezekiel in contrast with the New Testament and its special hopes. Never has either land or people, priesthood or sanctuary, answered to the prophet's description. Faith, therefore, assures itself that every word must yet be accomplished, but for earth, not heaven, for the Jew, not the Christian. Herod's temple in nothing corresponded to the temple of Ezekiel; any more than the state of Palestine or the Jews under Roman rule was like that which appears in the prophecy. All awaits the day when Christ shall appear and set up His kingdom. "And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and his name one."

The grand point to seize is the union, without confusion, of heaven, earth, and all things in them, under the Lord Jesus displayed in visible glory. The early Chiliasts wrongly dwelt on the earthly things of the kingdom; the moderns have been in general disposed to look only at the heavenly things. The truth which God is now reviving from His word is the united system in which heaven and earth, so long severed, are bound together under the last Adam and His heavenly Eve, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. To many this presents an idea which revolts them; but I fear its source is thoroughly infidel — the reasoning from present experience so as to reject the plainest testimony of Scripture. Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20, are most decisive, and above all exception as being imbedded within the highest unfoldings of Christian doctrine which the New Testament contains. But in truth they are found almost

everywhere, in one form or another. Thus the Transfiguration in the three earlier gospels presents the clearest view of this most harmonious blending of the earthly with the heavenly, of men in natural bodies with those already risen and changed, and Christ the acknowledged chief and centre of the scene; and this is the more to be heeded, because 2 Peter 1:16, 17 treats it as a sort of sample of the kingdom. “For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Nor is the gospel of John silent. Not only does John 3:12 attest the “earthly” and the “heavenly” things of the kingdom of God, but the same principle alone explains John 17:22, 23. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one: and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” Expressly this is the time of glory, ours in title now, but by and by to be so displayed that the world shall know (not “believe,” but “know”) that the Father sent the Son, and loved the saints after the same wondrous love. This is not the present state of things in which nothing of the kind is exhibited to or known by the world; neither can it be the eternal state when there will be no world to know it, even if it were the aim then and thus to make it known. The accomplishment of the Saviour’s words can only, therefore, be in a condition which essentially differs from the present state and from eternity; and this, it is evident, can only be the

millennial kingdom, with its heavenly glory an object of knowledge to the world below, and a spring of unceasing praise and glory to God.

No wonder that the Apocalypse sets its seal to the same precious truth; but such will be found to be the fact in Rev. 20, where judgment is given to the risen saints, who shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years: a reign which, as it is not begun yet, so it is inconsistent with what is revealed of eternity. The only time that intervenes is the millennium, which follows the advent of Christ in Rev. 19, but precedes the resurrection of the rest of the dead, the wicked dead) to judgment in the close of Rev. 20. But this is not all; for Rev. 21, after giving a complete picture of eternity in verses 1- 8, opens from verse 9 a retrospective vision of the millennial state, and presents to our view the glorified bride of the Lamb under the symbol of the holy city Jerusalem that descends out of heaven from God, in the light of which the nations walk, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and homage unto (not “into”) it. What more evident than that here we have the symbolic representation of the same truth we saw in John 17:22, 23? For the world, the nations of the earth and their kings, cannot but see in these glorified saints the fullest witness that they share the glory of Jesus, and that they are loved of the Father as Christ was. No such sight can be as things now are; neither does it suit eternity, when nations and kings of the earth have for ever passed away. The millennium alone exactly meets the case, when heavenly and earthly things are thus seen in glorious accord.

But, in fact, though in various degrees of strength and clearness, the same truth appears throughout the

Scriptures. For if the earnest expectation of the creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19), which can only be when Christ at His coming has raised them up and at His appearing has displayed them, this again can only be the millennial era. For then creation, as all the prophets bear witness, shall be set free and sing for joy, instead of being dissolved in order to form the new heavens and earth, which will characterize the eternal state. When those who now have the firstfruits of the Spirit are no longer groaning but revealed in glory, creation will be not destroyed, but delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. This is clearly the millennial day of gladness; not the passing away of the creation, when God shall make all things new for the final state. Then again 1 Cor. 6:2, 3 is most explicit; for what would be the sense of the saints judging the world or angels in eternity? Take it of the millennium, and all is plain; it is just one of the peculiar features which distinguish that day from the present on one side, and from eternity on the other. Again, Phil. 2:10, is plain; for though our Lord be exalted now, yet it is not yet the period when, in virtue of the name of Jesus, every knee bows, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings — when every tongue confesses that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. As this is manifestly not yet the fact, so neither does it harmonize with the eternal state as it does with the intervening millennium. For the point is man thus exalted, and every creature compelled to own him Lord, if it do not bow, as we do by grace with hearty good-will. Now, the grand truth of eternity will be God all in all; not the special glorification of man in the person of our Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 2:5-8 may close with its unmistakeable voice these New Testament witnesses, and the more so as it links them on to the Old Testament, which is the distinctive character indeed of the epistle. It is not only that we are here told of the subjection to Christ of the habitable earth to come (τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν), which can only apply as a fact to the millennial era; but Psalm 8 is cited to prove the putting of all things in subjection under His feet. And so absolutely does this embrace the entire creation, heavenly and earthly, that 1 Cor. 15, citing the same Scripture, has to except Him who put all things under Christ; and Eph. 1, where it is also cited, virtually excepts the Church, because it is the body of Christ, and therefore one with Him who is thus Head over all things. Personally He is now in this place of exaltation; "but now we see not yet all things put under him." This will be precisely in the millennium, and neither in strictness before it nor after it; for in the millennium there will be the display of His exaltation, and this over "all things," whether earthly or heavenly, as the psalm is thus comprehensively interpreted by the Holy Ghost in the later inspired writings which make use of it. The reason why there is a pause between Christ's invisible exaltation to the right hand of power, (where He has this place of headship,) and the sight of all things put under Him, is because, while He is thus on high, God is calling out those who shall be joint-heirs, yea, His bride, even as now they are His body. When God's calling of the heavenly saints is complete, Jesus will come, and in due time, when He is manifested, we too shall be manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3) — a passage which itself supposes men on earth, before whom the manifestation of Christ and the Church takes place. This, too, is

millennial, and possible neither in the present age nor in eternity. It is the day when Christ is not only the true Melchizedek in order, as now, but when He will exercise its peculiar functions and fulfil the type of him who brought forth bread and wine for the conquerors, as the priest of the most high God; when it will not be only sacrifice and intercession within the veil, but the blessing of Him who will bless His people on the part of the most high God, then indeed “possessor of heaven and earth,” and will bless the most high God on the part of His people, whose enemies will have been delivered into their hands.

“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the consummation of this age. The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all offences, and those that do lawlessness, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine out as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matt. 13:40-43) When this age is completed, the millennium, not eternity, begins; and as there is a higher and heavenly sphere wherein the risen saints shine as the sun, so is there a lower and earthly one where judgments are executed by angels who serve the Son of man. Such is the kingdom in both its parts, as the millennial age is clearly the only period in which the power and the glory of Christ are thus variously displayed. The Lord give us understanding in all things.

The Judgment and the Eternal State

Lecture 8 - Rev. 20, 21:1-8

I have read this portion of Scripture, not because it is by any means the sole authority for the truths of the judgment and the eternal state, which it is my present business to assert and to prove from the word of God, but because (including Revelation 19:1, et seq.) it presents the course of events from the return of the First-begotten into the world, throughout the whole period of His kingdom, until it be given up and God shall be all in all. This was naturally reserved, in the wisdom of God, for the last book of Scripture, and fell in most consistently with the character of the Apocalypse. There is nothing more distinctly graven upon that book than its judicial character. Hence we have judgment in both its forms: judgment exercised on the quick during the ordinary course of the kingdom of our Lord and of His risen saints; and judgment exercised before the kingdom closes on the dead, the wicked dead, when the whole scene concludes with that which has no end — the eternal state.

It is true that, in the full meaning of that eternal state, but few Scriptures speak of it. There is one in words of deep moment, 1 Corinthians 15:28, on which I may dwell a little when it comes before us, comparing it with that which we have here. There is another reference in 2 Peter 3:13. But as to the various applications of judgment, its true character, the persons who will be its objects, and the aim of God in it all, whatever may be its particular phase, Scripture deals with these questions abundantly. But this I may be permitted to state at the

outset — that judgment is never properly understood in its real depth, as well as its comprehensiveness, unless salvation be also rightly apprehended. A great effort of the enemy, working on the unbelief of man, is to confound these two things. The object is evident. Man in flesh, i.e. in his natural state, never trusts God, who on His part, it is clear, cannot trust man. The gospel calls upon man to confess that his condition is such that God cannot trust him; it claims in the name of the Lord Jesus, because of God's love displayed in giving Him, and by virtue of the efficacious work He has accomplished, that man should trust God — in a word, that he should repent and believe the gospel, that he should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. There is immense force in the words, "be saved." There are many even of God's children who have most imperfect thoughts about salvation. Were we, instead of this expression, to insert the words, "be pardoned," or "reconciled to God," I apprehend that the mass of Christians at the present moment would see but little difference; but salvation includes a great deal more than pardon, precious as it is. Salvation takes in the whole scope and result of Christ's work; and whether you look at salvation in its complete sense and heavenly light, as shown us in Ephesians, or add to the work of Christ His priesthood and coming again in glory, either goes far beyond forgiveness of sins, and both are certain and scriptural. The mass of God's children at present on the earth have not only scant but dim perceptions about it, which is proved by the fact that they are under the impression that those saved must be judged like man in general — that all men, saints, or sinners, must equally pass through the judgment, the eternal judgment of God. This prevails even in the minds of premillennialists, who suppose the

saints before, and sinners after, the millennium. If they asserted that all men, saints or sinners, must alike be made manifest before the judgment- seat of Christ; if they maintained that every one, without exception, must surely give an account of the things done by the body; if they held and taught that God will magnify Himself, not only in the judgment of those that have despised Christ, but in the distinct appraisal of the character and conduct of every saint, just as much as of every sinner, they would assert nothing more than in my judgment the word of God most clearly propounds. To me, I confess, it seems an evidence, not of strength, but of weakness of faith, where real Christians shrink from the truth of being manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, and vote it a strange doctrine and virtually a raising of questions as to personal acceptance again. But not so; Scripture is most explicit as to present and eternal acceptance, and as to our future manifestation before the Lord Jesus. Let none, then, imagine that the doctrine I trust now to prove, surely and plainly, from God's word, weakens the manifestation of every soul, at some time and for one object or another, before our Lord.

In 2 Cor. 5 we have a weighty, full, and unambiguous statement of God's mind upon this matter. Here the apostle, when bringing out the rich blessing of the Christian in the power of the life of Christ communicated to the soul, shows that this life is such in its own character that Christ, the source of it, has only to come, and at once every vestige of mortality in the believer is swallowed up of life. Hence there is the strongest expression possible of assurance; but in this the apostle puts himself on common ground with all other saints, and acknowledges, as a matter of common

Christian knowledge, that “if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” At the same time he shows that what the believer earnestly desires is not to be “unclothed,” that is, to pass through the article of death, as if death were a necessary step in the way of the saint to glory. It is not so at all. “Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon” is the word, the very reverse of being unclothed. When the saint dies, he quits the bodily tenement, he is unclothed, he departs to join Christ. Instead of waiting in the body till Christ comes for him, he goes to be with Him. In this case there is no such thing as mortality being “swallowed up of life.” On the contrary he is summoned from the heaven to go to the world. He is “absent,” as it is said, “from the body, present with the Lord.” But let the Lord come, and instantly there answers to His call and presence the life that He gave to all the Christians upon the earth, and not only to those then found alive, but to such as are dead — to those that slept in Christ. “The dead in Christ rise first;” but, more than that, in the case of the living “mortality is swallowed up of life.” These not only do not necessarily die, but death can have no possible dominion over them. Even now and till then mortality is in them; but for such saints as live till Christ comes, there is no death at all. A tendency to death, of course, there is now in the natural body of the believer, like anyone else; but in him, until the actual act of death if he die, it is only mortality. Christ comes, and at once every trace of mortality is swallowed up of life. This then, so far above natural thoughts, was what the apostle speaks of all earnestly desiring then. “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we

would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Lower down he insists that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." And here I would point out that there is a slight difference in the form but important enough in the sense, which shows that "we all," in the tenth verse of 2 Cor. 5 differs essentially from "we all" in the eighteenth verse of chapter 3. In the third chapter, "We all (ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες), with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," means all Christians, and Christians exclusively. But in the fifth chapter there is a specific difference (τοὺς γαρ πάντας ημᾶς) which has not been noticed, as far as I am aware, proving that a larger thought is in the mind of the Holy Ghost, and that while Christians, of course, are included, the expression embraces more than Christians, in fact, all men without exception. It seems to me there need be no hesitation whatever in affirming this; it is, at any rate, my conviction. It is well known that some have restricted 2 Cor. 5:10 to Christians; but they have overlooked, in my judgment, the comprehensive character of the passage that follows, which they are obliged to pare down and even alter unwarrantably, even then presenting a lame and impotent conclusion and failing to give value to the distinct phrase alluded to, which appears to me expressly calculated, and, indeed, framed to intimate a different truth. For it is not the way of the Spirit of God to vary the language after this manner, unless He have some different sense to convey by it. In 2 Cor. 5 the Greek article, thus inserted, gives all possible breadth — "the whole of us;" whereas in 2 Cor. 3 it is simply "we all." What confirms this is, as was said, the effect produced and stated immediately

after in verse 11, which shows that the apostle had more in his mind than believers and their portion. “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in [by] his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Now, this is clearly applicable either to a believer or an unbeliever. An unbeliever has nothing but what is bad; and when God enters into judgment with him, all will be made manifest, whatever may have been his own thoughts, or those of others, in this world: he is judged and cast into the lake of fire. There had been no love for the will of God, but hatred to it; there had been no faith in God’s testimony to his soul, but wilful rejection of it; there had been no clinging to mercy in the person of Christ, but on the contrary all was scorned, or at least done without. Judgment takes its course. There had been nothing but unmingled evil, as will be proved before the judgment-seat of Christ, whose name and precious blood had been despised. In the believer the crop has a mingled character: there is good and there is bad. The Lord will fully own and reward whatever has been the fruit of the Holy Ghost working in the believer’s soul and in his ways; but as to the bad, it will be his own deep and thankful satisfaction, while himself owning it all fully, not merely to know it blotted out as a matter of guilt against his soul, but to find himself brought into perfect communion with the Lord about it; he will thoroughly see and judge according to God respecting it all. If there were a single thing offensive to God that self-love or haste or will had blinded him to in this life, he will then know it even as he is known. So far from causing a single waver in his affections, so far from

raising any doubt or question of God's perfect grace to his soul, it would be positive loss if the believer were not thus brought into oneness with God's mind and judgment about all that he has here done. Even in this life we know something analogous. Who that has passed any time in the Lord's paths has not experienced what it is to be laid aside for a season — to have the Lord speaking to him and calling up before his soul that which he had too rightly thought of or wholly passed by? Much, it may be, in the very energy of his service had been easily forgotten, when carried along with delight in the work of God, though I am supposing there was also what is sweet and of God in the midst of all. But still, surely there is not a little of nature, not a little of unjudged and unsuspected nature, in the ways and testimony of those that love the Lord. Now, would it be for the Lord's glory if these mistakes, and even wrongs, were noticed by Him at no time? Even in this life He does often send circumstances of sorrow, want, sickness, disappointment, it may be a prison, shutting out from the activity of work, to raise needed questions for the soul's health — not as to God's saving grace nor as to the believer's standing. To doubt either is inexcusable: no trial will ever rightly lead to it. Nothing questions God's grace or faithfulness but flesh, and flesh acted upon by Satan. The truth is, there is not in all the word a single ground, or even excuse, given to a believer for doubting divine grace or his own blessing in Christ. But assuredly one is convicted of feebly holding God's grace, if one regards this perfect manifestation before Christ's judgment-seat as the smallest contradiction or even the least possible difficulty. In the end it is a part of God's necessary ways with His children! its principle is true of them even now: for we are expressly told by St. Peter

that the Father judges now. Is this opposed to His love? Surely not! Neither will it be so then. Perfect love will have brought us into that place; for in what condition shall we stand there? Before we are manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ, He will have come for us, and presented us in His Father's house in pure, simple, absolute grace. We shall appear there already glorified: our bodies being like that of Christ, we shall be incapable of that natural shame which might be a pain to us here in this life. We shall then feel entirely with Christ, and consequently be thoroughly above that which will be disclosed there. All will justify His ways, though it be humbling to us; but we shall only rejoice in — only exalt Him. And I see no ground at all to doubt that not merely what we have been as believers, but the whole life, from first to last, will be brought out. And what will be the effect of it? An infinitely deep appreciation of the grace of God; profound delight in all His ways and ends, and above all in Himself; and an equally deep sense of what the creature, and we ourselves, have been, in every form or degree in which self wrought here below. God forbid that any one should count such a manifestation a loss, grief, or danger to be dreaded Even here the measure of it we know is gain: what will it be then and there?

Further, it appears to me that this is the reason why the Spirit of God uses the remarkable language found here; for there is nothing expressed about being judged in the passage. It would not be true, as may be proved by other Scriptures, to say, "we must all be judged before the judgment-seat of Christ." None but the unjust, the unbeliever, will ever come into judgment; but every soul, good or bad, believer or unbeliever, must be equally and

perfectly manifested before His judgment-seat. And what makes this still more evident is not only the choice of the language, “we must all appear,” or “be manifested;” and then again that which follows — “knowing therefore the terror of the Lord” (which there is no ground whatever to weaken) “knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” This is the strongest possible proof of the large scope of the preceding verse 10, because we are here shown the effect of that future final manifestation upon the spirit as regards not ourselves but others. Thus, properly understood, this portion of Scripture supposes the fullest rest in the grace of God, even when we contemplate solemnly the judgment-seat of Christ. There is no question of perturbation about our own souls; but it fills us with anxiety about “men” as such. Why about men rather than about saints? Evidently and only because the judgment-seat of Christ will not in the smallest degree jeopard the safety of a single saint. The language is therefore changed, and instead of adopting the word “we,” or continuing the former phrase “us all,” or anything that would either present the believer alone, or the believer with the unbeliever to a certain extent, we have the word changed - “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” That is, we go forth animated with the deep feeling of what that judgment-seat must be to the unbeliever. We know that it is a solemn, though a most blessed, thought to a believer. We know nothing but the mighty grace of God in Christ could have made it to be a happy prospect for us. But the deeper and more solid the conviction, that only His grace gives us stable peace in presence of the judgment-seat, the more in proportion do we feel what that judgment-seat will be to those who have not Christ.

Hence then the apostle proceeds to speak of it as the common feeling of himself and other Christians) from the awful import of the judgment-seat to the unbeliever, to “persuade men,” as he calls it; i.e. to seek to bring them to the knowledge of Christ. “But we are made manifest to God,” he carefully adds here. In other words, even now the spirit of the judgment- seat is true of the believer; not that he will not appear there by and by, but that now also we are made manifest unto God. This is most true, and important too. “We are made manifest unto God, and, I trust, also are made manifest in your consciences.” He could speak in an absolute manner of being made manifest to God; he could speak but in a hopeful way of being manifested to the consciences of believers, because there might be disturbing influences in their case. After all, this could only be a comparative thing, while to God, I repeat, they were already made manifest absolutely. Thus the passage contains the most weighty truth, fully asserting the present manifestation of the believer to God, while it also insists on what is future and perfect before the judgment-seat of Christ for the believer by and by, and intimates the effect of grace on his heart to seek unbelievers, knowing, as we know, the terror of the Lord for them by and by; for we shall all be made manifest there; not only the unbeliever, but the believer. He presumes in the strongest manner the peace of the believer, even in contemplating the judgment-seat. On him the effect of this disclosure is to awaken not a single alarm as to himself or his brethren. What a witness of a full, and present, and eternal salvation! All his soul’s energies are thrown out in behalf of men who are living for the present and for the earth, little thinking that they must stand before Christ’s

judgment-seat, ignorant of its real character, and heedless of its issues.

This will be sufficient, I trust, to convince any Christian open to conviction, that, far from denying, I think we cannot too strongly insist on, the extent. as well as the certainty of the manifestation of every man, believer or not, before the judgment-seat of Christ. But then, observe well, it is their manifestation. The moment we come to speak of judgment, the Lord has decided for the Christian already. In John v. will be found clear unmistakeable evidence, which proves the separation, even in this world, between believer and unbeliever, through the Lord Jesus. This real present separation is simply by faith, but it is not the less according to the eternal truth of God. I do not speak of course of external circumstances. The Lord introduces it thus in verse 21: “For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will: for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent him.” Hence it is evident that, as two glories meet in Christ, so two actions are attributed to Him. One of them is in communion with the Father; the other is confined to Himself alone. In communion with the Father, He quickens or gives life. The reason is manifest. The communication of life flows from His deity. None but a divine person can quicken the dead. The Father raises the dead: so the Son quickens not only those whom the Father will, but whom he will. He is sovereign therefore, as being the Son, equal with God. Whatever may be the language of His lowliness as man, He never abrogated,

though He might hold for a season in abeyance, His full rights as a divine person, one with the Father. But then the Father does not judge. How is this? The Son judges, and He alone. No doubt it is the judgment of God, but it is His judgment administered by the Son.

The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son. Wherefore this difference as set forth in so marked a change of language? Why, in the one case, the quickening whom He will, and in the other, the judging by that authority that is given Him of the Father? Because the Lord Jesus here lets us know that His judgment is in the closest connection with His assumption of human nature.

The moral ground is evident. Why do men despise the Son, who ostensibly pay homage to God the Father? They take advantage of the humiliation of the Son, because He was pleased to empty Himself, to take the form of a servant, to be made of a woman, to become man. Wretched man, led of Satan, dared to spit in the face of the Lord of glory, and to crucify Him between robbers. His matchless and all-lowly love gave the opportunity to man, who was too madly base to lose it. The unbelieving way of every soul demonstrates the same sad truth. It is the history of the race from the beginning, and will be so to the end. God notices and will avenge it, when He makes inquisition for blood. But, besides, He commits all judgment to the Son. In that very nature in which He was set at nought He will judge. He will judge not merely as God, though He is God, but as man, once thoroughly despised and rejected, because, though the Son, He deigned to partake of flesh and blood, and thus become Son of man. Man will be judged before the Man he hated unto death. Man will

stand and tremble before the exalted Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so it is treated here: “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

The believer of course does not require judgment to compel him to honour the Son. There is nothing, first of all, that so honours the Son as faith; therefore, in hearing Christ’s word, and believing Him who sent Christ, the believer does honour the Son in that sort which is so sweet to Himself, and most acceptable to the Father, who refuses all homage at His expense. He bows to Him as Saviour; he owns his sins, seriously and truthfully; he receives life and propitiation in Him and through Him. He confesses Him as Lord; acknowledges Him to be his Lord and his God. He does not need therefore the judicial pressure of Christ to make him unite the Son with the Father in coequal divine honour. Well he knows that none but a divine person, one with the Father, could give him that life which he has received in the Son of God. “He that heareth my word,” as He says, “and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” Even now to the believer the Son of God gives life, and the highest form of it — eternal life. How can he then but bow down and bless the Lord Jesus? The consequence is that he needs nothing to enforce it, as the unbeliever does, who rejects Him, does without His cross, denies therefore the word and His

work, and therefore has to be forced to honour Him in some other way, if he with all men must honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

It is said here further for his comfort, not only that he "hath eternal life," but that "he shall not come into condemnation." It is well known, and must be insisted on, that this word κρίσις means judgment, and not "condemnation." Remarkably enough, it stands correctly represented in the common Popish version, though we all know the Roman Catholic version is too often inaccurate, and otherwise faulty, because it follows the common text of the Vulgate, even in its blunders not a few; yet for all that, the Vulgate being right as to this particular passage, the Romish version is therefore much nearer the truth of God in this chapter than the Protestant Bible. The Roman Catholic version, faithful to the Latin, which is here faithful to the Greek, allows and maintains throughout the whole context that there are two dealings in opposition one to the other, life-giving and judging. This contrast is kept up in every case. The Son has life because He is God; the Son judges because He is man. Being the only person in the Godhead who became man, but still in no way forfeiting His rights as God, He is ordained of God the judge of quick and dead. His resurrection proved what God thought of Him and means to do by Him, and what is the character, position, and doom of the world which put Him to death. The Son - the Son of man — will judge man. On the other hand, the believer owns Him, not only as the Son of man, but as God, on and according to His word; he consequently receives eternal life through honouring the divine glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The unbeliever, stumbling more particularly over His deity, refuses Himself, rejects, as

we know, His work in atonement, or manifests a guilty indifference about it, even if he do not openly deny it — has no real sense of his sins, and consequently no fear of God, nor appreciation of His eternal judgment. In one or other form men, unbelievers, slight, if not oppose, and in all cases do without, the Son of God, and, as far as they can in this world, dishonour the Father in thus dishonouring Him. And how then are they to honour the Son? They must be judged by Him. They have disclaimed eternal life, because they received not the Son of God. Now they may avoid stooping to the humbled Son of man; but they must stand before Him as the glorious Judge to be condemned for ever. But as for those who in this world received Him, followed Him, adored Him, through faith in His name, — they have everlasting life now, and therefore they need not to come into judgment. In truth, He was judged in their stead on the cross.

Let me repeat that it is not merely life and condemnation which are contrasted, but life and judgment. Men may adhere to the opinions of translators, but if the original word of God is to decide, I defy any man in the world fairly to controvert what is here affirmed. The truth was too strong for those trained up in the schools of theology; the grace which underlies it was too rich to mingle with their formularies and preachings. But as to the simple and necessary meaning of our Saviour's words there ought to be no hesitation; and I am persuaded that, just in proportion to familiarity with the language used here, and the truth everywhere, a candid Christian cannot escape from its force. There is no Greek scholar who does not know that there is another word (κατάκριμα) whose function it is to express condemnation. The word used here throughout

means simply “judgment.” Unquestionably the effect of judgment is condemnation. Would that our own and other translators had only understood this thoroughly because this very result, which is otherwise scripturally certain, necessarily excludes the believer! Herein lies the importance of the truth before us. It crushes the vain hope of unbelief; it demonstrates the absolute need of grace. No guilty soul can enter into the judgment of God without being laid bare in his sins. Impossible that God should not deal with them according to His own holiness.

No matter who it is the man may be, if he be judged he is judged for what he has done and is; he is put on his trial for his sins; and if it be so, what is more certain than that he must be lost? In vain then to talk about God’s mercy! His mercy is now manifested and proclaimed in Christ, who is the Saviour Son of God, but will shortly prove that He is also the Judge of men. You cannot mingle the two things. The unbeliever has avowedly no part in Christ’s salvation; he believes not, he ridicules or loathes the testimony of eternal life in the Son of God. On the other hand, and equally, the believer has no part in the judgment which the glorified Son of man will then execute. The two things are kept perfectly distinct. There is no mingling them in the smallest degree.

Therefore, we may note, the statement of the Lord Jesus is the strongest the language He employed could afford; and where is the tongue more admirably accurate than the Greek? and by whom is it wielded with such precision as by the writers of the New Testament? The Lord’s words here recorded show that it is decided for ever between the believer and the unbeliever. The truth

is, that for man all turns upon Christ. Do I make light of Him? Then I give the lie to the testimony of God. I insult the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, and prove myself to be at war with God. This I cannot do, save to my eternal judgment: “He that believeth not is judged (κέκριται) already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God;… shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:18, 36.) If I receive Him by faith, I have eternal life in Him on the warrant of the living word of God: “He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath everlasting life, and cometh not into judgment” (κρίσιν). It is a verbal noun formed from, and alluding to, the same word that was rightly translated “judge” in verse 22. It is essential to the context that the same sense should be preserved intact throughout. Weigh what comes afterwards: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” Manifestly we have life again as the effect of hearing His voice — and this too going on now. The dead, the spiritually dead, are being awakened to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, then heard when the great salvation began to be spoken by Him, but still continued “by them that have preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” And they that hear shall live — as He said. Such is the declared effect; he that believes “hath everlasting life:” “For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself,’’ The reason why the Father is said to give this to the Son is, I apprehend, because Christ the Son so completely takes the place here of a sent One in humanity upon the earth, though even He does not so speak till He had betrayed, as it were, His own intrinsic

glory, as One personally entitled to quicken whom He would. Here however, true to the place He had been pleased to accept, as man in subjection to God the Father, whose glory He upheld above all things, He only speaks of the Father as having given to the Son to have life in Himself. It is part of His perfection as man, that He did not claim as a present thing all or any of the rights attached to His essential dignity, but that He entered fully into the humiliation by which alone God could be retrieved in His moral glory here below, by which alone the counsels of grace to the lost could be made holily efficacious.

Hence the Lord says that the Father hath “given to the Son to have life in Himself, and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” Life is in Him; He also is the appointed Judge. Then we have the final result: “Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.” Here it is an hour, not “that now is,” but wholly future; and it is no question of faith called for, or unbelief proved, but “all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.” Before, the only part expressly treated was the believer with his blessing; dead indeed as to his state by nature, but quickened by hearing the voice of the Son of God. It was an individual personal thing for the soul; but when we come to this future hearing His voice, there is no question of faith any longer. It is the mighty power of the Son of God that is put forth absolutely and universally. Therefore, “all that are in the graves,” it is said, “shall hear his voice, and shall come forth” Does this mean all at the same moment, so that they all form a common class? Not only is there no such doctrine anywhere else

in the Bible, but this passage rightly understood excludes it. Popular as it may be, the idea of a general resurrection is wholly without foundation - nay, contrary to all Scripture. No doubt two or three passages in the word of God have been construed to speak of an indiscriminate rising from the dead, and none more commonly or more constantly than the verses before us. 1 Yet it is not merely a mistake as to the force of the text, but a fundamental error, which will be found to obscure and weaken salvation by grace; for it confounds the ways of God, and blots out that present difference which it is God's manifest desire to render especially distinct now to faith, as it will be by and by in fact, when confusion is no longer possible.

They were not, then, to wonder that even now dead souls receive life in hearing Christ; for a more manifest wonder was coming when the voice of the Son of God sounds forth in a day that is future. Then "all that are in the graves" (that is, not the dead morally, but all literally dead) "shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." These are thereon not viewed as a common category, which as lying in the graves they were, but are by resurrection divided into two distinct classes — "They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil' unto the resurrection of [not 'damnation,' but] judgment" — the very same word throughout. It cannot be denied. It is in vain for learned or unlearned to attempt glosses, clever or clumsy, over the expression. The word of God is too strong for man to bend it. No doubt the truth is too bright for those that uphold the vulgar error in this particular case. This or other reasons may have influenced the English translators from Tyndale: the motive I do not pretend to judge; but

the fact is plain. And I affirm that “condemnation” or “damnation” is a wrong rendering of κρίσις, for which there is no tenable ground. The verb means, and is rightly translated “judge,” (verses 22- 30); the substantive means “judgment,” or “the act of judging,” and should have been so translated, and nothing else, throughout (verses 21, 24, 27, 29, 30).

But this makes the distinction of the two classes that are raised from their graves manifest and complete. As to the first, they are those that have practised good (for they are no longer characterised as believers only); it is a life resurrection. As bowing to Christ in this world, they had life in Him, the Son; their resurrection is simply the consummation of the life. For the body will be quickened as well as the soul. It is Christ, as the Son of God, who gave them life through faith, even now and in this world; it is Christ who will shortly call them out of their graves; and the power of the life they possessed in Him will be then manifest for ever.

As to unbelievers, they contemned the Son of God. They saw not His glory; they felt not His grace. They consequently lived, or rather they lay, in unremoved death, moral or spiritual death before God. They had no life even while they lived, because they had not the Son of God; and the consequence is that they, summoned from their graves, know not a resurrection of life, according to the mould of Christ’s own, but simply rise to be judged. They come forth in due time (solemn thought!) that they may be compelled in judgment to honour that Son whom here they spurned to their own everlasting shame and ruin - to honour Him who, when they were alive, met them with gracious words of life, had they but hearkened to His voice of quickening

grace. But, alas! He (and, as it will soon be shown, all in Him) was definitively rejected. They had done nothing but evil or worthless things here; they are called up by Christ's power. It is a judgment resurrection.

Thus, beyond all controversy, there remains the patent fact that we have two resurrections distinguished here by their character — resurrections, not merely separated by time (which is stated expressly elsewhere, but after all it is quite a subordinate question), but in their own nature and issues as different as can possibly be. A difference of character is a far more important feature than a difference in point of time. For my own part, so far from thinking so much of the long space between them, I believe that were it but a minute which separated the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment, the eternal and essential features would remain; that the one is a resurrection of life which is given by the grace of God in His Son, and always distinguishes those who have received Him here; the other is a resurrection of judgment for those who would not have Him in this world, but are finally compelled by divine power, when His voice is heard in glory, to honour the Son even as the Father.

To this answers the well-known passage in the book of Revelation; but not it alone; for, in truth, scattered all over the New Testament, we have intimations of the great distinctions that the resurrection-state exhibits. It is true and very natural that the mass of the New Testament testimony should bear upon the resurrection of the righteous. Surely to dwell upon what is so bright and blessed, as being the fruit of the grace of God, is far sweeter to the Holy Ghost than to descant (save where it was needed as solemn warning) upon that which is the

last awful resort of eternal judgment. Nevertheless we have the twofold fact plainly asserted in the New Testament, as well as constantly implied.

For instance, in Luke 14, we hear of the resurrection of the just, of those who had such communion with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as produced practical righteousness, — as indeed grace is the sole thing that does. They will have their recompence; not in this world (that would not be a ground or character of faith) but "in the resurrection of the just." This assuredly falls in with, and implies, a separate or special resurrection. Then again, in Luke 20, we read of the question being raised about the condition, of the risen dead. A puzzle was put to the Lord by the rationalistic Sadducees of that day, as to the resurrection. It was no matter of conscience, but of mere curiosity, if it were not rather an endeavour to embarrass our Lord, and so overthrow the truth. But the Lord answered with His own perfect wisdom, and showed that the mistake lay in their own minds, and that its source was their ignorance of the Scriptures and of the power of God. Had they known the Scriptures, they could not overlook the resurrection so strongly asserted there; had they known the power of God, how could mere difficulty to their minds stand in the way? It was then a question of human ignorance. God always will be found (and is there any wonder in this?) wiser and mightier than man. But the Lord, in His solution of the matter, takes occasion to impart rich instruction as to the resurrection, and more particularly as to the resurrection in its only sweet and happy sense — the "resurrection of life" and "of the just;" for though it be not called by either of these names in these places, it is evidently the same in substance. The language is

perfectly clear. “They that shall be accounted worthy,” the Lord says, “of that world (or age), and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; but they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” In this remarkable exposition, where is found the least appearance of a general resurrection? The Lord speaks solely of a blessed resurrection: the other does not even come into view. He describes a resurrection of those that should be accounted worthy; He alludes to a special age — “that age” in contrast with “this;” He characterises the resurrection as from the dead, and not of the dead only; He limits this resurrection to the sons of God. So far, therefore, we find that these passages of Scripture in nowise jumble together all classes of men in a common rising from their graves; but very distinctly indeed single out that resurrection which concerns the saints, though not, of course, denying the other. To the very same Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 24:15), we are indebted for the record “that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of just and unjust.” Here again no sign appears of a promiscuous resurrection. The resurrection of two classes is quite definitely presented to us. It is not otherwise in John 6, where our Lord gives the negative to all question of an earthly deliverance by a Messiah such as the Jews expected. He had come down from heaven, Himself the living bread, and there was everlasting life given to them that believed in Him now in this world. This severs men even now; but He adds, “I will raise him up at the last day.” Evident it is that here we have no confounding of the believer with the unbeliever; but, on the contrary, the portion that distinctly and exclusively pertains to the believer. Once

more then the evidence, as far as it goes, is against the scheme which groups men together indiscriminately, whether righteous or unrighteous.

So again, when we come to the epistles, the same thing appears. The epistle to the Romans, which gives us the foundation of all individual truth (only touching upon corporate things slightly in one part of it), could not overlook the resurrection: as of Christ, so of those that are His. But the apostle does not go beyond the saints rising from the dead, because the principle of their resurrection lies in their having the Spirit of life, of which privilege Romans 8, speaks so largely. “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by,” or because of, “his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” There we have a principle of the weightiest kind; but what can more plainly mark distinction? Could it be said of any save of the believer? The unbeliever has not the Spirit of Christ, and is none of His. The saint alone has the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwelling in him; consequently we have in his case a resurrection, not as the salient proof of the Son of man’s power and authority to judge men and compel their homage, but by reason of the Holy Ghost’s indwelling. Hence from this moment, the believer has that true of him which distinguishes him for ever from the unbeliever. Indeed, knowing that so it is, I cannot but insist upon this truth as one of the most practical nature besides being also of the highest possible interest and importance otherwise. You will find, I am persuaded, that wherever there is an enfeebling of the distinction between the resurrection of the just and of the unjust; in a word, whenever men

imagine a common class of those that are raised, there is at the same time always, more or less, a cloud over the gospel of God's grace, and a tendency at least to put the Christian on common ground with the unbeliever. I do not mean that there is conscious deliberate plan; but the effect is in result this very thing, as has been noticed already. And no wonder; for when all present shadows are clear away, they really believe that all, without exception, go through a common judgment, the believer being tried no less than the unbeliever, though saved one knows not how. But the Lord denies the fact, and asserts in the clearest and most positive terms, as we have seen, that the believer does not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.

Be not moved by Pharisaic any more than Sadducean outcries. Let no soul that loves the Lord and trembles at His word let go this momentous truth, or suffer it to be weakened by tradition or philosophy. Hold it fast as the word of Christ. People may reproach you as a heretic, as a proud rejecter of a dogma which the Christian world worships. But let me remind you that you belong to Christ, not to them. They are not lords over you, however much they might desire it: let them not therefore have dominion over your faith. To the Lord you stand; to His word alone I commend you. Unmistakeable runs His assurance, "that he who heareth his word, and believeth him that sent him, hath everlasting life, and cometh not into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Life and judgment are irreconcileably distinct: you cannot have both, though Christ the Son gives the

one and will execute the other. His friends and foes are the objects respectively.

Thus far we have seen the distinctive resurrection of the saint, evidently showing that the resurrection of the rest of the dead has quite a different character. But it is not confined to any one epistle. In 1 Corinthians we have a whole chapter (1 Cor. 15) devoted to the resurrection of the saints, as a scene entirely to itself. It is impossible to find in that chapter the resurrection of the unbeliever, except by implication. So little are they treated as a common company, that, on the contrary, the whole chapter, long as it is, and abounding in the most important details, deals with the resurrection of the righteous as an entirely separate matter. Beginning at ver. 22, we read these words: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Nothing can be more distinct. The resurrection of Christ was a resurrection not merely of, but from, the dead. No man can deny it. The resurrection of those that are Christ's is, no doubt, a resurrection of dead persons (νεκρῶν); but it is also a resurrection from the dead (ἐκ νεκρῶν). Accordingly we have here this resurrection fixed to the time (not of "the end," but) of His coming — "they that are Christ's at his coming." He comes in His kingdom. The next stage is "the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." There we have in the clearest manner possible a statement of the separate resurrection of those that are Christ's, and not a word

said about the rest. The point afterwards noticed is not the resurrection of the wicked, but “the end.” The truth is, that “the end” will only be after the wicked are raised and judged, because the revealed account at “the end” is, not that He then raises up the wicked, but that He delivers up the kingdom. In 2 Tim. 4 we saw the judgment of the quick and the dead bound up with His appearing and His kingdom; for the kingdom includes the whole action of His power, from His appearing in the world until the new heavens and the new earth in their full, final sense. Before “the end,” before He shall have delivered the kingdom up to God, even the Father, the dead, therefore, must be raised and judged; but so far from confusing together the unrighteous with the righteous in a general resurrection, we can only gather from other Scriptures where we must insert the resurrection of the unrighteous into this picture. The chapter, as such, is devoted to, and dwells only upon, the resurrection of the righteous. The most we can learn of the resurrection of the unjust, as far as 1 Cor. 15 is concerned, is, that it appears to be involved in some of the statements, however certainly it is revealed in other Scriptures.

The fifth chapter of 2 Cor. is remarkably full; but we may pass on, as I have already touched on it at some length. We have only the hope of the saints, save that the manifestation of all before Christ’s judgment-seat is revealed there, but without an intimation of the time or circumstances; for which we must look elsewhere.

In the epistle to the Philippians we have a striking testimony to the speciality of the saints’ resurrection. In Philippians 3 the apostle says — “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of

his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." All this is clearly now to be known in this world; but next follows the object he is waiting for — "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." (ver. 11.) The translation is changed according to the true reading. In the commonly received text it stands as in the authorised version — "the resurrection of the dead." But I have no hesitation in saying that this is a mistake, though it is not a question of translation only, but of text. Unfortunately the ordinary Greek Testaments are just as faulty as King James' translators. You must not imagine that the actual condition of the text in a Greek Testament corresponds minutely with the inspired Scripture in its original perfection, any more than the English does, or any other version. What God wrote by the inspired penmen was perfect; but then it is evident that copyists and printers were not inspired, and I am sure the editors were not either. Accordingly we have some of them bad, some good, and some better, while none is such as to exclude enquiry or the need of a discerning judgment. But it is established now, upon all sorts of excellent testimony, and spite of considerably different systems of recension among the editors, and peculiarities in many other ways, that the true text is not τῶν νεκρῶν, but τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν (the latter of which, I do not doubt, was gradually corrupted into the former). Now, there can be no just question that ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν means "the resurrection that is from the dead.2 All the modern critics of just reputation (save one at the beginning of this century) have been obliged, by the weight of diplomatic evidence, to come to one result, and this a very satisfactory one for the truth, especially as none of those who thus settled the text were themselves aware of its bearing; and all of the German

editors, at any rate, must be thought inclined to the error which is now cast out of this text. The expression used in the passage for resurrection is the strongest that occurs in God's word. There is a redoubled emphasis in the phrase. It seems to be designed forcibly to express a peculiar, not a collective, resurrection. It is not the usual word "resurrection;" but "out-resurrection" might help to convey the meaning to the English reader. It would not suit the genius of our tongue, I admit; but it may illustrate the original word, by the way, were one to say "If by any means I might attain to [or, arrive at] the out-resurrection from the dead." Thus there is a twofold emphasis; one from the word itself, which is used here only in the New Testament; the other from the strong regular phrase for an eclectic resurrection which follows. The true reading then which strengthens the evidence for a special rising of saints from among the dead, is established upon evidence which it would be out of the question to enter into here. But this I may say, that the editors of note (with one strange exception, more than fifty years since), whether believers or rationalists, Romanists or Protestants, High Church or Low Church, no matter who, if they were men competent to give a sound opinion, agree on the point. This result is happy, because the text, as it was, proved a stumbling- block to some who were too much swayed by the critic, who erroneously continued the received text, by some oversight, against his own witnesses. But at present the true text may be regarded as settled as to this verse. Nor is there any just doubt as to the right version. As little doubt ought there to be about the doctrine; for not a resurrection which is a necessity for all, but one of special privilege alone could be such an object of desire to the apostle's heart. He says, as it

were, “I care not what the road may be, now that I see Christ and His resurrection. The blessedness of that portion with Him is such in my eyes, that let the path be ever so thorny, painful, and difficult, here am I, ready to go through anything, in order to be in the resurrection of the saints, — that special rising from among the dead.”

As this seems to me the plain scope of the passage, it must be evident that it confirms to the last degree the truth of a special resurrection for the righteous, in which the unjust have no part. A general resurrection, in which everybody must rise as a matter of course, would make the apostle’s ardour unaccountable. Nor is it only a “better resurrection,” but prior; for rising from the dead necessarily supposes that there are dead left behind as yet. As with Christ, so will it be with those who are Christ’s. Further allusions there are, but they cannot be enlarged on now. The passage read at the beginning of this lecture is at least proved not to stand alone. If we had no Apocalypse, the doctrine of distinctive resurrection would be no strange sound to the student of the New Testament. It is confined to no prophetic book. Not that if it occurred only in the Apocalypse, a just ground would lie for standing in doubt. But we know how much ignorant prejudice there is, and has long been, against the Apocalypse of St. John. Hence I thought it might be desirable to show that, right through the Gospels and Epistles, there is on this subject but one doctrine, which is decidedly adverse to the common view of all, good and bad, rising together. Nothing is lost of truth which the common view owns; but on the Scriptural scheme, how great is the gain! If one were to teach only a resurrection of the righteous,

this, I admit, would be rank heresy; for it would blot out the resurrection of the unjust — one of God's most solemn truths in warning to the unbelievers. The truth as God puts it strengthens the difference; for it draws the line most distinctly and overwhelmingly between just and unjust, while all that is true in the other view is retained. It is only what darkens and hinders the truth that is cast away.

In Revelation 20 we find, first of all, that after the beast has been judged and Satan bound, the prophet sees thrones, and persons seated upon them; then appear certain disembodied souls of those who had suffered during the earlier persecutions (Rev. 6); and, finally, others are there who refused the seductions, as well as the terrors, of the closing Apocalyptic scene. (Rev. 13 - 15) But these souls were reunited to their bodies, so that all lived and took part in the first resurrection — these two suffering classes, as well as the enthroned of the first clause of verse 4. Thus there are three distinct groups in the scene.

First, there are thrones, and sitters upon them, to whom judgment was given (not they judged, but judging). Of course these were not spirits. Who ever heard of spirits, absent from the body, seated on thrones? They were men risen and glorified already, and hence the prophet only speaks of "souls" after these. Who were they? They were the hosts who, having been caught up before, came out of heaven with Christ. The chapter before showed us the heavens opened, and the Lord, as a man of war, coming out attended by heavenly armies, who were in the execution of judgment along with Himself. (Rev. 19) They were arrayed in fine linen, bright and pure, which as we know (compare verses 8 and 14)

expresses “the righteousness of saints,” not of angels. It is not rash therefore to affirm that, although angels no doubt come along with Christ, still those here described as associated with Him in this triumphant style and title, cannot be angels but saints. These are the persons, I cannot question, seen sitting on the thrones.

“And [I saw] the souls,” etc. These were others — of course not the same people. As to this, there are men with whom one differs widely who acknowledge it. Indeed it is evident that those already seated on thrones are followed by two other classes, whose souls had to be reunited to their bodies, and of whom (not of the first) it was necessary to say “they lived and reigned with Christ.” As to the first, they were on thrones, living and reigning already. The souls, next seen after these, were of those who had suffered for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, before it was a question of the beast or his image. But last of all came others that suffered later, i.e. when they refused to worship the beast or his image, or to accept his mark in their foreheads or in their hands. These two classes being yet in the separate state, had to live and be added to the others who had just come from heaven, and were for some time raised from the dead. But they are all said to have part in “the first resurrection.” Plainly, therefore, this phrase does not imply that all who have part in it were raised together; but rather that it embraces all who are raised from among the dead. Long before the thousand years’ reign began, the Lord was thus raised; — so were the Old Testament saints, as well as those who compose the Church. Now, we have the earlier and the later Apocalyptic sufferers, caused to live and join those already viewed on thrones with judgment given them.

The earlier martyrs were told that they must wait till their brethren, who should be killed as they had been, should be fulfilled; for the Lord would have the last object of the beast's vengeance included. Now it is complete, the beast being cast into hell. Of all these consists the first resurrection.

Next follows a brief but vivid sketch of the reign for a thousand years. We need not discuss whether it be a thousand years symbolically or literally. Not that I doubt it is to be taken literally. The important point to see and maintain is that it is a long, though limited, time; distinguished in character from what went before, as well as from what follows itself. It is Christ's reign with the glorified saints for a certain defined period (not through eternity). There are striking changes as to conditions and circumstances, but still substantially the heavens and earth that now are; creation delivered from the curse; Satan bound; man blest; the glorified saints in their proper heavenly place; Israel in the inner earthly circle, and the Gentiles in the outer circle; all this combined and going on through the millennium. How it all differs from the old Chiliastic scheme is manifest. Indeed, I am not surprised that grave men rose up against the notion that the Lord Jesus should again live as a man on the earth during the thousand years. Such a view is both unscriptural and repulsive; though it was sorrowful that, in discarding the chaff, Origen and others lost so much of the wheat. But the thoughts of good men like Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and others, were clogged with elements which ruined their testimony to a great extent, and gave occasion to the philosophising reaction which allegorised almost all. Scripture does not such violence to the spiritual instincts of the children of

God, and enables us to hold fast what is good, while we refuse the evil.

In this blessed scene then we see the heavens put in connection with the earth, whereby blessing flows from the Highest down to the least. It is the divinely ordered scheme of blessing, with man in Christ in His rightful headship to God's glory. There are the glorified saints in their proper place. The mount of transfiguration presents distinctively its chief constituents. The Lord Jesus stands the chief of all, with Peter, James, and John; saints but in their unchanged natural bodies on the earth. But do we not also discern Moses representing the dead saints raised, and Elias the living saints changed, in immediate proximity to Christ? The representatives of the risen and the changed, with their Lord, enter the cloud; which is not said of Peter, James, and John, but rather that they feared at the sight; for the cloud was the peculiar sign of Jehovah's presence. There is thus a wondrous nearness vouchsafed to the glorified saints: while these with the Lord will have close links of association with those on earth, they only will enjoy that special and immediate entrance into the presence of God. Truly and in every sense our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. The saints, still in their natural bodies, did not enter there. Peter erred on this very occasion; so no doubt the millennium will not be exempt. But then the Lord will govern righteously, and His power control all that requires to be kept in check. That age is not characterized by the absolute extinction of evil, but it is by the glorious power of the Lord in government: Satan being restrained from tempting men on earth. Of course all evil is gone for

ever from the heavens, as eternity will see it finally banished from the new earth also.

But during the millennial reign of the risen saints with Christ, no more will be seen on the earth than evil kept in check, and its great source expelled for the time, but not yet extinguished, while the beneficent power of God will be conspicuous everywhere. The consequence is, that at the end of the thousand years the Lord will give a proof that, even after the blessed and perfect government of Christ, man is as liable as ever to desert God and His blessing for Satan. No proof of the Lord's goodness, no deliverance outwardly from the thraldom of Satan suffices. If not regenerate, he will instantly fall a prey after the revelation of glory, just as much as now in the presence of God's revealed grace. Satan is let loose once more, as if to test this tremendous experiment. At once the pent-up nations of the earth, especially from the more distant parts, turn from their righteous benefactor; they prefer Satan! The nations are here put under the symbol of Gog and Magog, with evident allusion to Ezekiel, who gave the fall of the last Gentile foe before the millennium, as the apostle John here gives the last earthly enemy after it. They gather against the earthly Jerusalem, but they rise to fall for ever. Fire from God comes down and consumes them. Thus smitten, they join the rest of the dead whom the first resurrection left behind. The next scene shows all these dead rising for the resurrection of judgment. They are the unjust from the beginning of the world; they must now stand before the great white throne. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." The unblest, the unholy await (I will not call it what God has not called it, the second resurrection, but, alas!)

“the second death.” The issue of divine judgment was so terrible, as well as the character of those that composed it, that it could only be rightly conveyed in these terms of grievous import.

There they stand (verse 12), the great and the small, before the throne (which is the true reading); but where is it? Just before (verse 11) we were told the earth and the heaven fled, and no place was found for them; after which is seen, not thrones, but “a great white throne,” before which the dead stand to be judged. Does the Lord appear at this point? On the contrary, it is the disappearing of the whole system of things to which He could come; and therefore, if the Lord wait for that epoch to come, it is impossible that He could be said in any just sense to come into this world (οἰκουμένην). For the earth and the heaven are expressly said to flee at that time; and this, with an additional statement which shows how complete was the dissolution — “no place was found for them.” They do not reappear till after the judgment of the dead is closed. Christ’s coming to the world is really described in chapter 19, before the millennium. At the end of the millennium there is no coming of Christ, but rather a departure, if you will, of the heaven and the earth that now are. Then we find the dead standing before the throne, books opened, with another book, the book of life, and the dead judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. How comes this? Why are these, without exception, said to be judged according to their works; for it is solemnly repeated, in verse 13, they were judged every man (or each) according to their works? Because they are all unbelievers.

Thus the word of the Lord stands for ever. He had said upon earth that the believer does not come into judgment. Assuredly therefore the believer, manifested as he will be, can never come into judgment; for this would falsify His words who is the truth. The unbeliever alone will be judged. This again strongly confirms, what is otherwise so clear and certain, that we have had already the resurrection of the righteous or believers. Consequently the only persons left in their graves were the unbelievers. Thus all is according to the perfect harmony of the truth of God. The wicked, and they alone, are judged, each according to their works. This could not be if there had been a single believer among these dead. Here again there is no sign of a general resurrection. The unjust are raised at the end, and are judged as the just had been long before, and had judgment given to them without one hint of being judged. Need I remark how the Gospel and the Apocalypse of John coincide? But how, it may be asked, can there be no believers? What becomes of the many righteous who live during the millennium? It is very natural that people should enquire why they are not included in this judgment. But evidently they could not be, and for this simple reason, that it is only the dead that stand and are judged, while, on the other hand, there is no ground to believe that a single saint will die during the millennium. The reason is manifest. Satan will not be there, but bound; and Christ will be there, and reign in righteousness. In the absence therefore of him that has the power of death, in the presence of Him that has the power of life, what wonder is it that the righteous of that day should live throughout the whole millennial period, and be every one of them witnesses of the living God, who carries them beyond the limits that

were fatal to men, even in the antediluvian state? Notoriously before the flood, not one reached the barrier of a thousand years. But things are ruled no more according to that one man by whom sin entered into the world, and death by sin. It is the reign of the man Christ Jesus, who will in every sense give life more abundantly, and prove that God did not make man to die but to live. Accordingly every righteous man then living shall live right through without death. So I understand Isaiah 65:20-22, as asserting that he who dies at a hundred years of age is but a child, and even then dies not, save under special curse. It is the exception which proves the rule. In that day death is not extinct till the close of it, but it is only in direct judgment of sin. That the righteous die is nowhere said. Man will then fill his days; but for this he is indebted to the Second Man, the vanquisher of Satan.

Are we waiting for these things? or are we beguiled into the lie of expecting that what now is must ever be? Still the bright millennium will have an end, and there is revealed an awful scene at the end, when heaven and earth shall pass away. The Lord does not gratify our curiosity by informing us what He will do with the righteous then living; but of this we may be sure, that as those who live are His saints, He will not act beneath Himself but in His wonted grace with them. He must do all that is good and great. We have no claim to ask what He has not told us; we must leave all the unrevealed with Him. It does not concern us. But what does concern men ever is, that which must befall those who have not the Lord Jesus now as theirs. All the wicked dead before the flood or after it, before Christ or after Him, before the first resurrection or afterwards, shall rise; the

righteous dead had been raised, the wicked had yet lain dead; but now the dead stand before the throne, and are judged. Two elements enter into this judgment. On the one side, books are open, in which, according to the symbol, their deeds were written, who will then be judged. On the other side is opened the book of life. Human responsibility is there; but also the witness of divine sovereignty. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. The grace of life in Christ was refused; death could not be evaded, nor now judgment. Men were judged, each according to his works. The books proclaimed their deeds that they were evil. The book of life was mute; none of their names was found written in it. Thus all the witnesses perfectly agreed. For the books of works demonstrated their just exposure to the wrath of God; while in the book of life there was not a word to deprecate His wrath; and, as it is said here, “if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.” Not a hint is given of any who were enrolled in it. The only allusion to the book of life is thus purely negative; and every image serves but to increase the solemnity of the scene. No doubt when, before the millennial kingdom, the voice of the Lord Jesus called the risen saints to be with Him, many bodies were gathered out of the sea, and many souls out of hades. But there is nothing said here save about the lost who had been left behind, or those added to them afterwards. For the day of blessedness there was no such thought as ransacking the sea and hades, if I may so say; and most justly and worthily, because it was a simple question of Christ, and those that were His. Such a link was between them — such a mighty power bound them to Christ, that at His voice they instantly arose. But now the knell of the lost tolls in

these terrible words: “The sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged, each according to their works.” Whether it was the restless, uncurbed ocean that kept their bodies, or the invisible world that held their souls, both are compelled to yield up their prisoners at last to the Judge. No power could retain, nor secret place could hide them, when the Son of man claimed them for judgment.

The eternal state will not require many words. The truth is, that Scripture gives us but brief explanations of it; probably because we are so little capable in our present condition of estimating its conditions. It is evident that its details cannot be especially calculated to act upon the soul. Still, inasmuch as it was needful for us, and due to God, as it was a part of His goodness and wisdom to tell us of everything, He does make known sufficient to put us in possession of the great distinctive features of eternity.

The only three passages that I think of at this moment, which refer positively and without the mixture of anything else to the eternal state, are found in 1 Cor. 15:24, 28; in 2 Peter 3:13; and in Rev. 21:1-8.

In 1 Cor. 15 Scripture thus speaks of it: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power” (ver. 24); and yet more plainly in ver. 28: “And when all things shall be subdued unto him,” etc. The millennial reign is not absolute perfection, except in the source of the power and the condition of the saints above, or the glorified. But as to the earth, there will still be evil — kept down, indeed, by

power, though showing its existence throughout that whole era. “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

Thus the characteristic feature of the millennium, here pointed out, is man exalted. Jesus Christ is Lord and Head over all things, to the glory of God the Father; but still the prominent thought is man in Him. He that humbled himself is, then, highly exalted. In the eternal state it is not so much the idea of man, so to speak, set thus over creation, but God all in all. We must, however, carefully bear in mind that, if God is said to be all in all, this means not the Father only, but the Son, and the Holy Ghost also. Such is the great distinction of eternity: God is all in all. It is the first lesson the New Testament gives us as to this state; and a very important one it is.

In the next place 2 Peter 3 tells us that righteousness dwells in the new heavens and earth. In the millennium righteousness governed. Evil was there, and needed, though it found, control; in eternity it disappears: government is no longer wanted.

We shall find all this confirmed in Rev. 21:1-8: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” One broad physical fact that distinguishes the eternal state from all that had ever been, is the disappearance of the sea. I need not say that the non-existence of the sea would be fatal to everything of natural life, as the world now is. How vast the change then! The fact is, that all mere nature will have completely passed away; the course of dispensations is then over; all will be fixed for ever. The consequence is,

that what was necessary as long as the earth was the scene of divine dispensations, and alas! of man's restless projects, with all his corruption and violence, with a ruined lower creation, will find no place then. Animal and vegetable life are no longer in question. God will be all in all.

Again, the new Jerusalem "comes down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Before the millennium began, the bride was complete, and the marriage took place on high. It is in vain therefore to think of the Church still going on in process of formation on earth during the millennium. Will any one say that, after the marriage, the bride had still to be completed? Can one conceive an interpretation more full of absurdity? The beautiful truth in the description at the beginning of Rev. 21 is, that though a thousand years had passed, there is an unchanging freshness in the bride — an eternal bloom, if we may use the expression. She comes down to be the tabernacle or dwelling-place of God Himself in this holy and glorious scene. She had been glorified with Christ during the millennium; but might the thought arise that, because God is thenceforward all in all, she had lost her special place? This is answered in the fact that the new Jerusalem descends once more into the new and everlasting creation of God. Of course it had disappeared from below (as also, no doubt, the millennial saints living on earth previously) when all was convulsed, and the elements melted with fervent heat; but now it comes down from heaven into the eternal scene. The new Jerusalem was in eternal blessedness long before, and' therefore it more corresponds to the new state. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven

saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." It is not "with Israel," or "with nations," but "with men."

Moreover, mark "the tabernacle of God." It is not "the tabernacle of Jehovah of Hosts;" it is not "the tabernacle of Jehovah," or of any dispensational name; but it is God, who is all in all. See how this harmonizes with all we have had already. The epistles of Paul and Peter and the Apocalypse, mutually sustain each other. "The tabernacle of God is with men." What is this? It is the new Jerusalem that comes down. It is there that God especially has His dwelling; which now, as never so fully before, takes a place with men. And who are they? Here, it seems to me, you have an answer to the question what became of the righteous saints that were dead. Of the wicked, and their death and judgment, we have had God's history in Rev. 20. Now we have an intimation to meet the desire of the soul, as far as it is just, to know what became of the righteous that had lived during the millennium. They had no part, we saw, in that most unsparing, holy judgment which consigned all who were in it to the lake of fire. "The tabernacle of God [symbol of the glorified Church in which He dwelt] is with men." Accordingly with these men He tabernacles, and they are His people, and God Himself is with them, their God. Further, as we are told, "He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will

give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Then comes the promise.

But another word must not be passed over, for a more solemn declaration there is not — men suffering the wrath of God in this final and fixed eternal condition of all things and all men, when God is all in all. If we have the tabernacle of God as the inner circle; if we have men outside that tabernacle, but still blessed for ever in proximity to it, God Himself tabernacling with them, He their God as they His people, — even in that unchanging state, we have the awful picture of "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars," who "have their part in the lake of fire." Whatever may be the joy and gladness of the millennium, whatever the holy blessedness of the new heavens and new earth, the very same warrant of God, which gives us to know the eternal privileges of those that are His, declares the eternal ruin and torment of those that despise Him. There is no hope of any change in their condition. The last view that the word of God vouchsafes of eternal blessing, shed by God among men as such when they are brought into the last fixed condition in the new heavens and the new earth, has at the same time the lake of fire with all its endless horrors as the dark background none the less sure, for His enemies of all dispensations.

May our gracious God bless His own word — bless it to His children — bless it as a warning to those that are still impenitent, for Jesus' sake! Surely "the time is at hand." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

W.K.

1 The other Scripture chiefly rested on is Daniel 12:2; but it needs little exegetic skill to see that the rising in question is bound to the deliverance of the Jews at the end of this age, and therefore must be figurative (like Isa. 26 and Ezek. 37.). It would, if literal, involve both just and unjust rising before the millennium, which contradicts the plainest Scripture. Besides it is here “many,” not the many, still less all, contrary to the hypothesis.

2 It is not accurate to say that Polybius uses

ἀνάστασις and

ἐξανάστασις as equivalent. Of the former there is perhaps but one genuine occurrence in his extant remains, the force of which has been much contested; the latter occurs more frequently, but in a somewhat different sense.

On the Lord's Announcement of Gentile Judgments

Appendix

As this, it seems, is liable to be misunderstood, I add a few words here to say that my allusion was especially to Luke 21:25-27, and 35. “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” The same principle, substantially, is found in Matt. 24:37-41; which, dealing with the earth, widens out so as to embrace all men, though clearly growing out of the Jewish section of the prophecy. The scene portrayed in Matt. 25:31-46 is the Lord’s judgment of the nations, after He is come and while He is reigning in peace. It is millennial, though its issues are final.

On the Rosh of Ezek. 38. & 39.

It may interest some readers to discuss a little more fully the right rendering of rosh. Compare Ges. Thes. 2. 1253.

Aquila of Pontus, who became a Jewish proselyte, was the first Greek translator to depart from the sense reflected in the versions of the LXX. Symm. and Theod. But he who most influenced others in a similar direction was Jerome, following the Targ. and Pesch.

Nevertheless, in the cited version before his comment, even he gives the alternative of the proper name, though preferring to take the word as an appellative. “Fili hominis, pone faciem tuam contra Gog, terram Magog, principem capitis (sive Ros) Mosoch et Thubal, et vaticinare de eo.” In his subsequent remarks he owns that the translators Symmachus and Theodotion adhered to the Septuagint, while Aquila, followed by himself, took the word in the sense of “head.” His reason was, that Rosh is not to be found as the name of a nation in Genesis or any other book of Scripture, or in Josephus. “Ex quo manifestum est, Ros non gentem significare, sed caput.” But the editors of Jerome’s works admit in their annotations that the argument is invalid; for many other proper names occur in Ezekiel, and not elsewhere, such as Chebar, Gammadim, Chelmad, Chub, Hethlon, Sibraim, and the like. No doubt it is in Oriental and Byzantine authors that we hear of Ῥώς or Rhos most frequently. The context is decisively in favour of taking Rhos as a proper name. So judged Bochart (Phaleg 3. 13) and Vitringa (Anacris. Apoc. p. 1170); and they have been followed by all scholars of weight down to De Wette in our own day, whose German version (close, though rationalistic) gives this meaning. And such is the rendering of the able Jew, David Levi, in spite of the Chaldee paraphrase. The Byzantine historians abound with proofs of the fact, that Ῥώς is constantly employed as the name of a Scythian race, then living on both sides of the Araxes = Aras, one of the progenitors of the great Russian nation. (See Cedrenus, Const. Porphyrogen., Leo Gram., Zonaras, etc., who distinguish the Ῥώς from the Turks, with whom Mede, Bp. Newton, and others confounded them.)

The following extract from the Origines Russes (St. Petersburg, pp. 24-26) of J. Von Hammer, who identifies the Ros or Ras of the Bible with the Ras or Ros of the Coran, sufficiently conveys the opinion of that distinguished Orientalist. “Un autre passage de la Bible dont on n’a pas encore fait usage, à ce que je crois, vient fortement à l’appui de la véritable signification du mot rosh qui doit être entendu comme un nom du people et non pas comme un appellatif. Les trois passages connus d’Ezéchiel sont le 2 et 3 verset du 38 et le 1er du 39 chapitre ‘Principem capitis (Ros) Mosoc et Tubal.’ Outre que ‘princeps capitis’ ne forme aucun sens raisonable, nous trouvons les deux peuples Mosoc et Tubal dans un autre passage, savoir dans le 2e verset chap. 10 de la Genèse, associés, comme dans les passages d’Ezéchiel, à Gog et Magog, mais aussi à un troisième peuple: ‘Tubal et Mosoc et Tiras.’ Or, comme ici Tubal et Mosoc se trouvent associés à un troisième peuple, on est autorisé à croire que le rosh (Ρως) des trois passages d’Ezéchiel est de même un nom de peuple comme il a été traduit par les LXX., et non pas un nom appellatif comme il se trouve traduit dans la Vulgate. Cette probabilité, déjà extrêmement grande, se change en certitude, quand nous retrouvons rosh (Ρως Ras ou Ros de la Bible aussi dans deux passages du Coran) associés de même à deux noms de peuples, lesquels cependant ne sont pas ceux de Mosoc et Tubal. Il nous paraît hors de doûte que Mohammed qui a eu évidemment connaissance de la Bible ait eu en vue ce passage, et de là 1’ ignorance de quelques commentateurs du Coran qui, cherchant les Ras ou Ros dans l’Arabie, ne savaient pas où les trouver, et changèrent le fleuve (Ras) sur lequel ils habitaient dans un puits, jusqu’ à ce que des commentateurs plus instruits les replacèrent dans leurs

véritables demeures, c'est-à-dire dans l'Azerbeidjean sur les bords de l'Araxes.

"Une autre preuve que les Ras ou Ros du Coran ne sont qu'un plagiat des rosh ou Ros de la Bible se trouve dans leur dénomination même d'Asshabir-Ras, c'est-à-dire les maîtres du Ras, dans lequel nous reconnaissons le nasi rosh c'est-à-dire principem Ras (Αρχοντα Ρως) de la Bible, repété dans tous les trois versets d'Ezéchiel comme le Asshabir-Ras dans les deux versets du Coran.

"Ayant ainsi mis hors de doûte que les Ras ou Ros du Coran sont les Ros ou Ras de la Bible, et que le mot de rosh dans la Bible est un nom propre du peuple, et non pas un nom appellatif, il nous reste à montrer que les Tiras Θειρας [thiras] de la Genèse (malgré la différence des deux s du Sin et Samekh et malgré la première syllabe Ti) sont le même peuple, que les Ras ou Ros qui se trouvent dans les trois passages d'Ezéchiel à Gog et Magog et à Mosoc et Tubal.

"Etant constaté que Ros ou Ras associé trois fois dans Ezéchiel aux peuples de Mosoc et Tubal est aussi un nom de peuple, il est d'abord naturel de chercher le nom de ce peuple dans la généalogie des fils de Noé, qui donne l'origine de toutes les nations. C'est cette idée si naturelle qui nous conduit au passage en question (Genèse 10:2) où nous retrouvons les Tubal et Mosoc réunis, comme dans les trois passages d'Ezéchiel, mais associés aux Tiras au lieu des Ras.

"On peut donc inferer de là avec quelque probabilité, que les Ras et Tiras sont le même peuple, et cette probabilité reçoit le plus grand degré de vraisemblance par le passage de Tzetzes déjà cité par Bochart, qui dit qu'on appellait les Ρως aussi Ταυρους (Phaleg 3. 13):

Σαφεστερον εδηλωσα Ταυρους τους Ρως καλεισθαι." Von H. next refers to some Oriental confirmations in pp. 26-29, which need not be cited.

There is a curious passage in the Apocrypha bearing on this subject. The children of Rasses were among those whose lands were laid waste by Holofernes. (Judith 2. 23.) The Vulgate has Tharsis and Ismahel, the old Latin has Thiras and Rasis. In Smith's Dict. of the Bible we are told that Wolff restores the original Chaldee text of the passage as Thars and Rosos, comparing the latter name with Rhosus on the Gulf of Issus. "If the above restoration of the original text is correct, the interchange of Meshech and Rosos, as connected with Thar or Thiras (see Gen. 10:2), is very remarkable; since, if Meshech be the original of Muscovy, Rosos can hardly be other than that of Russia."