

THE SAINTS' REST AND RAPTURE:

WHEN AND FOR WHOM?

AN INQUIRY AND APPEAL

BY

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THE SOVEREIGN GRACE ADVENT TESTIMONY

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INTRODUCTION

Far be it from me to make the doctrine of "that BLESSED HOPE" a matter for unprofitable controversy. Every portion of revealed truth when face to face with its opposing error, is in its very nature and perforce, controversial, yet if spoken or written in love, should not be unprofitable but contrariwise. It pains me to differ from, and even to controvert honoured brethren, but necessity is laid upon me. I can do no other especially as I mark how stealthily yet surely, the Apostacy advances and with what startling rapidity anti-christian teachings are developing both within and without the professing Church, leaving very little to follow in this direction, but the *parousia* of the Lawless One himself. Compelled to the belief, from 2 Thess. ii. 2-3, and many other scriptures, that his Coming *must* precede the "Coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him" (*i.e.* the Rapture) I can scarcely conceive how more effectually to blind the minds of the people of GOD to his (Antichrist's) presence and identity, than by reversing the teaching of the Apostle and saying that he cannot be revealed while the Church is on the earth. To affirm that "The translation of the Saint is independent of prophetic events" is surely to make void the apostolic injunction in 2 Peter i. 19. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy (a prophetic word more abiding than the voice in the holy mount) whereunto ye DO WELL TO TAKE HEED, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

F. H. W.

THE SAINTS' REST AND RAPTURE:

"Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, . . . even so, Amen." -- *Rev. i. 7.*

WHEN AND FOR WHOM?

AN INQUIRY AND APPEAL

THE COMING OF THE LORD NOT IMMINENT.

The ink with which the Apostle had written his first epistle to the Thessalonians was scarcely dry, before he sat down to write them a second letter, "in both of which," as did the Apostle Peter when writing to the saints of the Dispersion, he sought to stir up their "pure minds by way of remembrance"! "Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told (lit. was *telling*¹) you of these things."--2 Thess. ii. 5. Clearly, whatever the import of his second epistle, it contained no *new* teaching. The Thessalonians had been similarly instructed before. We have Paul's own words for this. The profane theory that he was correcting in his second letter an error into which he had been betrayed in writing his first, viz.: that the Coming of the Lord was imminent, or immediate, is utterly disproved. It was not *his* error, but theirs, that this second epistle was intended to meet.

All the Apostles in their inspired letters have left instructions and exhortations for the comfort and guidance of the Church on earth, during her Lord's absence. Each one, however, speaks of a more or less *lengthened period*, during which, evil and error would run their course before "the end" would come. Each describes the interval as calling for *patient endurance* and long-suffering--Acts xx. 29, 30; 1 Tim. iv. 1-3; 2 Tim. iii. 1-13; iv. 3, 4; James v. 7, 8;² 2 Peter i. 13-15; iii. 1-4; Jude 17-21. The Lord

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- 1 The imperfect implies more than a solitary communication '*I used to tell you*' (Winer). If they had only remembered his definite and repeated lessons, they could not have been so perplexed and seduced as to imagine that the Day of the Lord had set in; for they would have sustained themselves by the thought that defection must precede it--and the terrible development of the Man of Sin."--Eadie (Greek text of Epistle to Thessalonians).
 - 2 "The expression 'the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh,' is not one to be measured by mere interval of time, but rather with the intelligence of its absolute certainty, even though the intervening period might seem great. In reproving those who plan what they will do, the Apostle tells them what they

Jesus Himself even warned His disciples *against* the thought of an immediate coming, and sketched a whole series of events which should happen before His personal return, adding, "For all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."--Matt. xxiv. 6. He spake, moreover, the parable of the Pounds, because they thought the Kingdom of GOD should immediately appear. "He said therefore a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a Kingdom and to return."--Luke xix. 11, 12. Again, in the parable of "The Talents" we read, "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh."--Matt. xxv. 19. In both cases a considerable interval between the going and coming is implied.

THE JEWISH REMNANT THEORY.

It is often objected that the prophetic instructions and warnings given by our Lord in Matt. xxiv. have no direct bearing on ourselves, as present-day believers; that the disciples, including Peter, James, and John, who had forsaken all and followed Christ, were representatives, not of the "Church of the First-born," but of a future "Jewish Remnant," who will be found in the place of testimony, during the last great tribulation, *after* the Church has been raptured;³ others affirm that they represent those who will be converted under the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, "after the completion and removal of the body of Christ."⁴

That our Lord in Matt. xxiv. was not addressing Jews as such, is abundantly clear from the concluding verses of chap. xxiii. which indeed seem expressly recorded to warn us against such a thought, marking as they do, the close of the Saviour's personal ministry in Jerusalem, and containing His solemn and significant declaration that they (the Jewish people) should see Him no more *until* His return in glory. "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."⁵

ought to say, is, 'If the Lord will we shall do this or that.' He does not make *instantaneous* looking for the coming of the Lord the reason why such things should not be said or done. He does not say, as some do now in speaking of things presently before them--unless the Lord come first." -- Dr. S. P. Tregelles.

- 3 "When the Church, which is Christ's body, has been received into glory, a Jewish remnant of elect ones shall take her place as witness bearers and be recognised as the then company of God's saints and Christ's servants on earth."--*Morning Star*, Nov., 1894.
- 4 "The Church shall be 'caught up,' not at the 'Appearing,' but at the first stage of our Lord's advent--His 'parousia'--in the air. During the Day of the Lord which is ushered in by this event, a band of Israel-witnesses shall succeed church testimony, and shall proclaim the Gospel of the coming Kingdom."--*Morning Star*, Feb., 1895.
- 5 i.e. In that Saviour-relation in which since the day of His manifestation to Israel He had appeared among them.--John i. 11. "Words that imply corporate ideas, or that denote representative bodies, have always an indefinitely extended application as to time. Thus in the concluding verses of the 23rd chap., 'ye' has an extended application through more than 1,900 years. It is addressed by the Lord to the representatives of the Jewish nation, who then stood in His presence, to whom He said, 'ye shall not see Me henceforth.' But there is a time when Israel shall welcome Him and pronounce Him 'blessed.' The same 'ye' therefore is extended to that future period. The same prolongation of 'ye' through a period that has already extended to 1,900 years, is seen several times in the 24th chap. in application, not to the Jewish nation, but to the Christian Church. *The*

After speaking these words, it is written, "Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to Him"--"His disciples" who had left all, and followed Him, and of whom He witnessed "Ye are they who have continued with Me in My temptations"--Luke xxii. 28; to whom a little after He said "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you"--John xv. 15; the very same "disciples" of whom He afterwards testified, "They have kept Thy word, and have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee, for I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me"--John xvii. 6-8; the very same disciples for whom He then prayed "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."--John xvii. 24.

"If such disciples were not Christians proper, and so do not properly represent us in Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi., when instructed by the Lord with respect to circumstances that should surround them *after* His departure, and *after they should have received the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*, when do they represent us, if at all?"⁶

If we reject our Lord's counsel in the above Scriptures, can we consistently claim His comfort in John xiii. to xvii.? Were not the Apostles quite as much Jews by nature and by earthly location, when that precious promise fell on their opened ears, in John xiv. 3, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself," as when the same Lord said to the *same company* a few hours before "Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When her branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near; so ye in like manner when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that HE is nigh, even at the doors." And as if anticipating the teaching against which we contend, He adds "and what I say unto you I say unto all, watch!"--Mark xiii. 28, 29, 37, R.V.

Must we no longer take our marching orders as preachers and teachers from the Lord's great and final commission, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you?"⁷ Again, are we prepared to give up that blessed assurance of our Lord's, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age?"--Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, R.V.

Indeed, some have not hesitated to accept this latter inevitable conclusion, and to affirm that "the Lord's

Apostles, as addressed in their representative character, are regarded as living on to the end of the dispensation."--B.W. Newton.

6 It is true they were Jews by nature and externally surrounded by Jewish circumstances and inwardly filled with Jewish prejudices; nevertheless they were, by faith in His name, His own disciples, who had both received and confessed Him as Lord and Saviour, and so had become the sons of God, to be afterwards manifested in glory with us who have believed on Him, "through their word."--John i. 12; xvii. 20; Rom. viii. 19-23; Heb. ii. 10.

7 "In the Gospels, many instructions were addressed to the disciples in their *then* present circumstances, which ceased to exist after the death and resurrection of their Lord, and all such instructions were of necessity limited to the time then present. Thus it is not said to us 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles' in Matt. x. 5. But it is otherwise with those passages which were intended to guide their service during the time of His present absence from them."--B. W. Newton (*Coming of the Lord*, p. 17.)

Supper as recorded in the Gospels would not be binding upon us in this dispensation had not the Apostle Paul received of the Lord a *special* revelation on the subject."

PRECEDING EVENTS.

But even on the wholly unwarranted supposition referred to, it is clear that "Whatever be the moral bearing of the hope of the Coming of our Lord, *He* regarded it as being in nowise impaired by the knowledge which He Himself gave of events that would intervene, for He taught such preceding events in answer to the enquiry of the disciples,⁸ "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy Coming and of the end of the age?"--Matt. xxiv. 3, 14.

Both Peter and Paul knew they would die before the Advent--2 Tim. iv. 6; 2 Peter i. 13, 14. Yet their Lord's return was none the less the subject of their faith and hope. Indeed the disciples generally were similarly forewarned. "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you"--Matt. xxiv. 9; John xvi, 1, 2. With *them*, at least, the certain knowledge of intervening events was not, as some in the present day affirm it to be, inconsistent with a true and proper expectation of their Lord's return. For this they looked and longed. It was their "Blessed Hope," as it is ours. In every-day life, we do not find ourselves looking for an expected event with less intensity because we *know* that something else must happen first. Yet I have even heard it said of those who accept the Word of God which expressly teaches that before the return of the Lord Jesus in visible glory, "that man of sin" must be revealed--2 Thess. ii. 3, that they are looking for Antichrist, and not for Christ Himself. To this we reply, the prior coming of the former is indeed a subject of our *expectation*, for it is so written, but OUR LORD HIMSELF is the object of our longing desire. It is "*His* Appearing" we *love*. "Not on the intervening darkness we rest, but on the brightness beyond." "That is strange love which because a token is expected from a returning friend should so fix its thoughts on the token as to forget the friend."

The intervening events (of which we are forewarned) stand in relation to the Advent of the Lord as the semaphore stands to the incoming train. You go down to the station to meet a beloved friend, who you know is coming by a particular train, and while waiting you watch the signals. As long as the semaphore stands at right angles you know the train has not passed the last station. What were you *waiting* for? The dropping of the semaphore? No, your friend; but you watch for the signals, because they show when your friend is near."⁹

In 2 Peter iii. 13, believers are even represented as looking, "according to His promise, for new Heavens and a new earth," and that notwithstanding, under any system of prophetic interpretation, *pre* or *post*-millennial, many events must necessarily intervene.

It is true, that in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, Paul warns the Thessalonians of the

8 Dr. Tregelles, "The Hope of Christ's Second Coming."

9 The late Mr. James Wright, of Bristol.

suddenness of the Coming, and that, to the WORLD AT LARGE, the event would be as unexpected as it would be unwelcome. For ye yourselves know perfectly that "the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; for when they (that is, men generally)¹⁰ shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." "But ye brethren," he adds "are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."--1 Thess. v. 2-4. Note, he does not say "it shall not overtake *you*," as surely he might or would have said, had he believed with some, that long before the hour of which he was speaking arrived, they would be all removed from the earth, in which case, "that day" would not, *could* not have overtaken them at all. What he does say is, "it shall not overtake you *as a thief*,"--shall not take you by surprise.¹¹ But in any view of the Apostle's language, there is not the slightest hint given that he knew that when "the Day of the Lord" really arrived, those to whom he was writing would be found in any place but that of testimony and trial, demanding patient watching and waiting.

Either the Thessalonian believers had forgotten what the Apostle had said, or they had misconstrued his words, or, as he suggests, they had allowed themselves to be "shaken," or turned away from their understanding on the subject, by listening to some one among them professing to be possessed by the spirit of prophecy, who falsely affirmed that (either when speaking in the Spirit, or in conversation, or by letter) he, Paul, had declared that the Day of the Lord had actually set in--was "upon them," or "was present," as the word might be rendered. It may be that to this false idea is to be traced the fact that some had even gone so far as to renounce their daily callings, becoming idle, disorderly, "working not at all" busybodies.--2 Thess, iii. 11.

How then does the Apostle seek to meet this grave error into which the Church at Thessalonica had fallen? Not by disparaging the study of the prophetic word as being of "no practical value,"¹² but by *repeating former instructions*, calling to their remembrance what he had spoken and written already to them on the subject, and bidding them fall back on their "patient waiting for Christ" instead of indulging in an ill-balanced and feverish expectation, for which they had no warrant, either in anything he had said, or written, or in the teaching of the Lord and His prophets. In plain and unmistakable language he assures them that THE "DAY OF THE LORD" AND HIS PERSONAL COMING IN GLORY TO RAPTURE HIS BELIEVING PEOPLE TO HIMSELF MUST BE PRECEDED BY THE PERSONAL COMING OF THE ANTICHRIST.

10 "The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy--John x. 10, and consequently such a figure could not describe what the Lord's Coming would be to His people, while to the unbelieving world its application is most obvious.

11 "As the context shows, the reference is to unbelieving men who are wholly unprepared for the sudden crisis"--Eadie (Greek text of Epistle to Thessalonians).

12 "Ignorance of Divine prophecy opens the door to mere human predictions. Hence come not a few latter-day delusions. To neglect the study of the word of prophecy is to neglect nearly two-thirds of the Bible, and is a presumptuous disregard of the inspired injunction to 'take heed' thereunto 'as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.'"

Nothing could be more express than the language of 2 Thess. ii. 1-3: "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him" (*i.e.* as the result of the rapture referred to in 1 Thess. iv.)¹³ "That ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle, as from us" (nor by anything the Apostle had written or spoken) "as that the Day of the Lord is now present." "Let no man beguile you in anywise; for it" (*i.e.* the Day of the Lord) "will not be, except the falling away¹⁴ come first; and the Man of Sin be revealed the son of perdition." The "Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" and "our gathering together unto Him," *are both placed under one Greek article*, and thus are inseparably connected in point of time--"they form one event, the first completing itself in the second."--2 Thess. ii. 3 (R.V.)

THE COMING AND THE DAY ARE CONCURRENT.

Those who teach that the Church will be removed from earth and its trials before the Appearing of Christ in glory, seek to draw a distinction between the Lord's Coming and the Day of the Lord. The one, they maintain, is secret, the other open and manifest.

That the "Coming of the Lord" takes place on the "Day of the Lord" is evident from a comparison of 1 Thess. iv. 13-18 with 1 Thess. v. 1-11. The Apostle speaks of the same period and to the *same body of believers* in both chapters.

Moreover in 1 Cor. i. 7, 8, the "Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" and the "Day of our Lord Jesus Christ" are declared to be the hope for which the Corinthian believers were waiting. See also 2 Cor. i. 14; Phil. i. 10.

In the passage before us, 2 Thess. ii. 1-3, "the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Day of the Lord" (true reading), are used as co-ordinate terms, and well may this be done, for at the Coming of the Lord the day of the Lord *begins*; the only contrast that *could* be drawn is, that the coming is one point of time, while the Day is a *continuous* period. The passages which speak of the *Day* as our hope, contradict all thought of secrecy. Could the Sun of Righteousness arise without the Day beginning?¹⁵

THE COMING NOT SECRET.

Three distinct circumstances accompany the descent of our Lord from Heaven and the Rapture, any one

13 "No notice is taken here of the resurrection--though when Christ comes down, the dead in Him arise,--for the appeal is to the present generation of believers, who regarded the advent as *on them*, and their gathering together without suffering death as about to take place. Their own death is not implied and the death of friends for whom they grieved *precedes* this wondrous assemblage."--Eadie.

14 "*Apostasia*, which, according to universal biblical usage, denotes apostasy from the faith, or from God. The definite article denotes *that* apostasy known to the Thessalonians by real instruction." (See verse 5.)--Lange.

15 Dr. S. P. Tregelles, "Hope of Christ's Coming," pp. 73, 74.

of which entirely precludes the thought of *secrecy*; (1) the SHOUT¹⁶, the signal shout of our victorious Lord Himself summoning those who are to accompany Him in His royal and triumphant progress; (2) the VOICE¹⁷ of the Archangel, like himself powerful and full of majesty; (3) the TRUMP OF GOD. Of this trumpet at the descent at Sinai, it is written, that it "sounded" long and waxed louder and louder, yet it is constantly asserted, without the slightest Scripture evidence, that "only the saints will hear it," that the present age will continue its evil course. According to one writer "antediluvian and sodomic wickedness will recur and remain obdurate during the Parousia." Then after a period of time, termed "*the interlude*" (the duration of which is variously defined as three and a half or seven years, and by some, even thirty years), "the Lord of glory who has already descended *invisibly*, concealed by clouds, bursts forth visibly and bodily, as the Sun of righteousness, to paralyse Antichrist by the manifestation of His Parousia."

Even the *simultaneous* resurrection in glorified bodies of the millions of sleeping saints is held to be consistent with the alleged *privacy* of the Lord's descent into, *not*, be it observed, the "third" or lower heavens, but the "*air*"--"the atmosphere that surrounds the earth in close contiguity thereunto, in the open firmament of heaven"--Genesis i. 20. There it is that the great host of the glorified saints "meet"¹⁸ their Lord.--1 Thess. iv. 17.

THE CHURCH AND THE TRIBULATION

Certainly, the circumstances of the Thessalonian Church, and the state into which so many in it had been brought, would have made any reference to so consoling a hope as a speedy removal from the scene of their suffering and trial most opportune. Indeed it is difficult to conceive that the Apostle would have done else than have hastened to direct their attention to it, if such an event had been a legitimate object of their expectation. We search in vain, however, for the *barest allusion* to anything of the kind. If such a hope lingered with the Thessalonians, no doubt "the wish was father to the thought." Their sufferings were most severe. Persecution raged. Thus they would be only too ready to listen to the suggestion that the end was close upon them, and that they were soon to find relief in the Appearing of the Lord. We may even imagine some shade of disappointment overcasting their faith and love, at the receipt of the Apostle's letter. But "better the disappointment of truth, than the fair, but false promises of error." Falsehood may promise more, but is ever cruel, for it promises but to deceive in the end.

16 "When the Lord comes to receive His people to Himself, no eye shall see Him, no ear shall hear Him, but His beloved people."--C.H.M.

17 "Paul was inspired to add the sudden coming for the saints who are to go in *privately* in a moment, in order to come out publicly the Heavenly bride of Christ."--G. W. Gy.

18 "The Greek word here rendered 'meet' occurs in three other passages in the New Testament only--Matt. xxv. 1, Mark xiv. 13, and Matt. xxv. 6. In each case, as Dean Alford and other authorities affirm, it implies not merely meeting an approaching person (or persons), but returning with him. Thus the brethren went out to meet the Apostle as far as Appii Forum, and returning accompanied him into Rome. So in the Day of the Lord's Coming for His own, to take the kingdom whose right it is, His redeemed shall go forth to meet Him on His Kingly progress to the earth, and swell the train of His glory. In this manner it is He will come both *for* and *with* His saints.'--Zech. xiv. 4, 5; 1 Thess. iii. 13; Jude 14-25; Rev. i. 5-7.

First of all, the Apostle commends the Thessalonians for their "*patience*" as well as faith;--"We ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure."--2 Thess. i. 4.

From commendation, he proceeds to instruction and comfort, and bids them, instead of being surprised, or stumbled at what they were passing through, to look upon their sufferings as a pledge and proof of the reality of the Divine Judgment--sure tokens of a day of future rewards and punishments--rewards for the patient sufferers, and punishment for their persecutors.

The close connection between suffering, and the Kingdom of which these persecuted Thessalonians were the appointed "heirs," is further seen, by their persecutions being referred to as a token, not only of the righteous judgment of God upon their persecutors, but of their (the saints') worthiness for that kingdom--a kingdom to which everywhere in the New Testament *tribulation* is declared to be the Divinely appointed pathway. "In the world," said the Lord to His disciples, "ye shall have tribulation."--John xvi. 33. Paul in "confirming the souls" of certain disciples, and "exhorting them to continue in the faith," adds, "we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."--Acts xiv. 22.

Again we find "tribulation" linked with "the love of Christ," from which it shall one day be severed, but from which at present it is declared powerless to separate the feeblest believer.--Rom. viii. 35. In the same epistle "tribulation" is declared to be the Christian's friend, rather than an enemy, and bearing fruit in working "patience," "experience," and "hope."--Rom. v. 3, 4. "We told you," says the Apostle, "that we should suffer tribulation, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto."--1 Thess. iii. 3,4. Of the redeemed multitude before the Throne, the angel witnesses, "These are they which came out of great tribulation"¹⁹ [THE TRIBULATION, the GREAT ONE, (Alford);]--Rev. vii. 14. See also our Lord's words to His disciples in Matthew xxiv. 21-30, where He most expressly teaches that the Coming of the Son of Man with power and great glory shall be "IMMEDIATELY AFTER," and not *before* the tribulation.

Should it then be counted a strange thing in the light of such Scriptures, as well as of the past history of the church, if the saints of the last days should be called to endure the stress of the final great trial? It is true "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." But tribulation on the way to glory is one thing, and "wrath"--penal judgment--quite another. Through the former, we are over and over again told we must pass; into the latter, we are promised, on the word of Him Who cannot lie, we shall never come--John v. 24. If inquirers on this subject would but distinguish between the *punitive* judgments of God which will be poured out upon the ungodly at the Coming of the Lord, and the "tribulation" which *precedes* that Coming, they would be more settled in their minds.²⁰ As we have seen, suffering and the kingdom stand in closest relation, not only in the

19 "Some who saw that the company of the redeemed in Rev. vii. are indeed the Church, and who yet would not admit that the Church can be in the special tribulation, rashly cut the knot by asserting that this company were not in the Tribulation at all. 'They came *out of* great tribulation' meant, according to such teachers, that they came *away from it*, so as not to have been in it. This, they said, was the force of the preposition *ek* here. If this were true, then Col. i. 18, where our Lord is called 'the first born (*ek*) from the dead,' would teach that He never died at all, instead of the direct contrary." ("The Hope of Christ's Second Coming," pp. 50, 51.) Dr. S. P. Tregelles.

20 Many seem to overlook this fundamental distinction. For instance, in an article in a certain

chapter we are now considering, but all through the Scriptures.

The question is frequently asked, "WILL THE CHURCH PASS THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION?" Whereas the question should be, Will the Church be previously removed from the earth before the last great tribulation takes place?²¹

Very inconsistently, I think, Luke xxi. 36, "Watch ye therefore and pray always (at every season, R.V.) that ye may be accounted worthy (may prevail, R.V.) to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the lion of Man," has been quoted in proof that it will; but an examination of this passage in the light of its context will show how little it supports such a notion. In the first place, the injunction to "watch and pray" is given to the very same disciples who are addressed in Matt. xxiv. If such do not represent present-day believers there, then neither do they in the passage we are considering. The one cannot be set over against the other.

If the Lord's instructions in the one Scripture have no direct bearing on us as members of His body the Church, neither have they in the other. One thing is clear, the saints who are in view in Luke xxi., as also in Matt. xxiv. and 1 Thess. v., are seen as *on the earth in the place of trial and testimony during the tribulation of the last days*, and up to the arrival of the "Day of the Lord," else, it could not be said to them, "When these things (*i.e.*, the things mentioned in verses 25, 26 and 31 of Luke xxi., and spoken of in Matt. xxiv. 29 as the immediate precursors of the personal glorious Coming²² of the Lord, "thus carrying on," as Alford well remarks, "the prophetic announcements past our own times even close to the day of the end")--"When these things begin to come to pass, *then* look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Surely the Redemption in view here, is that to which the Ephesian saints were sealed, "unto the praise of His glory."--Eph. iii. 12, 14.

It is important to notice in v. 27 it is not written "then shall *ye*," but "then shall *they* see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."²³ The contrast here is between the saints and the ungodly, the Church and the World, those whose "citizenship is in heaven," from whence also they

Christian monthly, entitled "Will the Church, or any part of it, go through the Great Tribulation?" a writer in his vain endeavour to prove from the Scriptures that it will not be on the earth at that time, actually quotes as a proof text Rom. viii. 1, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," and says, "It would be a condemnation if a child of God was to come under the condemnation of the great tribulation in any way." Could anything be more confusing or misleading? Were the three Hebrew children under condemnation when they passed through the burning fiery furnace? If tribulation and reproach for His name's sake at the hand of man be not something altogether different from judgment on the ungodly at the hand of the Lord, how could the Apostle speak of the uncondemned, in Rom. v., as not only "rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God," but glorying in tribulation also?

- 21 The stress of that tribulation will be in Jerusalem, for it will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. xxx.) but it will be a time of universal trial also, at least wherever Antichrist holds sway.
- 22 *Parousia*, "presence or arrival. The idea is of not merely arriving, but then *remaining present*." If this be so, how does it consist with the view of the Coming which involves an actual withdrawal of the Lord Himself with the Church, to allow for the Antichristian development."
- 23 Compare Matt. xxvi. 64, Acts i. 9, and Rev. i. 7, xi. 12, xiv. 14, with 1 Thess. v. 17. Caught up together with them in, "not into," but *in* the clouds" as one received the Lord, enwrapped *in*, or enthroned *on* them., as on chariots of God."--Chrysostom.

"wait, look for the Saviour" and those who dwell (at ease) on the face of the whole earth--verses 34, 35.

So also 1 Thess. v. 3, 4. "When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them . . . and they shall not escape. (Gk. *ekpheugo*, the same word as in Luke xxi. 36.) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." Not the barest hint is given in either place of the saints being removed from the sphere of danger and trial a considerable period before "the Day" arrived.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND DESTRUCTIVE JUDGMENTS.

Thus again we see the importance of distinguishing between the signs and tokens of the Lord's coming, of which the great time of trial or tribulation is one, and indeed the very last, and those *destructive judgments* which will be poured out upon the disobedient. From these all believers will escape or be delivered, since they will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air, *before any one of them is inflicted*.

"It is, therefore, to be able to escape from the destructive judgments at the hand of God, and *not* the trials and persecutions at the hand of man" (Alf.), that even professed disciples are exhorted to "watch and pray."

If it seems strange that such language should be addressed to such, let it be remembered that these are often so exhorted and warned in the Gospels. For example, in Matt. xxiv. 42-51, they are divided into the "ready" and the "unready," the "wise and faithful" and the "evil" servants. See also the parables in Matt. xxv., etc.

Another scripture often quoted in proof of a private rapture of the saints at a period *prior*, by an interval of *years* at least,²⁴ to the Appearing of the Lord in glory is Rev. iii. 10. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth."

The whole point at issue is, what is the meaning of being "kept from."

In John xvii. 15, the same word is used--but the keeping there is certainly not a removal from the evil in the sense of being taken from its sphere, for the Lord expressly says, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them *out of* the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from (*ek*) the evil."--See also 2 Thess. iii. 3; Jude 24.

"The keeping is not necessarily a being kept from the experience of this persecution, as if to be kept in the midst of it were a *penal* condition" (Lange), but "to be preserved from being overcome by the temptation or trial--so strengthened to resist it, *as to escape its blighting and destroying power*."

Thus the three Hebrew children were kept while "walking in the midst of the fire" and took no hurt, and

24 "There *must* be an interval of at *least* seven years to let the Antichrist play his part. We believe, however, that a much longer interval will take place between the two stages (!) of the advent."--*Morning Star* for April, 1865.

"upon whose bodies the fire had no power."²⁵

Of our Lord, it is written: "When He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong cryings to Him Who was able to save Him from (Gr. *out of*) death"; certainly not from tasting death, but strengthened to bear or meet death, or rather to be delivered from its full power, in resurrection.²⁶

"If we suffer we shall also reign with Him"--2 Tim. ii. 12. It was for the Kingdom these Thessalonians suffered. The day is coming when the subjects of Christ's Kingdom shall not suffer, when they will be no longer called upon to exercise the patience for which these Christians in the Church at Thessalonica were so commended. To this hour the apostle now points, promising them "rest" from all their troubles. "*Ye who are troubled rest with us.*"--2 Thess. i. 7. The "rest" here is not so much rest from labour as from affliction. It is not the "Sabbath-keeping" we read of in Heb. iv. 9, but relief from trial and suffering.

Thus the Apostle shows these afflicted saints that the pressure shall one day be removed, the tension loosened, and they shall suffer no more. But when? Here is the crucial point in our enquiry.

WHEN?

Let the reader mark well the only answer that a candid examination of the text will admit, and remember that what is here written to the Thessalonians, is not written for their sakes only, but for ours also.

When, then, does this rest come? Here is the answer. "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels" (lit. the angels of His power, the executors and ministers thereof. See Matt. xiii. 41, xxiv. 31) "in flaming fire" (lit. flame of fire, encompassed with such. See Dan. vii. 10). "Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from (away from) the presence (or face) of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (lit. believed) in that day." Thus the living splendour of His *manifested* presence is the sphere in which the saints will be glorified, while the sphere of the misery of the lost will be *away* from the presence of the Lord.

The Second Coming will be the occasion for the full display, not only of the Redeemer's glory, but that of His redeemed Church. Thus THE TIME OF THE SAINTS' FULL AND FINAL RELEASE FROM THE

25 In the idea of "escape," removal from the scene of danger is not necessarily involved, and indeed seldom in Scripture. This is made very plain in Isaiah xxvi. 20. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast"; also 1 Cor. x. 13, "God . . . will with the temptation make a (*lit.* the) way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." So in 2 Peter i. 4, the Saints are said to have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (not be taken out of the world but rather preserved from its defilement).

26 The Greek word variously rendered in the New Testament means to "keep with care, to *guard*." It is so translated in John xvii. 12, R.V.--"I guarded them." It is never employed in the sense of taking away.

TRIAL AND SUFFERING is clearly specified--when the Lord Jesus is personally revealed from heaven "in power and great glory."

Surely, the view that the suffering Church is *previously* raptured to the Lord in the air at an earlier period contradicts this plain and most definite declaration of the Holy Spirit.

It is equally opposed to Acts iii. 21. "Whom the heaven must receive UNTIL the times of restitution of all things." It may well be asked, "How could this be true if the Coming of the Lord is to be followed by the reign of Antichrist?" Nor can it be reconciled with Ps. cx. 1, "Sit thou at my right hand UNTIL I make (or shall have set) thine enemies a footstool for thy feet." If our ascended Lord is not to leave His Father's right hand until the hour has arrived to put down all opposition and destroy His enemies, how could it be that Antichrist, His greatest enemy, should afterwards arise and flourish?²⁷

Again, in Rev. xx. we find special mention made of those who suffer under Antichrist, among the "blessed and holy who have part in the first resurrection."

Everywhere in the New Testament, the Church is represented in a suffering condition to the *very end of the Dispensation*. Indeed, were it not so, where would be "the patience and faith of the saints"?--Rev. xiii. 10; or, why should the Lord have said for their comfort, when He was leaving them as sheep in the midst of wolves, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the age"? If the Church is to be removed from the earth before the Coming of the Lord in manifested glory, why did the Apostle write to the Corinthians commending them for their *mistake* (?) in "waiting for the Coming (lit. REVELATION) of our Lord Jesus Christ"?--1 Cor. i. 7. Why did the same Apostle urge Timothy to "keep the commandment without spot unrebukable UNTIL (not simply, in view of) the Appearing" (*Epiphaneia*) (1 Tim. vi. 14), if the Church would not then be in circumstances calling for any exercise of endurance--for such is clearly involved in the "keeping"? Why should the Apostle again and again refer the saints to the "APPEARING" as their hope and his, rather than to any previous Coming, and say, "when Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, THEN shall ye also appear with Him in glory"--Col. iii. 4; or write of them as "looking for that blessed Hope, and Appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus ii. 13, R.V.); or describe the crowned ones in the day of His Coming and Kingdom as those that "love His Appearing"?--2 Tim. iv. 8.

Why should the Apostle Peter bid believers "gird up the loins of their mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to them at THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST"?--1 Peter i. 13. Why did he not bid them hope for an *earlier* ungirding, which it is hard to think he would not have done, if he had known of such a hope? Again, why did the same Apostle write "Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that WHEN HIS GLORY SHALL BE REVEALED ye may be glad with exceeding joy"--1 Pet. iv. 13, if there was any hope of a previous cessation from trial and suffering? If such a hope really existed, why did he not tell them of it?

I ask these questions in no spirit of triumph over those against whose views I am contending, but in heart-felt concern for the truth of Christ. After long years of earnest study of the prophetic word in general, and of this question in particular, I am filled with an ever increasing conviction that no other reply can be given to such interrogations than that there is no such hope revealed in the Scriptures as a previous removal of the Church from the scene of her trial and testimony before the Lord is revealed in

27 The late Mr. James Wright.

glory--NO DELIVERANCE, NO REST, AND NO RAPTURE PRIOR TO THE PUBLIC PERSONAL MANIFESTATION IN GLORY OF THE DELIVERER HIMSELF.

TO "WHOM" ARE REST AND RAPTURE PROMISED AT HIS COMING?

It now only remains to answer this question. A view is being earnestly advocated in the present day "that a *portion* only, of the Church of the Living God--and not the whole" will share in this hope, and that some are "left on the earth to be purged by the fires of tribulation." This we regard as gravely opposed to the express teaching of the Word of God.

In 1 Cor. xv. 23, where the order of the resurrection is given, we read, "Every man in his own order (his own proper band or division), Christ the first-fruits; afterwards (next in order of succession) they that are Christ's at His Coming." This is surely decisive. They that are Christ's--who belong to Him, by purchase-right--blood-bought--His own--His very own, of whom the eternal witness will be "He loved them to the end." So in 1 Cor. iii. 23. "Ye are Christ's," there the Apostle is addressing the entire body of the Corinthian believers--inclusive of those whom he rebukes as being "carnal"--walking as men in certain particulars and not "according to Christ Jesus" (see Rom. xv. 5). Such would certainly not answer to the "consecrated believers" of whom some speak. Yet are they to be raised "AT HIS COMING."

Again, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 29). If so, are not *all* Abraham's spiritual seed--all who are "of faith," including the Old Testament saints, covered by the words "They that are Christ's."

Again, it is written "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ (*i.e.*, the Holy Spirit) he is none of His"--Rom. viii. 9. But those who *have* the Holy Spirit are His; therefore, according to this Scripture, such will be raptured at His Coming. Will any be left behind? Look at 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Does the "we" in this Scripture include "consecrated believers"²⁸ only, or does it embrace the *whole of the redeemed* then on the earth, as forming with those "who have fallen asleep in Christ," the Church of the first-born.

Can it be denied that those who are spoken of in 1 Thess. iv. as sharing in the Rapture are identical with those mentioned in chapter i., as having "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"? and in chapter v. 5, designated "children of light," and "children of the day," for whom Christ died (verse 10), appointed "to obtain salvation" (verse 9)? "Wrath" is the appointed portion of all the rest, which cannot be said of true believers however unfaithful. Moreover, it is expressly declared in 2 Thess. i. 10, that at the Lord's Coming to terminate the trials and afflictions of His suffering Church, He

28 Mr. Pember says, "A Christian, though sure of eternal life, is not sure of being removed from earth before the troubles of the last 'Week.' This favour will be granted only to those who have progressed in holiness." ("The Great Prophecies," p. 446).

is to be "admired in ALL them that believe (believed, R.V.) in that day."²⁹

Returning to 1 Cor. xv. we read (verse 51), "We shall not all sleep, but we shall ALL be changed, at the last trump" (clearly the trump of 1 Thess. iv. 16). Does the "all" in this verse include only the consecrated?

The question equally touches the hope of the sleeping saints. Are those then left behind in their graves, who have died in Christ, but had not sufficiently "progressed in holiness"? No "fires of tribulation" can reach *them*, for, according to the word of the Apostle, they are with the Lord--Phil. i. 23. Shall they not come with Him? If not, what poor comfort we must have concerning those who have fallen asleep in Christ! How tortured by the question, were they sufficiently consecrated? Who is to say? Views differ so as to wherein true consecration consists.

A Christian teacher writes: "Holiness is the *supreme* (italic mine) passport into the "*parousia*." If practical sanctification is meant by that statement, as evidently it is, who shall determine the exact measure thereof? ALL true blood-washed believers are "holy" unto the Lord--"Sanctified by the one offering of the body of Christ"--"perfected for ever."--1 Cor. vi. 11; Heb. x. 10, 14. This is their *abiding condition*.

Moreover, does not this teaching come very near to a contradiction of Col. i. 12, where all the faithful (believing) brethren are declared to be already "made meet"--(possessed not with the title only, but the *fitness*) "for the inheritance of the saints in light"?

Again, what of the great multitude of redeemed saints in Rev. vii., who "have come out of great tribulation" ("the tribulation, the great one")? Do these represent the "unfaithful believers" who are left behind? If so, how honoured! What, too, of the glorious martyr-host in Rev. xx.? Are they "unfaithful believers" of whom it is witnessed that they "were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years"?

What, too, of those of whom, under the desolating persecutions of the Antichrist, it is witnessed, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."--Rev. xiv. 12? Surely this is Bible-consecration.

It is affirmed that those left behind "will be purified in a furnace of affliction seven times heated more than it usually is." So says Mr. Pember.³⁰ But we have the furnace *now*, and are not to count it "strange" if fiery trials try us.--1 Pet. iv. 12. "In the world," says our Lord, "ye shall have tribulation."--John xvi. 33. "We must," says the Apostle Paul, "through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God"--Acts xiv. 22. Will those who, to escape tribulation (it is to be presumed), were "unfaithful" *before* the Rapture, after their more devoted brethren and sisters are caught away, "count it all joy" to endure the fiercer persecutions from the hand of the Antichrist himself? If now, in spite of the Holy Spirit, who some (without the slightest Scripture warrant for so doing, affirm) will be absent from the earth during "the time of the end," and the example of their more faithful fellow-believers, they yet

29 Dr. Tregelles.

30 "Anti-Christ, Babylon, and the Coming of the Kingdom."

remain "unfaithful," will they be found otherwise when left behind at such a disadvantage?³¹ Having been unfaithful in the least, will they be faithful in the greater? Is it not written, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."--Matt. xxv. 29.

"The harvest," says our Lord, "is the end of the age"--that is, it marks its close. "Both wheat and tares grow together." Of the former it is written, "gather the wheat into my barn"; of the latter, "gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them." This is penal judgment, *not purgatory*. The distinction made is not between wheat and wheat, but between wheat and *tares*. So in the parable of the ten virgins; it is a question of oil or "*no oil*," possession or mere profession, having the Spirit of God or having Him not, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."--Rom. viii. 2.

The Lord's word of promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself"--John xiv. 32, is addressed to *all* who have been given Him by the Father--John xvii. 24; their claim being grounded, not on the measure of their practical holiness, but on redemption alone; not the Holy Spirit's work *in* them, but Christ's work *for* them.

CONCLUSION

Do I seem to be pressing these points unduly? I write earnestly, and in all love under the most solemn sense of the confusion that the view I am contending against is working. With very many others I long, with an increasing longing, for a fuller and deeper consecration to the Lord, both in word and deed. I believe this to be the one great need of the present time; but what if in our anxiety to promote such we should be found dislocating the truth of God and dissevering those whom God has joined together?

In the "due praise"--1 Cor. iv. 5; and the promised rewards for faithful service--1 Cor. iii., we surely have a sufficient motive for whole-hearted fidelity, together with that still higher consideration, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me"--Gal. ii. 20. May God the Holy Spirit guide our hearts and minds, and make us, in all our communications one to another, true helpers to a fuller "knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and so much the more as we see "the Day approaching."

The following is a characteristic quotation from the pen of a beloved and revered writer at the conclusion of a valuable exposition of Christian doctrine. It is in such complete harmony with my own feelings as I lay down my pen--leaving with the Christian reader this imperfect, but heart-felt record of my own most settled convictions on a subject so near and dear to all Christ's true disciples, that I am able to fully transcribe every word of it as my own:

"It is not willingly that we close these notes, and leave the sacred subject, and conclude this little book, with discussions which pointedly refer to differences and controversy. Let us at least, by way of actual conclusion, in some of the most ancient liturgical words still used in the Christian Eucharist, "Lift up our hearts unto the Lord." To HIM, directly to HIM, Son of the

31 It is certainly condemnatory of the teaching I am of necessity contending against, that it is usually, if not invariably, connected with the assertion that all the virgins are alike true children of God. In which case, the Lord is made to say to His "own," "I know you not," though it is written, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." They also know Him.--2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Father, Lamb of God, Lord of Resurrection, Head of the Church, Life of the Soul, across and above all controversies between disciple and disciple. For Him we long, looking for Him to come again, "this same Jesus," in like manner as He went up into heaven. May not one word we have written, if His mercy will grant it, becloud that look, chill that longing, for any follower of His. If He be pleased in sovereign kindness to grant it, may some words we have written direct and clear that look, and make that longing only tenderer and deeper, till He come."

Outlines of Christian Doctrine.

The late Rev. H. C. G. Moule, D.D.

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