

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant

By John Nelson Darby

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The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—1

The rapture of the saints to meet the Lord in the air, before His manifestation to the earth, and the existence of a Jewish remnant, in whom the Spirit of God is graciously working, before the Lord manifests Himself to them for their deliverance, is happily attracting the attention of Christians. It has made sufficient way to be the occasion of a renewed opposition, which can only do good by urging serious Christians to examine the scriptures on the subject—an examination which will, under grace, spiritually enlarge their apprehensions on many most important points, full of blessing and interest for their

souls. The true character of the church of God will appear, and the nature of its connection with Christ, on the one hand, and the ways of God in the government of the world on the other — the two great topics of which the scriptures treat; besides that first of all concerns, the reconciling of the soul with God. On this last also, indeed, a right intelligence of the other two casts abundant light. The rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ, strange as it may appear to some, has nothing to say to the church, directly or exclusively; but as we form part of these caught up, it, of course, interests us in the highest degree.¹ The rapture is in connection with the glory of the kingdom; and the saints in general, who are to reign in the kingdom, have part in this rapture. Still, indirectly, the inquiry leads to the question, What is the church? because the doctrine of the rapture of the saints, before the appearing of Christ, connects itself with the existence of a Jewish remnant waiting for deliverance after the rapture and before the appearing; and the position of this remnant connects itself, more or less, with the spiritual condition of the saints before the manifestation of the church on the earth.

Those who believe in the rapture of the church before the appearing of Christ hold that the church has a special and peculiar character and connection with Christ, in virtue of its being formed into one body by the descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven; and that, while salvation is always necessarily the same, the relative condition of the saints previously was a distinct one. They are convinced that in the Psalms a Jewish remnant is found, and that thoughts,

1 Hence, indeed, it is often, in a practical way, treated of, in scripture, as applicable to those who now believe, without going farther.

feelings, hopes, fears, into which the Spirit of Christ enters prophetically with and for them, are there expressed in their behalf. This remnant is believed to be continually spoken of in the prophets, as existing before the appearing of the Lord, and waiting for that appearing, and delivered by it. But, further, the Lord Himself being a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, as well as a Savior, presented Himself necessarily to Israel, according to these promises, and became associated with the remnant, and the leader of it, as far as it was awakened to know Him. Hence the interpretation of many passages of the New Testament also became involved in this question; and, indeed, the whole order of the dispensations of God. But above all, the question of the church and its privileges, as formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is important and essential in this matter, and a right understanding of it a key to the interpretation of the word of God.

On the other hand, the denial of the existence of a Jewish remnant, such as is above spoken of, involves the most grave and, indeed, fatal consequences; because it connects, especially through the contents of the Psalms, the Spirit of Christ, which speaks in them, with the ungodly and unconverted Jews, and makes the declaration of integrity and uprightness, not the breathings of a righteous soul pleading with God—yea, its pleadings furnished to it by the Spirit of Christ—but the pride of self-righteousness presenting itself to God. It is hard to suppose that any could allege that the Lord should give all this self-righteousness by revelation in connection with—yea, identified with—the breathings of Christ's Spirit and the piety flowing from it; but such is the theory of those who deny the rapture of the saints before Christ's appearing,

and, consequently, the existence of a Jewish remnant, in which the Spirit of Christ is at work in connection with the hopes proper to Israel.

A point connected with this has been insisted on by the adversaries of the truth, to which I advert here only to leave it aside, as not touching the main point, even if true, and used by them only to obscure the great and vital truth of the rapture of the church—I mean the secrecy of the rapture. The two points on which it is important to have the clear testimony of scripture are—first, that there will be a Jewish remnant at the end, with a place belonging to itself as such; secondly, the true character of the church of God.

That there will be a Jewish remnant at the close, delivered and blessed by the Lord at His coming, blessed on earth, is, beyond all controversy, the doctrine of scripture. This remnant has neither the church's heavenly blessings nor the church's hope. For those who have inquired into these subjects, it ought not to be necessary to quote passages of scripture to prove this. Still, as it is in its consequences a very important point, I will reproduce here some of the principal passages which prove the fact that there is a remnant, and show the state in which that remnant is.

First, as regards the Jews, Zech. 13:8, 9: "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

As regards the ten tribes of Israel, the case is somewhat different; the rebels will not enter into the land. Of Ezek. 20:33-38 I quote a part: "And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face ... And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." Still they will be united in the land. See Ezek. 37:11-28. In verse 19: "Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand." Verse 24: "And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt ... my tabernacle also shall be with them."

As regards Judah, Daniel tells us (12), "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." I have no doubt verse 2 refers to those scattered in the countries; but on this point I do not dwell here. Only let

the reader remark that the wise and those that instruct² the many in righteousness are distinguished from the rest (ver. 3; see chap. 11:32-35). The general blessing and promise to Israel may be seen at the close of Hos. 3 and 4. I do not quote in detail here, because these passages do not touch the question of a remnant. For the great day of trouble the reader may compare Jer. 30:4-9, and for the certainty of their blessing in general, that chapter, and chapters 31, 32, and 33. I might refer to a multitude of chapters besides, but this may suffice.

What I have quoted also shows that it is the *remnant* of Israel which is blessed with Israel's blessings. As it is said in Isa. 10: "For though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall return"; and verse 21, "the remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God." The points thus made clear are that it is the remnant which is blessed, and blessed with Israel's blessings, according to promise, in the land, with Jehovah as their God. The next and capital point (for what precedes is generally admitted) is their previous state: is it a Christian or church state? And now I pray the reader to mark one most important consequence of any supposition that this remnant of Israel is previously in a Christian or church standing. Their blessings are, the earthly glory, under Christ, in the land, according to the promises made to them.

Now, if their hopes have been church hopes, and their spiritual condition the same as ours, their hopes are not fulfilled, they are disappointed in them; or (and it is this

2 Not "turn many to righteousness." It refers to chapter 11:33, and other passages, where these wise ones are noticed. (See chap. 11:35; 12:10.)

I pray the reader especially to remark) if they are not, our hopes are reduced to the level of Jewish earthly and temporal ones. Now this is the great object of the enemy in all this scheme, for that it is the positive work of the enemy I have no doubt at all. In denying a distinct Jewish remnant, having Jewish faith, Jewish hopes, and resting on Jewish promises, it reduces the church to the level of these; and the value and power of spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and the place of Christ's body in union with Him, are denied and lost. It is this which makes the question vital for Christians themselves. The great object of the enemy in denying the rapture of the saints before the appearing of the Lord, and the consequent rejection of a distinct Jewish remnant with Jewish hopes and Jewish piety, is to deny and destroy the proper faith of the church of God, and to set the church itself aside. Far be it from me to say, that all who have fallen into this system have any such purpose, or are even aware of the effect; but the effect is nothing the less produced, and the loss theirs, though the intention be not. They are deceived by the enemy, though far from intending to deceive with him.

But my task now is to show, from scripture, that this honored and glorified remnant is previously under the influence of God's Spirit—a people waiting on the Lord. I repeat, that those who are blessed as Israel by the Lord are previously waiting on the Lord, and that the Lord recognizes them in this character.

There are two classes of texts referring to Israel in the latter day, to one of which I only refer here, and leave aside, though full of interest, as not bearing on our present subject. I speak of the texts which speak only of the intervention of God in power, whether to deliver or gather Israel, blessing

the nation in contrast with their previous depression and misery, without touching on the question of a remnant, or the state in which that remnant is found. I refer to such passages as Amos 9, Jer. 30-33, and many like passages.

The other class refers explicitly to the despised remnant and its state previous to Jehovah's intervention in power to deliver. Texts of this character are what I would now lay before the reader, quoting as many as are needed to show the existence of a godly though oppressed remnant, which is under the influence and working of the Spirit of God. This truth rests not on a few casual texts, but on the constant teaching of the scriptures. For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself concerning His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up nor left. Not only this, but it will be found that these scriptures connect this remnant of the latter day with those who had ears to hear when the prophets spoke. The connection of "the day," or "that day," with the testimony delivered by the prophet at the time, and that without supposed interruption or interval, is characteristic of prophetic scriptures. But we shall find that this is applicable to the testimony of Christ viewed as the great Prophet of Israel, by whose Spirit alone the prophets prophesied; and that thus the prophetic witness is continued in connection with a waiting remnant during His life, and even after His lifetime, in connection with God's government of Israel, and as long as God dealt with that people as such; and that the doctrine of the church alone took the witness of God entirely out of this connection. The doctrine of a heavenly calling paved the way for this, though not the same thing as the church, though the church had surely a heavenly calling; while the

destruction of Jerusalem, and the judgment of the nation connected with this event, and the warnings which refer to it, closed and broke all connection of God's testimony with the nation, and left the church and the Gentiles the only acknowledged place of witness, as such, until that of the Jews is resumed, according to the clear testimony of the prophets.

To be continued

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—2

Our first duty will be to produce the testimony of scripture to the existence of a godly Jewish remnant in the latter day, with Jewish hopes sanctioned of God. This once distinctly shown, the whole question as to the state of things in the latter day is really solved, and the modified or transitional state of the remnant becomes easy to discern. God would not deprive the Jews of the hopes of Israel till they deprived themselves of them; meanwhile He introduced the church, and their hopes gradually died down, giving place to exclusively heavenly ones, till

judgment closed all other relationship between God and them.

I shall begin by a very plain and strong testimony, which will set the state of the Jewish remnant in the latter day in the clearest light, and then quote passages to show it was a constant theme of prophecy; some showing the fact that a remnant will exist, others its character.

Mal. 3:16 "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Chapter 4. "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth [land] with a curse."

Such are the last solemn words uttered by the prophetic Spirit to Israel before the coming of the Messiah and His precursor. The provisional application to Christ and John the Baptist will be noticed, and is most important, to show the way in which the testimony of their day took a Jewish character and application; but the last days are definitely here in view. A godly Jewish remnant is the very subject of the prophecy. They are contrasted with the wicked, they fear Jehovah's name, and unto them the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings. They triumph judicially over their wicked oppressors in that day. They are identified with the godly in Israel in the prophet's time; they speak often one to another; God will spare His in that day. They are called on to remember Moses and the law given to him for all Israel. Nothing can be more distinct and plain, more specific and positive in its character; and it has all the peculiar weight of a final and closing testimony, the last words of prophecy to Israel.

Let us now see if this doctrine of a remnant is constantly recognized in the prophetic testimony, and in what way. Isaiah, a prophet who unfolds to us the ways of God with Israel as a whole, will abundantly instruct us on this point. The general principle, which connects the remnant with all God's moral dealings with Israel, is found in chapter 1:18, 19.

Before I proceed to quote the passages in detail, let me here state the great principles which this first citation suggests. I have already noticed that, after the question of personal salvation or relationship to God, two great subjects present themselves to us in scripture: the church, that sovereign grace which gives us a place along with Christ Himself in glory and blessing; and God's

government of the world, of which Israel forms the center and the immediate sphere. Only we have to remember that in this government, grace must have a part, or it would not be the government of God. It would be simple judicial condemnation, and impossibility of blessing. These ways of God are revealed in Ex. 32; 33; 34, and Deut. 32. The prophets founding themselves on the law given in Horeb, are sent in grace to seek the fruit which the vine of the Lord's planting ought to have borne. They reproach Israel with not producing it; and solemnly warn the people of the consequences in judgment.

But as God, and therefore grace, was at work, there were the purposes and will of that grace to be revealed: only that it was not in Israel's case made effectual in a simple sovereign gift to the divine glory in a new creation, but in display of God's ways in divine government in connection with the responsibility of man. This grace must be in Christ, for He is the center of all God's ways. He is the Messiah, then, of the Jews, the King that is to reign in righteousness, and to display fully and in perfection God's immediate government (see Psa. 101). Hence there is a double test applicable in the ways of God in government in Israel.

Have they profited by and glorified God in the privileges, in the enjoyment of which they were originally placed? Are they in a condition to meet Jehovah in glory, coming in the person of Christ? These two questions may be seen treated in Isa. 5 and 6.

The question of the remnant is treated, let the reader remark, entirely in connection with the second of these subjects (*i.e.*, in connection with Christ). It is the same nation of course: the residue have the law necessarily before their consciences, and this fully maintained; but it

is, after all, the presenting of Christ, the dealing of God in grace, which brought the state of the nation to an issue, separated the remnant, and brought judgment on the body. After sending the prophets, speaking by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, to seek fruit, the Lord of the vineyard said, I have yet one Son: it may be they will reverence my Son when they see Him. We all know the result. Judgment came upon the nation, a remnant clung to Him through grace. But this necessarily raised another point, “the kingdom” as well as the law. The kingdom was not set up, but the King was there, and the kingdom in that sense among them; and, moreover, since John the Baptist, it was preached as at hand. It passed, on the rejection of the King, into its mysteries as unfolded in Matt. 13. It will be established on the earth; but on the return of the King from heaven, where He is gone to receive it. The reader may see that in Isa. 5 the remnant is not brought into view; in chapter 6 it is, while the people’s hearts are made fat.

Now, the whole of this process of government is unfolded in Isaiah: in the early part, before the history of Hezekiah, in judgment, and connected with all God’s ways, and the national condition ending in the millennial glory and blessing in connection with Emmanuel the King; in the second part, after the history of Hezekiah, in grace, showing that Israel had failed in maintaining Jehovah’s glory as His servant, that Jehovah had substituted Christ come in humiliation as His servant, “the true vine,” and that He (rejected and despised of men) would inherit the Gentiles also. The restoration of Israel was a small thing; but still God would, in and with the remnant, bring in the final glory of Jerusalem and His people.

Thus the whole of the ways of God in government, in connection with Israel, are unfolded in his prophet. The question which exercises many saints connects itself with this whole in this way: Christ having been rejected, and having gone on high, has become the Head of the body, the church; but how far can we, admitting this great and blessed truth, consider the disciples, viewed as associated with Christ during His life—or even in some respects for a time, through God’s patience, after His death—as entering (though, in result, then merged in the church) into the scheme and course of God’s ways with Israel? Are they ever, whatever higher privileges God may have granted to them, viewed and treated as the remnant of Israel according to promise? How far did Christ act and speak in this character, or did He at all? And will not a remnant be found in the latter days, associated, according to God’s will, with the hopes of, and promises to, Israel; taking up the link where it was suspended and broken off, a remnant to whom Jehovah (Jesus) will show Himself in glory, to bless them on earth, as having waited on Him and for Him, the Lord Jehovah, for their help in their trouble? Or is it the church which will continue to the appearing of Christ? And will there be no remnant of Israel waiting, with a right Jewish faith owned of God, for the accomplishment of the promises?

This is the point at issue.

Let us now examine the testimony of Isaiah as to the remnant. First, we get the fact stated. The prophet (*i.e.*, the Spirit of Christ), representing the testimony of judgment against sin, and God’s grace pointing faith to Jehovah’s faithfulness and a Messiah to come, thus lays down the state of Judah: “Why should ye be stricken any

more? ... Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrah." This is the general prophetic view of the condition of Israel. At the prophet's point of view, such is Israel. Further, the nation must be restored by judgment (chap. 1:24-31). But there shall be a remnant left, and full glory and holiness With Christ for those who have escaped (chap. 4:2-6).

Judgment having been used to purify them, the glory is connected with Jerusalem on earth. We have already noticed the judgments of chapters 5 and 6; the former in respect of conferred privileges, the second of expected glory. In this second case, as the glory is necessarily connected with Messiah, the doctrine of the Jewish remnant is fully brought out. First, in general desolation and forsaking, the people's heart being made fat. This, we know, carries us on to the time of Christ, connecting Israel's state under the prophets with their state under Christ, in whose time this judgment was accomplished (Matt. 13:14, 15). And let the reader remark Acts 28:26, 27, showing that there was a dealing with Israel, as such, in patience, after the Lord's rejection and departure.

But secondly, the same passage shows us that there is a remnant (Isa. 6:13)—a holy seed, which is the substance of the old and seemingly withered tree. It shall return and be eaten. Chapters 7 and 8 unfold this fully in connection with Emmanuel.

The local enemies of Judah are set aside; and through the inroad of the Assyrian, the circumstances of the Jews connected with the latter day; for the enemy who then overran Judah is the, often-named enemy of the latter day, of whom the prophet speaks continually as the overflowing

scourge. At the same time, the sign of the virgin's Son, Emmanuel, is given to them. Assyria will overflow Judah. But this is not all; there is a confederacy of nations against Judah. Now we get the resource of the faithful, connecting this history with our particular point.

In presence of Judah's dangers from the confederacy of her enemies they were not to lean on human sources of strength, and confederate as men would. The Lord of hosts was to be their sanctuary. Where found? Here it is Christ comes in. He separates the remnant, being a stone of stumbling to the nation itself: for He is the Lord of hosts (compare chap. 1.). He is a sanctuary for those who look to Him as such; for there is no question of atonement here. However needed it may be, it is not the subject. The person of Christ is before us. The testimony is bound up and the law sealed among His disciples; and He teaches them, in the spirit of prophecy, to wait on Jehovah, who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and to look for Him. In a word, He maintains by faith the connection of Jehovah with Israel in the remnant. He and the children which God has given Him are for signs and wonders to both the houses of Israel, from the Lord of hosts who dwells in Mount Zion. Trouble and judgment are then announced and the full deliverance of Israel through Messiah by victory and judgment. He shall reign upon the throne of David with judgment (chap. 9:3-7: in ver. 3, read, "*to it* increased," instead of "*not* increased," *i.e.*, "thou hast increased its joy"). What is so important in this passage is, that while the church's position, undoubtedly assumed subsequently by the remnant who adhered to Christ, is passed over, their connection with Israel's hopes, and the accomplishment of Israel's hopes, are fully established through Him who

teaches them to look to Him who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and to wait for Him; for church blessings and grace they had not to wait. The church still waits for the accomplishment of this also; its own proper hopes are different, as we shall show in due time. Here the remnant connected with Christ are connected with a proper and exclusively Jewish national hope.

(continued)

(To be continued)

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—3

The prophecy that follows (chap. 9:8) takes up the general history of Israel, its chastisements and hardness of heart, till the inroad of the Assyrian, the final instrument of God's anger, and in whose destruction His indignation is to cease. Here Israel, in Zion at least, is encouraged not to be afraid when the Assyrian is there; for God's indignation shall soon cease in his destruction. That is, God owns and warns in that day His people, has to say to them as such, and counsels and encourages them. Be it that the mass will not have heard, will have joined, as I believe they will have done, with Antichrist, to ward off

the inroad (see chapter 28.); still the remnant will hear, and will reap the fruit of this grace. All I insist on here is that there is a Jewish remnant who will have Jewish blessings, and who have Jehovah's witness and testimony for them to rely on, before He comes to deliver. In this general history the ultimate result is more in view for the nation than the previous detail as to the remnant. Still, necessarily, general principles are maintained. Hence we find, in the following chapter, where the rod out of the stem of Jesse is introduced, that while in the main the millennial blessing is introduced, yet He reproofs with equity for the meek of the earth. That is, He introduces a new order of things, in which pride is put down, and the poor and meek (that is, the remnant) vindicated. The Lord, when He was here, refused to judge thus, but the connection of this passage with those whom He owned in His testimony, and owned as those that should inherit the earth, is too evident to every reader of scripture for me to insist on. There is, therefore, a remnant who are blessed with Jewish blessings, and who have previously a character suited to them, and who are owned in this character even by the Lord, and as heirs of this blessing.

That in the new establishment of the kingdom in heavenly power at the time of Christ's first coming they succeeded—and sometimes with very slow and reluctant faith—to other and higher blessings, is quite true; but this did not affect the truth suspended in its effectuation by Israel's unbelief for a time, but to be accomplished yet by Him who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and for whom, and whose time of mercy, they must now wait. When we examine the Psalms and Gospels, all this will come out with the clearest evidence. Chapters 13 and 14

I only note as showing the way in which prophecy passes over from these present or near approaching judgments to the last day. The same remark applies to chapter 17 while there we find, verses 6, 7, the remnant and its moral state in the last days. In chapter 24 the remnant are again found (vers. 13, 14, 16); the righteous are owned. Judgment then comes in to establish the glory and blessing: but we find therein (chap. 25: 4) the character of the delivered remnant very plainly recognized. Jehovah has been a strength to the poor and needy. Not only so, but this pious expectation is clearly stated (ver. 9), and it shall be said in that day, "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." This is very clear; but the whole of chapter 26 sets this position of the remnant in the strongest possible point of view.

"In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD forever, for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength: for he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. The way of the just is uprightness. Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee: the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul I have 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. Let favor be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, 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. LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. LORD, in trouble they have visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into my chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants

of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”

Here the true state and character of these poor and needy are the special subject of the Spirit’s teaching. God “most upright weighs the path of the just.” They have waited for God in the way of His judgments. Their prayer was to Jehovah when His chastenings were upon them: “With my soul,” says the righteous, speaking by the Spirit of Christ, “have I desired thee in the night.” Jehovah will ordain peace for them, and finally desires them to enter into their doors and hide themselves for a little moment, till the indignation be overpast, for He was coming out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth. This passage needs no comment; its whole object is to own and show the character of the remnant of Israel in connection with Israel’s peace and glory, and before the judgment is executed (they waiting for and desiring the Lord). I pass rapidly over chapters 28:5; 29: 9; 30:18; 31:6; and cite them merely as confirming the same truth, which they do, however, very clearly. Chapter 33 furnishes a testimony to the point which I must not pass over. “The sinners in Zion,” says the Lord, speaking of the last days of Zion, “are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eye shall see the king in his beauty.” Here the righteous remnant in

Zion, in her last day of trouble, are brought under view as definitely as can possibly be, and their security announced on this very ground that they walk righteously (chap. 35:3, 4). The feeble remnant are encouraged while waiting for the Lord, who will surely come with vengeance. The ransomed of the Lord come to Zion with songs. It is a Jewish deliverance.

That part of Isaiah which extends from chapter 40 to the end has quite another character. It is a series of reasonings with God's people, first, mainly on the point of idols in contrast with Babylon, introducing Cyrus by name; and, secondly, on the rejection of Christ. In the former part (chap. 40-48.) the general restoration of the nation, taking the Babylonish captivity for its point of departure, is prophesied; so that a remnant previously in Jerusalem could evidently have little or no place. In chapter 49 Christ, who has labored in vain in Israel, takes the place of Israel as servant; He is the true vine. Here the remnant at once comes in view (chap. 49:6); but after the rejection of Christ (chap. 1.) their character in the last days (ver. 10) is distinctly and definitely brought out: "they fear the LORD, and listen to the voice of his servant." In chapter 51:1, they follow after righteousness; and they know righteousness—have the law in their heart. Yet the comfort of Zion is not yet come, nor has His arm put on strength. But it does; and the redeemed of the LORD return to Zion with singing. The whole chapter follows out the progressive development of the appeals of Jehovah to the righteous remnant, and their deliverance by Him, in the most remarkable manner, with the remnant's appeal also to Jehovah, bringing in that deliverance.

Remark, that in these appeals, righteousness, the circumstance of the grace shown to Abraham, and the law in the heart, are spoken of as characterizing or called for in the remnant who follow after righteousness; and their deliverance is wrought, and Jerusalem called to stand up.

Afterward (chap. 53) the exalted servant is introduced when the Lord has made bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of the God of Israel; and the spared remnant recognize that the despised and rejected One had been bruised for their iniquities. Then comes out the full blessedness of Jerusalem. Her Maker is her husband. The call of chapter 55:6, 7, confirms the great principle; but I do not insist further upon it. Chapter 57, some of the righteous ones perish—have the lot of the Righteous One: the wicked will never have peace. Chapter 58 commences anew with warnings, showing the spirit in which the godly Jew should walk; the result of which will be walking on the high places of the earth, and being fed with the heritage of God's servant Jacob. Yet he that departed from evil made himself a prey. Here was a suffering, godly remnant, in the midst of an ungodly nation; and Jehovah comes in in righteousness. Chapter 61 is remarkable in this, that the Lord quotes the early part of the statement, to apply it to Himself, but stops before the part which speaks of the day of vengeance, which is part of the same sentence in the prophecy. Yet that day of vengeance comes to comfort all that mourn, to appoint to those that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD that He might be glorified: and they shall build up the old wastes, and

raise up the former desolations; and then all the blessing and glory of God's people is entered on.

Now here we get the Jewish remnant in the latter day, clearly connected with Christ's personal service on earth when He first came, and all Christian or church blessing dropped out (the link of the latter day blessings of Zion, with His ministry being immediate, and the blessing being earthly, Jewish, and millennial, just indeed as in chapters 8, 9.). It is hardly possible to have anything clearer to prove, not only the existence of a Jewish remnant in the last day, owned of God as such, and blessed with Israel's blessing on the earth, but the connection of this with Christ's ministry as the great Prophet on the earth, to whom Israel was to hearken, the minister of the circumcision, the character withal of the remnant being in terms such as He owned in that ministry, though in order to the introduction of the church all was for a time suspended. This introduction of the Gentiles is explained in chapter 65, quoted by the apostle for this purpose, as well as to prove God's patience with Israel. In this chapter the remnant is again very distinctly and prominently introduced, declaring that, because of these, His servants, He will not destroy all Israel; they are the elect of Jehovah, who shall inherit His mountains—His servants, contrasted with those who forsake Him. They shall sing for joy of heart when misery and judgment shall come upon the rest. These (chap. 66) had hated those who trembled at Jehovah's word, and cast them out for His name's sake, and said, Let Jehovah be glorified: but He will appear to the joy of the poor, despised, but faithful remnant, and they shall be ashamed. They are righteous in heart and spirit before He comes; and, therefore, He appears, and gives them the earthly blessing.

I have gone through these prophecies that the reader may clearly see that the doctrine of a Jewish remnant (owned in this character by Jehovah, with Jewish hopes pressed on them by God's word, by Jehovah Himself—hopes to be fulfilled in the possession of earthly blessings in Zion, the holy land)—a remnant, pious, and waiting on Jehovah before His appearing to deliver them, and whose piety and confidence are owned by Him—is not a matter of speculation, or of the interpretation of some difficult or obscure text; but the clear, constant, impressive, and prominent testimony of the Spirit of God. He may have seen, too, that this remnant is directly and immediately connected, in character and in the divine testimony, with the position and character of the remnant at the time of Christ's presence on the earth, though meanwhile, for other purposes, the Lord may hide His face from the house of Jacob.

The Psalms will afford us the thoughts and feelings of this remnant in the double aspect of the righteous in connection with Jehovah, and the purposes of God as to His anointed Christ—respectively the subjects of Psa. 1 and 2. The Gospels will afford us (only that John's from its very nature treats the Jews from chapter 1 as reprobate) the transition to the previously hidden counsels of God as to the church which last forms the second subject we have to treat of.

The Psalms begin (Psa. 1) with distinguishing the righteous man from the nation; that is, marking out the remnant morally. The ungodly are not so. They shall not stand in the judgment, nor in the congregation which the righteous will form. As Isaiah had said, in what we have examined, "There is no peace, saith my God, for the

wicked.” Not only this, but the godly man is promised the present temporal blessing of the righteous Jew; and, further, the law is the measure of righteousness, in which he delights.

Thus the first thing the Psalms do is to give the position of the remnant, and the results of that position in the government of God, while the blessing of God is pronounced upon the godly remnant itself.

The next thing is to present to us the heathen and Jewish rulers rising in rebellion against Jehovah and His anointed, and the sure decree which sets Him, as Son of God, upon the throne of Zion, and calls upon the kings and judges of the earth to submit to Him lest they perish. Such are the thoughts of God, the effect of His government.

But another scene is opened out before it is accomplished. The godly man (and Christ, as such) finds himself a prey to the relentless hostilities of the ungodly. In Psa. 3-7 we have the various relative feelings of the faith of the remnant in this position—faith in spite of the taunts of enemies as to apparent desertion, calling upon God in peaceful confidence, appeal to God in contrast with the wicked, the distress so strong that God’s chastening in displeasure is deprecated, and appeal against the wicked in this distress, looking to God’s bringing it to an end as the righteous Judge. Then, in Psa. 8, the remnant own Jehovah their Lord as having made His name excellent in all the earth, while the Son of man, rejected when He came as Messiah,³ is set over all the works of His hands: that is, the full universal dominion of Christ is owned.

3 Hence, when drawing to the close of His ministry, Christ forbids to say He is the Christ: The Son of man was to suffer, Compare Luke 9.

Now we have the remnant here very distinctly, and Jehovah their Lord: but we have the godly man. In Psa. 1, the righteous is plural in verse 6. But what undoubtedly is specially presented is Christ's entering in spirit, as the true godly one, into all the sorrows of the righteous remnant, which, though stated in principle, and specially in principle from Christ's first coming (when the position of the godly remnant and the rebellion of the nation were definitely and in their full character brought out), reach on to the final destruction of his enemies, as indeed stated in the two introductory Psalms. That it is stated in principle is evident from Psa. 1; that it is true in its main principle of Christ, the application of Psa. 2 by the apostles to the circumstances of Christ's death, and by Christ Himself of Psa. 8 on the same occasion, are ample proof. That it runs on to the close, and gives the sufferings of the remnant, and the judgment of the wicked then, is shown by Psa. 1:5; 2:8-12; 3:7, 8; 7:6, and following; while Psa. 8 gives the result in blessing when the Son of man takes His place in the glory.

(continued).

(To be continued).

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—4

Thus the general character of the book (more correctly of the five books of Psalms, in which there is much more method than is supposed) is clearly given. It is the position of the godly remnant in Israel, and Christ entering in spirit wholly and fully into the position of this remnant, sometimes animating their feelings according to His mind in them in it, while sometimes the Spirit rises up to the expression of His own, as entered personally into it, so that what is there said becomes direct prophecy as to Christ Himself. The Lord, entering fully in grace (for in all their affliction He was afflicted) into their trial, appropriates

more than once language which is also true and applicable in the mouth of the remnant, though sometimes, as we have seen, it is exclusively Himself. In all, it is His Spirit graciously furnishing the expression of sorrows and desires in the trial by His perfect sympathy, or of which He is the source—sorrows and desires into which He has so personally entered, that often the terms employed belong prophetically to Him.

To proceed (Psa. 9 and 10.), the trial and judgment of the last days are definitely gone into, and the state of the remnant plainly set forth; the needy expectations of the poor would not always be forgotten. The connection of the Lord with the remnant, and their praise for deliverance, is unfolded in Psa. 9; the extensive power of wickedness and distress of the remnant in Psa. 10; but the general subject and result is the same. In Psa. 11-15 the various thoughts, feelings, and apprehensions of the remnant in these circumstances are developed, Psa. 15 showing the Jewish character of godliness which shall find its place in God's holy hill. All this, and its unquestionable carrying on of the subject to the last days (for we have in Psa. 8 the full final exaltation of Christ and blessing of Israel under the glory of Jehovah's name; and in Psa. 10 the heathen perished out of the land, and the Lord king forever and ever) shows the existence and character of the remnant in that day, and its connection with the remnant in the time of Christ's personal presence in humiliation here on earth, in the very clearest possible way.

This is completed in Psa. 16 and 17, especially the first, by Christ's definitely taking this place of association with the godly remnant, as He did historically when He was baptized with John's baptism (the submission to which,

on the part of the remnant, was the first expression of the action of the Spirit of God in their separating in view of the thoroughly purging of the Jewish floor). In the path of that action, Christ, who surely needed no repentance, at once goes with them. The principle laid down in the beginning of this

Psalm is brought forward in the Epistle to the Hebrews,⁴ to show that “both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” In the Psalm, Christ says, I take the place of a servant to Jehovah, not my divine place. He says to Jehovah, Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee. He says (for that is the connection) to the saints on earth, the excellent, In them is all my delight. Having taken this path, and owning, leaning on, and desiring none but Jehovah, He follows the path of life, does not see corruption, and finds His eternal joy as man in the presence and at the right hand of Jehovah. As Psa. 16 was His trust in God, so Psa. 17 is His appeal to His righteousness. He will behold His face in righteousness and be satisfied, awaking up in His likeness, the true eternal image of the invisible God. But here He brings in the remnant as associated with Him in His sorrow. In Psalm 16:2, it is absolutely Himself passing through death in the power of life. Mainly so in Psalm 17; only He associates the rest of the godly with Himself.

Psa. 18 is, I doubt not, the application of Christ’s death backwards and forwards (to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and to their final deliverance when, under the figure of David, all is subdued under Him).

⁴ The quotation, as is shown by reference to the LXX., is from Isa. 8. But if this be referred to, it will only still more strongly confirm this connection of Christ with the place of the remnant, as the securer and inspirer of their Jewish hopes.

The Psalms which follow are remarkably interesting. In Psa. 19 we have the testimony of the creation, and the law. Psa. 20, Messiah; but now it is the sympathy of the remnant with Him, as suggested by the prophetic Spirit. Psa. 21 the full result of His sorrows and desires recognized in His glory. Compare Psa. 20:4, and Psa. 21:2. The result is, length of days forever and ever as man, and glory laid on Him. In result, His right hand finds out all His enemies. In Psa. 22 we have, not His sorrows from man merely, but the forsaking of God. He mentions these sorrows, and appeals to God not to forsake Him, and is forsaken as none other had been. The result is all grace, which He exercises on His full deliverance, in making known the deliverer's name to His brethren, and associating the remnant in praise with Him, then all Israel (for He has been heard as the poor man, so that they may trust in their cry); and then all the ends of the earth bow to Him in millennial fullness; and generations to be born learn what He has done as the source of their blessedness.

I will close this rapid review of the early Psalms with noticing Psa. 23 and 24. Psa. 23 as showing Jehovah's faithful shepherd care through every difficulty, now exercised in our favor by Christ, is in principle the portion of every believer; but as He knows His sheep and is known of them, so He has walked in the path in which the sheep had to walk, and when He put them forth, went before them; and though the place of sheep was properly still theirs, not His, yet He has really walked in it; and, in that sense this Psalm is the expression of His own confidence. Restoring is not exclusively from sin—though He does that for us, but from sorrow and oppression of heart; as, "Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this

hour.” In Psa. 24 we find, that He who has walked in the path of the sheep themselves in grace is the Lord of hosts Himself; and in the last day will take His place in glory in the hill and in the house of the glory of Jehovah. The character of him who shall have a place there, and blessing and righteousness from the God of his salvation, is found in verses 3-6. For the righteous remnant are all forgotten; only here, I apprehend, it goes out to Gentiles (so verses 5 and 6 seem to imply), for they shall rejoice in that day with His people. From this to Psa. 41, which closes the book (Psa. 40 giving the source of all the blessings in the counsels of God, and the willingness of Christ to undertake the accomplishment of His will), are largely and blessedly unfolded the various exercises of heart in confidence, joy, and sorrow, with exhortations and warnings suited to the godly in such circumstances, and Christ’s entering into them given as a ground of confidence: “This poor man cried and the Lord heard him,” though this be in principle true of many a saint.

In this part, consequently (for it is never the case before Psa. 25), sins are referred to, and the blessedness of forgiveness; for, after all, the remnant had sins, and Christ took them. But the true godly character of the remnant, as under the influence of Christ’s Spirit, is what is put forward in the first place as the true essential characteristic of the book, and of the position of those who are its immediate subjects. Even in Psa. 22, where the fact of God’s forsaking is spoken of, the “Why?” shows the perfectly righteous man. Through grace we can answer the “Why?” but in the Psalm itself Christ is the Righteous Sufferer forsaken of God. Of Psa. 6 we can say, that the occasion of such fear to us would be our sins; but sins are not spoken of there—it

was grief: but the wicked who pressed Him He sends away, as apart from them. In a word, sins are not spoken of before Psa. 25. This is after the whole introductory part of the connection of Christ with the remnant. Thence to the end of Psa. 41 every kind of practical exercise is gone through to which the remnant will be in fact subject, of which they need the exposition from God; but it is always of the godly these Psalms speak, even when forgiveness is sought or sins confessed. They acquaint us with the circumstances of the godly remnant in the latter day, though often on principles which all, by grace, can use. See Psa. 35 and 37.

Remark also the essential difference between the sufferings of Christ from man and from God; the first were for righteousness, the second for sin. The consequence of the first (Psa. 21) is, that He will make His enemies as a fiery oven in the day of His wrath. In the second He was bearing wrath: the consequence is all unmingled blessing, and nothing else, as its fruit. (See Psa. 22:11-23).

(To be continued)

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—5

Now, the reader has only to take up these Psalms and he will see the remnant recognized as a godly Jewish remnant, and their deliverance wrought by judgment (which is not the case of the raised or heaven-born saints in any case); their blessings, Jewish blessings; the character of their righteousness, Jewish. They wait on God, are owned; their cry is heard. They are exhorted to perseverance and dependence. The earth is their portion in many exhortations. Yet they go back to the place Christ held on the earth, and show Him buried—not seeing corruption and ascended on high. For their piety and waiting on the Lord for earthly

deliverance, see Psa. 27:4, 13, 14, and indeed the whole Psalm; for their separation from the ungodly, Psa. 26; for their trial and appeal, Psa. 31; for the positive reassuring of the saints, and confidence founded on Jehovah's ways with the poor man, Psa. 37. Psa. 38 is the full heart guidance and encouragement of God, the inheritance of the earth promised to those blessed of Jehovah. The whole Psalm should be read.

In Psa. 40 we have Christ's example to encourage. He waited patiently for the Lord. Then His whole work from His first undertaking it is shown, and His taking the place Himself of the poor and needy. I only notice Psa. 41 as an example of a statement fulfilled in the case of Christ, but not properly a prophecy of Him. He was, above all, that poor man so often spoken of in the Psalms; but His brethren will tread in the same path, however feebly, and meet similar treachery, and what is done to one of the least of them is done to Him. The Lord God of Israel would accomplish His purposes in blessing.

I need not go into the same detail with the remaining four books. This gives the position of the remnant in the midst of Israel, all its great principles, and the place Christ has taken in their sorrows, Jehovah delivering, though in the end He is proved to be Jehovah.

In the second book, Psa. 42-72, they are cast out, the power of Antichrist established; but (Psa. 45) Messiah appears, and full deliverance is celebrated to the end of Psa. 48. Psa. 49 is the world's instruction by the judgment; Psa. 50 the general judgment of Israel; Psa. 51 their confession of Christ's death now He has appeared; then the various relative exercises of heart under these circumstances. In Psa. 65; 66; 67 that praise which only waits for God's

deliverance to burst forth in Zion is sounded out, and thus the nations are to be made glad. Psa. 68, an ascended Christ is the real secret of all this; Psa. 69, a suffering Christ the basis of that ascended glory, and the security of the poor and needy in Zion. Psa. 70 and 71 apply it in the remnant, and against the wicked, in the person of David, I doubt not to Israel, seemingly past hope; and Psa. 72 describes the full reign of peace. But take the end even of Psa. 69, which applies to Christ's sufferings; you will find the poor and needy owned in Zion, and the earthly Jewish types recognized and opened by God. The seed of His servants shall inherit it, and they that love His name shall dwell therein.

The third book, Psa. 73-89, goes out to all Israel, not simply the Jews, and gives God's beginning, their fuller history in the latter days, the glory and blessing of Zion. The judgment of Israel under law, but election brought out, and the certainty of mercy by infallible promises to David's seed.

The fourth book is the bringing in the First-begotten unto the world, directly connected with God's faithfulness to Israel, but reaching out to all nations. It shows how the suffering Christ could have a share in the restoration of Zion. He is the Eternal Creator (Psa. 102). In Psa. 101, we have His government as man.

In the closing book we have various consequences and effects on the bringing back of Israel — explanatory Psalms of the scheme of God, as Psa. 110; the law written on Israel's heart, Psa. 119; the Psalms of degrees commenting on God's ways; and then the praises of God, with their various grounds, and pursued in view of millennial blessedness.

I have just thus run rapidly through the whole book to give a general idea of its connection with Christ and Israel. It would evidently be impossible to enter into the detail of the hundred and fifty Psalms here. I think, if the reader looks at them, he will see the leading ideas borne out. What he cannot fail to see, if anything can impress the truth, as I would trust it may, on his mind, is, that there is a godly pious Jewish remnant — ever true in principle — tried, oppressed, all but overwhelmed, in the latter day; whose piety Jehovah owns and encourages before their deliverance; which He rewards with Jewish blessings according to promise; with which Christ identifies Himself in spirit, as He did, in fact, when on earth with those of the like spirit; into all whose sorrows He enters, His own having given Him the tongue of the learned; whose sins He has borne; and that in this state of things the case is supposed of dying (Psa. 16; 17) and heavenly joy provided in that case, but the hopes held out are of Jewish blessings, the earth, the holy hill, and deliverance wrought by judgment, that they may enjoy it (which we learn in the second and fourth books); that the ascension and sitting at God's right hand precede these blessings, Christ returning to judgment to bring them in-returning withal as Jehovah, and entering into the temple as such — assuring all things to Israel as David's seed, having all things under His feet as Son of man, and while King in Zion, subjecting all the nations as Son of God born in this world. The name of the Father and the thought of the church do not appear: room is left for one after His resurrection, when He calls the saints brethren; and some figure of the other in Psa. 139, but no direct reference to either. The Holy Ghost's work, as come down from heaven, is intimated in the form of gifts in man, but so as Israel also

will have them in the latter day—“Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them”—only so far, however, intimated, as to say that Christ has received gifts for men.

Such is the testimony of the Psalms. While ministering to piety at all times, though often a piety with imperfect intelligence, their subject is the remnant of Israel, and the blessings of that remnant as such, of course through Christ, the ministrations of His Spirit, preparing them to enjoy it with earthly though divinely given hopes, and in an earthly way.

Note here, too, that all this connects itself with God's government of the world, and in no way with that sovereign grace, which sets a sinner in heavenly glory as one with Christ Himself, and a member of His body. But a heavenly calling is shown in Him, and the possibility of passing to it by death; but it is only stated as to the person of Christ directly, or in the general expression, “The heavens shall declare his righteousness.”

What we have now to inquire into is the extent to which the New Testament seals these hopes and promises to Israel, while introducing higher and heavenly hopes. For it is absolutely impossible that it can set them aside. It does not undo what God had before promised and assured to His people; that is certain and evident. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” It is said in speaking of Israel, Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers. Has his rejection and death set them aside? Far from it. It is just this the apostle insists on in Rom. 11. It has made their accomplishment to be of pure grace, and has secured that accomplishment. Our only research, then,

is as to this point: Was the remnant owned in connection with the kingdom then? Is this connection carried on to the latter days, so as to link the future restoration with the remnant then owned of and owning Christ, so as to show that there will be a pious godly remnant owned of God, such as the Psalms speak of, before the manifestation of the Lord, and waiting for Him?

The beginning of the Gospel of Luke announces Christ fully as thus coming in connection with Israel, before entering on the wider moral ground connected with the Gentiles, which Luke more especially does, and I think we may say because he does. The Spirit of God, at the commencement of this Gospel, has put His seal on all the promises to, and hopes of, the godly remnant (that is, of Israel). The pious remnant were looking for redemption in Jerusalem, and knew one another thus (Luke 2:38). There were just and devout ones waiting for the consolation of Israel, and saw in Christ a light indeed to reveal the Gentiles, but the glory of God's people Israel. The angels brought good tidings to the shepherds, which were such to all *the* people (not all people). In the city of David a Savior was born to them, which was Christ the Lord. The angels of the heavenly chorus alone, in this part of the Gospel, celebrate the full result of Christ's coming to the earth—a result not yet produced, but, as the Lord Himself states, for the present the contrary, but which will be produced fully on the earth hereafter.

Prophetically, it was declared that many of Israel should be turned to the Lord their God, through him who came in the spirit and power of Elias: he was to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Note the last expression, for it gives the divine intention as to any Elias service, and

what the essential character of the remnant is. It is not sovereign grace visiting a sinner of the Gentiles in his sins, but a people prepared for the Lord before He comes. To Mary it is announced that the child born of her on the earth should be called the Son of the Highest, and that the throne of His father David should be given Him. He was Jesus, *i.e.*, Jehovah the Savior. Help to His servant Israel is the final subject of praise with Mary in the touching and beautiful interview between her and Elizabeth. And the song of Zacharias (Luke 1:67-79) is wholly composed of the divinely-given celebration of God's having visited and redeemed His people, and raised up a horn of salvation for them in the house of His servant David—a temporal salvation afforded—promises to Abraham in favor of his earthly seed to be fulfilled. The whole is too clear and definite to need any comment: a remnant already waiting, a people prepared for Jehovah, full earthly deliverance from Him. These are the topics divinely given by inspiration on the occasion of the birth of Christ. That they were interrupted, for the accomplishment of brighter and more blessed purposes, by His rejection, is quite true; but to suppose that He was to invalidate them would be to subvert divine testimonies and destroy divine faithfulness. That it is only a remnant is clearly shown. He was for the fall, as well as for the rising up, of many in Israel. Further, all that passes, Mary's purification and the whole scene, places us on Jewish ground.

Matthew's whole Gospel reveals to us the presentation of Christ to the Jews, and the substitution of the new divine order for the Jewish on His rejection. Hence it becomes particularly important to see how far it assures

us that, notwithstanding this new divine order, the old ⁵ is still according to the mind of God to be accomplished in its time. We shall find that the yet future testimony of the servant of God in Israel is expressly linked up with the service of Christ's disciples in His lifetime, passing over, as the prophets are wont to do, the whole intervening church period unnoticed. This Evangelist, from the outset, introduces Christ as the accomplishment of prophecy and promise. The very genealogy itself, and Matt. 1:22, and 2:5, 15, suffice to point out this—the last showing that Israel's history is taken up afresh in Christ, the true Vine, according to the principle of Isa. 49:5.

In the sermon on the mount the remnant are morally distinguished; the qualities of those who should have part in the kingdom, are clearly and fully stated in contrast with the current self-righteousness of the Jews. Two great principles characterize this teaching of the Lord—the spiritual character of the law, and the revelation of the Father's name. It is to be remarked that persecution is supposed, and reward in heaven presented as the fruit of it. Thus we have the Lord's teaching in Israel clearly and fully brought before us. Obedience to His teaching was like a man building his house on the rock; while Israel was warned he was in the way with God, and if he did not come to agreement with Him, he would be cast into prison till all was paid. (Compare Isa. 40:2). It will be remarked, that all this is divine government, not divine salvation.

I pass by a multitude of indications of the same relationship of God with Israel, accompanied with

5 When I say the old, it is not of course under the old covenant. It was God's wisdom to accomplish all promised and predicted, but on the pure ground of grace. (See the close of Rom. 11).

warnings of the introduction of the new order of things, to draw my reader's attention to a chapter which brings the point which occupies us out into the fullest light. In chapter 10 Christ sends out the twelve. They were not to go in the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter into a city of the Samaritans; but to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and declare the kingdom of heaven at hand; to inquire who was worthy (*i.e.*, seek the righteous remnant, not poor sinners), and repel with fullest condemnation, shaking off the dust of their feet, those who did not receive them. Though in Israel, they were "as sheep in the midst of wolves": it was an ungodly nation. They were to seek the worthy ones in it, speaking peace everywhere, but that peace resting only on the sons of peace. But in verse 18 this goes on to circumstances out of the Lord's lifetime. They were to be brought before Gentiles, and the Spirit of their Father to speak in them; not only so, but they would be hated of all men for Christ's name sake, and when persecuted in one city, go to another; for they would not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man was come.

Now here we have a mission exclusively to Israel, carried on during the Lord's lifetime, carried on by the Spirit afterward, in which they were to endure to the end—a ministry which would not be closed nor completed, and still confined to the cities of Israel, till the Son of man came. How often do we see the prophets passing on from some notable circumstances in their day to "that day!" Here we find the Lord establishing a ministry exclusively to Israel, drawing out the remnant; carried on after Him by the Spirit, and carried on with the same objects still unfinished even when He comes as Son of man. They have

only to do with Gentiles as enemies, along with the wicked and hostile nation of the Jews. Nothing can be plainer in all its parts. They were, according to Jewish hopes and prospects, to gather out a remnant and prepare a people for the kingdom which was at hand. Such is the direct teaching of the Lord.

I note, in passing, that, besides the history of the mysteries of the kingdom to its close, consequent on His rejection, the church itself (chap. 16) and the glory of the kingdom (chap. 17.) are announced in connection respectively with His titles of Son of the living God and Son of man. He and His disciples are (chap. 17:24-27) the children of the kingdom. The judgment of the nation, viewed in their own responsibility is clearly announced in divers parables under law and under the grace of Christ's mission at that time.

(To be continued)

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—6

But in chapter 23 we come again to positive instructions on this point. The multitude and the disciples are both put on distinct Jewish ground, subjected to Moses's seat; yet they who filled it—all the teachers and the righteous of the nation—put under lawful condemnation. Further, the apostolic mission (vers. 34-36) is presented as "prophets, and wise men, and scribes," sent to the nation (as the prophets rejected of old had been), their rejection bringing present temporal judgment on that generation. Often would Jesus-Jehovah have gathered Jerusalem's children together—that Jerusalem who thus, in all times, stoned the prophets, and

killed those sent to her; but she never would listen. Now her house was left desolate to her; she would not see her Lord till she repented. When, through grace, she was in the spirit of that which God had perfected praise by, in putting it into the mouth of babes and sucklings when Christ was rejected by the nation—namely, the confession of Psa. 118—then, and not before, she would see Christ again. In a word, there must be a prepared people, a people prepared to receive Him, saying, “Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” before the Lord would appear to them. Nothing, I apprehend, can be clearer than this, as to the position in which the Lord sets the multitude and the disciples; the character He gives to the witness of these last in Israel, after His decease, and the desolation of Jerusalem and the house, till repentance and a prepared heart had made them ready to receive the Lord, ready for the home here on earth, now to be desolate no more.

The Lord then proceeds to announce the judgment of Jerusalem, and the circumstances of His disciples in connection with the end of the age. The disciples inquire when should the temple be destroyed, what the sign of Christ’s coming, and of the end of the age. That the questions here relate to the Jewish people is perfectly evident: the end of the age (it is well known that “world” is a mistake) has no sense or application out of the sphere of Jewish thought. That it referred to this, in the mind of the disciples, is most clear; that the other question, when the temple should be destroyed, had this reference, it is not needed to say. Does the Lord’s answer continue on this ground? His answer is divided into two parts; a general warning to the end of verse 14, and particular circumstances from verse 15.

As to the first part, to whom do persons come, saying, I am the Christ? Not to Christians as such, I suppose. It was an expectation that Christ might appear, into which the disciples, with Jewish expectations, might be seduced. The scene, sphere, and character, of deception are Jewish. Many troubles and wars would arise; but the end of which they inquired was not yet. Before that arrived, the gospel of the kingdom, which Jesus, and even John the Baptist, had announced, would be sent to all the Gentiles, and then the end would come. Why even this difference, if the previous part were not Jewish in its sphere?

The latter part, from verse 16, demonstrates, as clearly as any language can do, that the Lord was referring to what was Jewish. The abomination of desolation of which Daniel spoke in a prophecy specially referring to his (Daniel's) people, is the point of departure: it would stand in the holy place. Those who were in Judea were to flee to the mountains; they were to pray that their flight should not be on the sabbath day. What language can be plainer, to show the place, the people, the circumstances, which occupy the Savior's thoughts? the rather because we get the saints, and the nations, and their judgments, in chapter 25.

That is (to resume the evidence this Gospel affords us), it takes up the ministry in Christ's time (chap. 10.), and pursues it to the close—the coming of the Son of man—in an exclusively Jewish character. The Lord takes up the disciples and the multitude (chap. 23.) on definitely Jewish ground, subjecting them to Moses' chair, while rejecting those that sat there; and declares, at the close, that repentance must characterize the remnant before they would see Him again: and then, showing the judgment on the house, shows the nation guilty—iniquity

abounding—the testimony of the remnant in the midst of this iniquity—the true witness of the kingdom—and extending before the end to all nations: and, finally, He returns to the last great tribulation and occupies Himself with the godly remnant in Judaea and Jerusalem, previous to His own appearing; warning them that new pretenses would arise of His being there, a suggestion having no application whatever to Christians, properly so called, because they are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. A person must have renounced Christian hopes before such a pretense could be a snare to him. To an earthly remnant the presence of Christ upon earth is the sum of all their rightful hopes.

As regards the subsequent continuation of this testimony in the midst of Jerusalem, the Lord on the cross (Luke 23:34) intercedes for them, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” To this the Holy Ghost, in witness, responds, saying by the mouth of Peter (Acts 3:17) “Now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did your rulers. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that [not “when”] the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus, whom heaven must receive till the times of the restitution of all things, of which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Now, this gracious continuation of the testimony to Israel, as such (see vers. 25, 26—the remnant is distinguished by the reception of the testimony, ver. 23), shows that repentance was called for in order to Christ’s return. Those would be cut off who did not receive this prophetic testimony. Stephen bears witness to their always resisting the Holy Ghost; and to Saul, the most active

resister of the Spirit amongst them, the willing help of the slayers of the witness, the full doctrine of the church is revealed. The persecuted witnesses are owned to be members of Christ Himself; yet, though the church be set up (and we have it in fact, Acts 2, before Peter's testimony), and Paul be made a minister of it, he preaches first to the Jews only; when they count themselves unworthy of eternal life, he turns to the Gentiles, and pronounces, as witness of this church ministry, as the Lord in His living one, that the judgment pronounced by Isaiah must soon fall upon them; but it is only in Acts 28 that this is finally said—the last scriptural witness that we have historically.

The general doctrine of a remnant in Israel is clearly stated in the Epistle to the Romans; an elect remnant spared, who, not continuing in unbelief, will be grafted in again, and that into their own olive tree; not into the Christian assembly, which was not their own olive tree—they had never been broken out of that, nor had the believing branches continued in it. There is an elect remnant of Israel which shall be brought to believe, and be grafted into their own olive tree, and become the nation—the “all Israel.” There are many passages in the prophets, as Joel 2, Zech. 9, to which it may suffice thus to refer.

We will now proceed to take up the other capital point of which we desired to speak—that in which God shows the sovereign fullness of His grace. The historical development of the doctrine we have hinted at, and we will briefly state it here. We have the largest and fullest warrant for saying, that it was entirely unrevealed in the Old Testament. Speaking of the mystery, the admission of the Gentiles to be of the one body in the assembly of God, Paul says (Rom. 16:25, 26), “The preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the

revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest and by prophetic scriptures [not “the scriptures of the prophets”], according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith,” etc. In Eph. 4; 5, “The mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body”; and (ver. 9), “the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world was hid in God: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus.” So (Col. 1:24), “For his body’s sake, the church, whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” This doctrine, of which Paul, as he states in the Colossians, was a minister, as well as of the gospel, in order to complete the word of God, was thus wholly unknown to the saints of the Old Testament. Much more was utterly obscure; but this was hid in God. Other things they might have were for an age to come, not for themselves, as the promise of the Spirit and the Messiah’s glory and redemption; but this they knew not at all. When the Father had revealed to Simon Bar-jonas the truth of the person of Christ, that He was the Son of the living God (not merely the Christ), Christ could then speak of the church; for it was to be founded on that. But He spoke of it only prophetically, and as a future thing—“on this

rock I will build my church.” It was by resurrection He was declared Son of God with power; so that Satan’s power was of no avail; and His death was needed to gather together in one the children of God, wherever scattered abroad—His departure, that the Comforter might come.

Except the corn of wheat fell into the ground and died, it abode alone. When Christ had died—had gone up on high—the great foundation was laid for all blessings, and in particular for the church. And the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, came down according to promise; and the assembly, the church, was formed; and the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved (the residue, the *σωζόμενους*). That was the way He now disposed of them, though His promises to Israel remained sure. The doctrine of the church, however, was not taught as far as scripture informs us. The Christians remained strictly attached to Judaism, zealous of the law; priests were obedient to the faith, nor seem to have ceased to be priests. Peter never even teaches that Jesus is the Son of God; his doctrine is, “Him whom ye have crucified, God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.” God had made Him both Lord and Christ.

What will, perhaps, surprise the reader, the church is never named in the Epistles but by Paul. A particular assembly is named by John; but the assembly or church, as a whole, the body of Christ, is spoken of by Paul only; nor, consequently, I may add, the rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ. God raises up, we learn in the Acts, a free ministry outside the college of the apostles. This brought out the fullest hatred of the Jews; and Stephen, an eminent instrument of God in this ministry,

is put to death. Heaven receives its first-fruits of the power of the Holy Ghost, of the church; heaven itself is opened, and a heavenly Christ is seen—a man in glory is seen. Conformed to Christ, the spirit of Stephen joins Him on high, and the final tale of Judaism was told in blood: they always resisted the Holy Ghost. God did not dwell in a house made by hands. This changed everything; a heavenly gathering before Christ's return was actually begun.

This, however, was individual; but the enmity of the Jew was to assume a yet more active and violent character. Not content with making havoc of the church at Jerusalem, Saul must persecute them to strange cities; but while occupied with this, and close to Damascus for the purpose, he is arrested by the Lord's revealing Himself in glory to him, and telling him that those he was persecuting were Himself—"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; why persecutest thou me?" Here, then, sovereign grace abounded over final resistance to the Holy Ghost Himself. The foundation for the gospel of the glory was laid, and the identification of all the saints on earth with their glorified Head in heaven was made the starting-point for Paul's testimony as to what His church was. Of this he became minister. For a heavenly, glorious Christ, Jew or Gentile were all one; they were all one in Him.

The reception of Cornelius was entrusted to Peter, that the new truth might not be a separate one; but unity, as manifested on the earth, continues, with a new element of truth introduced. The unity of Jew or Gentile, as one body in Christ, was entrusted as a testimony to Paul. He was minister of the church to complete the word of God. He who alone verbally speaks of the church, what does he teach? "God hath put all things under his feet [Christ's,

exalted on high], and gave him to be head over all things to the church [assembly], which is his body, the fullness of him who filleth all in all." Such, then, is the church. It is an assembly which, when Christ is exalted on high and fills all things, is His body, the fullness or completion of the Head.

So in Col. 1 "He is the Head of the body, the church, the firstborn from the dead." So in detail (Rom. 12), "We being many are one body in Christ, and members one of another." So 1 Corinthians 12. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Another character as to the formal existence of the church on earth is, that we, Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2), are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The manner of its building is the breaking down the middle wall of partition, and to make of twain one new man; or, as is expressed in a passage already quoted, the mystery is, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of one body. The baptism of the Holy Ghost, by which it was formed, took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8), which it was the distinctive title of Christ to confer (John 1:33, 34), and which for the saints He ascended up on high to receive. (Acts 2:33; compare John 16:7).

In a word, the church, or assembly, is the body of Christ, formed, when the Head was exalted, by the Holy Ghost, which He then sent down to gather together the saints into unity. Before Israel's being owned as a nation, the saints walked in individual faith; when Israel was

owned, they were individual members of a nation owned as such as God's people, but of which the vast mass were unconverted, the unity of which, such as it was, was in the flesh—a unity with which the Spirit had nothing to do, and which, consequently excluded Gentiles. After the death and exaltation of Christ, who gave Himself, not for that nation only, but to gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad, all was changed in this respect; the distinction of Jew and Gentiles effaced; both alike (through faith) reconciled to God, and gathered into the unity of one assembly by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which assembly is the church, *i.e.*, the assembly of God, the body of Christ, the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost on earth. We are not inquiring here how far it could be corrupted or ruined, viewed as the house of God, or dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost on earth; but what it is in the primitive scripture view of it. Nothing is that but itself.

This assembly is, as may be seen (Eph. 5), the bride of Christ. The word is applied to the particular assemblies of Christians in different places, because they formed the assembly of God in that place; but if the word be taken as scripture uses it, it is not possible to attach any equivocal sense to it. It is God's assembly, formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, when the Head had been exalted as man on high. It is His body and His bride. Translate the Greek word by the natural English one, and no one would have a moment's hesitation as to what it meant—the assembly, or the assembly of God. The Lord added daily to the assembly. He set some in the assembly; first, apostles; secondly, prophets.

It is called to participate in the sufferings of Christ, and He will present it to Himself as His bride, as Eve to Adam, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. When the Lord added to the assembly such as should be saved, it is quite clear that it was not to that to which they belonged already; and their adding to it, an act which showed they did not belong to it as members of the Jewish nation, not even if they were previously pious. It was a newly instituted body, formed in unity by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and united to the Head, Christ, who was there.

We have now to inquire what the testimony of God is as to joining Him there. The church's joining Christ has nothing to do with Christ's appearing or coming to earth. Her place is elsewhere. She sits in Him already in heavenly places. She has to be brought there as to bodily presence. Christ would not remain with His disciples here, and tells them, "I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am there ye may be also." The thing she has to expect for herself, then, is not, though sure of that also, Christ's appearing, but her being taken up where He is. And so the apostle, speaking of it in detail, "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."

We go up to meet Christ in the air. Nothing clearer then, than that we are to go up to meet Him, and not await His coming to earth; but that this coming to receive us

to Himself is not His appearing is still clearer, if we pay attention to Col. 3, which shows that we are already with Him when He shall appear. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." This identification of the church's hope and glory with Christ Himself is of the essence of the church's blessing. He is our life, our righteousness; the glory given to Him He has given to us: we are members of His body, we are of His flesh and of His bones. We reign with Him, suffer with Him, are glorified together, being like Him—conformed to His image. He is hid in God: our life is hid with Him in glory; but for this we must be caught up to meet Him, and that before He appears at all—when He does, we are already with Him and appear with Him. This does not state the epoch of the rapture of the church, but, what is far more important, it does clearly show the entire difference of relationship of the heavenly saints with Christ, and of those who only see Him when He appears. The one are blessed under His reign, and are connected with the earth; the others are identified with Himself—with Him who reigns—appear and reign with Him. Wherever this is enfeebled, Satan is at work.

There are truths common to all, such as being manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. There are those which are the prerogative of faith; and such is our association with Christ, the Firstborn among many brethren, the being His bride and His body. He who awaits Christ's appearing, as the time in which he is to go to be with Him, has denied the proper hope and proper relationship of the church with Christ. On this point there can be no compromise. Ignorance of privilege is one thing (it is our lot, all of us, in one shape or other), the denial of it another. When once

we have seen that we are to appear with Christ, and that, consequently, our hope of Christ's coming for us is not properly His appearing, all our habits of thought and our spiritual affections are changed. Our proper hope is not even the glory in which we appear with Him, wonderful as that is, but this, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

(continued)

(To be continued)

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—7

Three several ways of presenting the return of Christ are found in scripture.

There is, first, the general fact. We do not expect things to go on to an unknown end of dissolution; we are converted to wait for God's Son from heaven. Nothing precise and distinctive is here presented. We do not think that things go on as they were from the creation of the world. Christ will come again, and we wait for Him. This is the abiding thought in every instructed Christian, whatever degree of light he may have as to details. He expects Christ, so that,

morally, the fashion of this world is closed for him: the object of his hope is elsewhere.

Next, the scene of this world is confusion and evil to his spirit; he knows that it will ripen up into rebellion, and that God will judge this world by that Man whom He hath ordained—that Christ will therefore judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom that He will set up His earthly kingdom by judgment—further, that the effect of His governmental judgment will be manifested in the saints at that time—that if it be the day of the Lord for this world, it is the time when the responsibility of the saints will be brought to its manifested issue or result. He will return and take account with His servants, and set one over ten cities, another over five. He knows that the appearing of Christ is naturally and necessarily connected with manifested judgment; hence he finds responsibility always referred to this in scripture.

Thirdly, besides the facts of Christ's coming and manifested righteousness, there is, through grace, special privilege, the proper association of the saints with Christ, which must have their accomplishment also. No doubt the saints will be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ to give an account of themselves to God; but this is not separated from privilege, for they arrive there already like Himself. Yea, He has come Himself to fetch them there. This special association with Christ is made good, not by Christ's appearing, as we have seen (though manifested then), but by His coming to receive them to Himself where He is, His introducing them into His Father's house; and in the kingdom placing them in the heavenly seat of government with Himself. This is effectuated by His coming, and causing them, raised or changed, to come up

and meet Him in the air. This is the rapture of the saints, preceding their and Christ's appearing: at that they appear with Him. So that at their rapture He has not appeared yet.

Such is the general doctrine of the rapture of the church—a doctrine of the last importance; because it is immediately connected with the relationship of the church to Christ, its entire separation from the world and its portion. It is the act which crowns its perfect justification. This rapture before the appearing of Christ is a matter of express revelation, as we have seen from Col. 3:4.

As to the time of this rapture, no one, of course, knows it. But the difference, in this respect, between it and the appearing is very marked, in what is most important. At the appearing comes the judgment of this world: hence it connects itself with, and closes, its history; and before it that history must have run on to its revealed result, revealed events must have occurred, and the objects of judgment must have appeared on the scene and accomplished what is predicted of them. The church is associated with Christ already gone, is not of the world as He was not, is risen with Him, has its life hid with Him in God. There is no earthly event between it and heaven. It must have been gathered, and Christ rise up from the Father's throne to receive it: that is all. It is this conviction, that the church is properly heavenly, in its calling and relationship with Christ, forming no part of the course of events of the earth, which makes its rapture so simple and clear; and on the other hand, it shows how the denial of its rapture brings down the church to an earthly position, and destroys its whole spiritual character and position.

Our calling is on high. Events are on earth. Prophecy does not relate to heaven. The Christian's hope is not a

prophetic subject at all. It is the promise that Christ will come and receive him to Himself, that where He is the Christian may be also.

Although the question be already answered in principle, it may be well to put it formally here, When is the Christian to expect the Lord? I answer, Always. It is his right spiritual character. His always doing it is that by which his right spiritual state is characterized. Be ye “as men that wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding that they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them... Be ye therefore ready also, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” And, after speaking of service to the saints, the Lord adds, “Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth, I say unto you, He will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and begin to beat the men-servants and the maidservants he will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” Here, as a general principle, the constant waiting for the Lord as a present thing is given as characterizing those who are blessed when the Lord comes, and who reign over all things. That which leads the wicked servant into all mischief is, not the denial of the Lord’s coming, but the loss of the sense and present expectation of it.

This was the origin of the church’s departure from simplicity, and its fall into clerical authority and worldliness—the cause of the loss of its spiritual authority. The saints went out, left the world and worldly religion by

going out, to meet the Bridegroom. It characterized them as a present thing. It was recalled to its primitive position and liveliness by the renewal of the immediate expectation of Him. He did tarry, in fact; and the sense of His coming was lost. "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!" was what aroused and prepared them. No events, no earthly circumstances, intervene or modify the direct summons. They go out to meet Him. There is no other thought, no confusion with the government of this world, none of any previous dealing in respect of the marriage-feast (His union with the Jews). They go back with Him to it.

That the apostle lived in, and taught, this immediate expectation, as the proper primitive doctrine of the Spirit of God, is evident, whatever degree of light as to detail may have been possessed. The Thessalonians were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven; with very little clearness of light; but they had been so taught, and Paul approves of their expectation as a divine witness to the world, of which the world itself spake. It was his manner of entering in—they were waiting for Him. It was not a prophetic explanation of events they possessed: there is no event, I repeat, between us and heaven. God's Son was coming from heaven; and they were waiting for Him as the fruit of Paul's entering in among them, owned and delighted in by himself. They drew certain conclusions from it in which they erred, which Paul corrected (as he did another mistake, induced by false teachers, in the second epistle); but their constant expectation was right. The word even is used only here, and speaks of awaiting; but Paul was doing as much. He speaks to them of "we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord." We are told this is a class. Be it so. But it is a class in which Paul reckons himself, showing

that that class could and ought so to await the coming of the Lord. Why not we?

But there were, as we have seen, errors. The Thessalonians were distressed about those who perished for Jesus' sake; fearing, as it appears (so much did they expect Christ in their life-time), that these would not be there to enjoy His coming. Paul corrects this error, by showing that the dead would be raised, and then the living go up to meet Christ with them. But he is so far from weakening the Thessalonians' present expectation of Christ during their life-time that He confirms it by associating himself with them in this expectation. The circumstance, that it was a conclusion drawn from this expectation which misled the Thessalonians so that they were troubled about the saints' dying, gives uncommon force to the statement of the apostle. How anxiously would he have set them right, had they been wrong on this, and shown them that he never had led them, nor meant to have led them, to such an expectation—that it was an excited and erroneous way of looking at the Lord's coming! How would he have shown them (the occasion and need of correcting error being thus offered), as do many now, that there were many events to Occur, much history of the church and world to be accomplished, before the Lord could come! But, quite the contrary, he corrects the mistake they did make as to the dead, showing them that they should first rise; and they, being changed, all go up together on high; and confirms in the strongest way their own present expectation by, as I have said, associating himself with it. Was he deceived, as rationalists allege, in having and confirming in others this thought? Surely not. The moment was not revealed, as we know: the constant expectation was right. It produced

a liveliness of expectation, a courage in persecution, a brightness of heart-association with the Lord's person, and personal approval, of which Paul will reap the blessed fruits when the moment does come — of which the Thessalonians did reap the fruits every day, in the liveliness of their faith, and the brightness of their hope, and the labor of their love — and of which we do: in a witness of liveliness of affection and liberty of heart, and superiority to circumstances, of which no epistle in scripture affords a like example. Would there were a little more enthusiasm in Christians, if it be founded on a hope sanctioned by the apostle himself!

But those circumstances to which the Thessalonians were exposed, were very trying; and if lively, they were young in the faith. They had heard that the day of the Lord would come — a terrible day of trouble and of judgment. False teachers came and sought to upset their minds, alleging even a letter of Paul, and declarations of the Spirit, that that day was there. If hope was somewhat enfeebled by their sufferings, as perhaps was the case (as the apostle speaks only of their faith and love here), this unsettling of their minds is not difficult to conceive, entirely inexperienced as they were, and subjected to trial. But the Lord was there to help them, as the wicked one to trouble them. It is to be remarked that the verse translated (2 Thess. 2), "as that the day of the Lord is at hand," should be, beyond all controversy or question, "as that the day of the Lord were present," It is the word translated elsewhere *present*, in contrast with things to come. They were troubled and upset by the impression that the day of the Lord, that great and terrible day was actually come. No wonder the apostle could not speak of their hope. Before the apostle touches on their mistake, and unfolds the true order of events, with

heavenly skill he sets their minds at ease. This he does in the first chapter. He glories in their patience and faith in their persecutions. It was a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those that troubled them, and to them that were troubled rest with Paul and others (he was associated in the sorrow and the rest too) when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in (not “to receive to himself”) all them that believe (for the Thessalonians had believed) in that day.

Here all is set in its place. It was Christ’s appearing in glory which would bring in the day. If that day had been then present, it was without Christ. If His appearing brought it in, He was not going to trouble those that were His, but surely those who troubled them. That was a righteous matter with God; so that the terrible persecution the Thessalonians were undergoing was but a pledge with a righteous God that, when the kingdom came, they would have rest and glory. They would not have trouble when Christ appeared, and when the kingdom was established by judgment. In that day their portion would be ease and delight; nay, indeed, more than that—they would be the admiration of the world, or rather Christ in them, in that day.

Thus, by introducing Christ and God’s righteous ways, all was as clear as possible, and the delusion dispelled. The Thessalonians’ minds were re-established. It is ever so: introduce Christ and God’s ways, and all is clear and peace. They can now, calmly and with a restored soul, in which known truths had their place, receive fresh and satisfying

light on the point which troubled them. The moment we see that they thought the day of the Lord was there, all is perfectly simple and clear.

It has been supposed that “rest when” means the moment of relief. Nothing is more unfounded. The reasoning of the apostle is that Christ introducing the day, it was not when He had the upper hand that His people would be troubled and ill-treated. Was He going to treat them so? In the day exactly the contrary would be the case: they would enjoy rest and blessing: the persecutors would be troubled. The word *ἄνεσις* by no means conveys always the same meaning of a moment of relaxation arriving; it is never so used in scripture. The other passages are Acts 24:23; 2 Cor. 2:12; 7:5; 8:13. It is used in the same sense here. In 2 Cor. 8:13, it is in a similar opposition with *θλίψις*.

We come now to the very easy understanding of 2 Thess. 2, in which to the relieved Thessalonians the apostle unfolds, by fresh instructions, the order in which events will really take place. I only remark, before turning to it, that if “rest with us” meant relief at the moment of the revealing of Christ, it would mean that the Thessalonians and Paul were to expect Christ’s appearing in their lifetime, as the term of their trials, and the moment of their rest. This reply would be complete and absolute to those who allege this; but it would not be the truth, nor scriptural. It is not the force of *ἄνεσις* here, nor is it the meaning of the passage, nor would such an expectation, using *ἄνεσις* in this way, be a scripturally enlightened one, such as an inspired apostle would give. It proves the absurdity of their reasoning as an *argumentum ad hominem*, but no more.

As regards 2 Thess. 2, as I have said, the apostle unfolds additional truth. He had already told the Thessalonians

that they would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Hence their being under the day of Christ on the earth was an absolute impossibility, since they would be in heaven, with the executor of the wrath of it, before it arrived. This motive he now pleads. They fancied (or at least were unsettled as to it by the false teachers) that the day was actually come consequently, without Christ's coming. Hence he says, "We beseech you, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor troubled ... as that the day of the Lord was come." Both facts, and both together, proved that the day of the Lord was not there; already evident by the moral absurdity of the day of the Lord being against the Lord's people; but here he leads them on to positive ground. Christ must come for it, and their portion was to be gathered up to Him before the day arrived.

Another thing which showed the day was not then come (this supposition being the groundwork of all the apostle's reasoning and, indeed, the occasion of the whole epistle) was, that the day would not come till the apostasy came, and the man of sin was revealed. Before the day of Christ could be present on the earth, events must occur—the object of judgment must be there. Thus the mistakes of the Thessalonians only gave occasion to clearer and surer light. And here I must remark that confounding the day of the Lord and His coming to receive the church is not a mere mistake in terms, but a subversion of the whole nature of the relationship between Christ and the church, and Christ and the world, an apostate world; and a losing sight wholly of the great moral bearing of a day coming on the world, of which the Old Testament is full as well as the

New. To mix this up with “I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also,” is to confound the whole bearing of Christ’s affections towards His own, with the terror of an apparition which every eye shall see—a confounding the flaming fire of destructive judgment with the dearest confidences of perfect grace, and bringing down the hopes of the saints, founded on the all-perfect grace and truth of Christ, to the level of an event common to all, and terrible in its glory. It is the practical establishment of the error to correct which the second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written. It not only sets aside the distinctive revelation of our being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and the distinctive existence and position which (it is here, as elsewhere, revealed) we shall have with Christ when He appears. When He appears we shall appear with Him; He will come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe (not to receive them up to Himself). The scripture is as plain as possible. He who confounds the day of Christ with His coming to receive the church knows neither what His day is, nor His coming, nor the church.

Do the saints not await His coming to earth, and His appearing? Undoubtedly: but not as the time of their joining Him; for, I repeat, they will appear *with* Him: as walking on earth, they await this event. They await it as the great eventful act of God’s government, in which Christ is glorified, as that in which all responsibility will be brought to its manifest result. It is the grand act of that display of power which sets everything in its place according to the divine judgment, and by which evil power is set aside. But they do not expect it as that which is to fulfill and accomplish their own personal blessedness according to

sovereign grace in their own relationship with Christ (that is, in the Father's house). Christ's appearing will be the full establishment of divine power in government, and the result of responsibility; the rapture of the church, and its entrance into the Father's house, the accomplishment of sovereign grace towards the saints in their full individual blessedness—of the hopes which communion with the Father and the Son has given them. Another special result will follow for the church—the marriage of the Lamb. But this is distinctive and peculiar, not the completing of individual grace.

The moment of the rapture none can know. Its distinctive character is vital for him before whom the truth is set. I will now cite some passages of detail, which show our exemption from the tribulation predicted a position in which the world will find itself, and in an especial manner the Jewish people restored to their land.

In the address to the Philadelphian church, and in reference to the near coming of the Lord, and giving, as the ground of the promise, that they had kept the word of Christ's patience (for He waits also), it is declared that they shall be kept from the hour of temptation which shall come on all the world to try them which dwell upon the earth. This last description of persons is frequently so designated in the Revelation, and expresses, surely, much more than the fact that they live on earth. They are characterized by having their dwelling-place there.

(Continued)

(To be continued)

The Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant—8

In Rev. 12:10-12, it is said, “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!” Now I do not take this as the rapture, because I believe it had taken place before, and is pointed out in the timeless rapture of the

man-child, for the church is one with Christ, and shall rule the nations as He. But I find a positive revelation, that three years and a half before the close (that is the last half-week of Daniel), Satan is cast down, the accuser of the brethren is no longer in heaven, the triumph of those accused is come—their trial passed; they had been in trial and conflict, and had overcome, and conflict is ended for dwellers in heaven. It begins, and with great wrath of Satan, for the inhabitants of earth. There had been persecution, there had been death. For one class it had now ceased, and for another it was just going to begin. And note, this is exactly the epoch spoken of by Daniel, which the Lord refers to as the tribulation such as never was since there was a nation; nor have I the smallest doubt that the woman represents the Jews. I am aware, as to the remnant of her seed, difficulty has been raised from the expression, “the testimony of Jesus Christ.” But the answer is in the book itself: “The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.” It will be a prophetic, not a church, testimony—a very different thing. Compare with this the end of Isa. 1, where the remnant are expressly declared to hear the voice of God’s servant (that is, of Christ as prophet).

I only notice these as accessory and explanatory, as my object is not controversial, but to bring out plainly the testimony of scripture on the Jewish remnant and on the church. Renewed opposition to these truths has come recently under my eye, but what is alleged was only proof to me how, when men are not taught of God on any subject, little difficulties hide and obliterate immense and fundamental truths, which a child, learning of God in simplicity, could not go astray upon. Indeed, wherever the connection between Christ and the church is not seen,

reasoning on these subjects can only bring into deeper darkness.

But, as I have said, my object is not controversy here; and I pursue not my impressions on this point farther, however clear and strong they may be. If the reader has laid hold of the truth, clearly proved from scripture, that there is a distinct Jewish remnant at the end, with Jewish hopes given of God, and a Jewish character, that the church has its own and peculiar association with Christ, as the body with its Head, called into union by the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven; if we have seen that we shall not abide down here till Christ appears, since it is positively declared—revealed—that we shall appear *with* Him when He appears, he will have got hold of clear land-marks which will guide him safely through details, in the discovery and order of which patience will surely be needed; but through the knowledge of these land-marks, the details will not take him out of the main road, will never enfeeble divine relationship, upon which the holiest and most precious affections are necessarily dependent, and in which indeed, they have their origin. It is, indeed, this last consideration which makes these subjects so vital and important to my mind. All right affections depend on divinely constituted relationships, and cannot exist out of them. If I know not the relationship of the church to Christ, and the position in which He has set us, along with Himself in reference to the Father, none of the affections suited to these positions can have any place in my soul; and my spiritual discernment and judgment as to everything will suffer in proportion. The recrudescence of opposition to the truth on these points shows that it is making progress. What I have seen written against it only seems

to me to mark deeper darkness and more ignorance of the great outlines of scripture than earlier opposition, though the general spirit and character be the same.

As regards passing through the tribulation (a question which every one knows is that which always arises on this matter) the scripture seems to me to make it very simple. How can I tell there will be a tribulation? I shall be answered, "Passages of scripture positively declare there will be such." I admit it: but there are no passages which reveal it, which do not also show that the church will not be in it. As far as I am aware they are these: Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19; to which we may add Rev. 3:10; 7:14. I am not aware of any other which can be applied to this subject. Now who are in this tribulation in the passages which speak of it in scripture? Rev. 7:14 could alone leave open the smallest question. Of this I will speak. Of all the rest, the positive evidence is, that the Jews are in it—the church *not*.

Jeremiah tells us, "It is the time of Jacob's trouble," the day which none is like. This shows to whom it belongs. Daniel shows us that that day of "trouble, such as there never was since there was a nation," was the day of indignation upon Israel. Daniel's people, as the whole prophecy declares, are there in question, and they will be delivered (that is, those written in the book). The Savior, who applies this passage in Matt. 24, leaves not the smallest doubt that it applies to those of Israel, and, even exclusively, to Palestine, or, still narrower as to locality, Judea and Jerusalem. They are to flee to the mountains. The abomination of desolation is in the holy place. Those in the countries are not to return. They are the days of vengeance to accomplish what is written. They are to desire their flight should not be on a

sabbath day. In a word, the tribulation is in Jerusalem, in Judea, and among Jews. Mark 1 need not comment on; it is evidently the same event. Thus Jeremiah, Daniel, the Lord Himself, in Matthew and Mark, citing and applying Daniel, declare that the tribulation regards the Jews. It is the time of Jacob's trouble.

But Rev. 3 speaks of a time of temptation; and here it is said that it shall come on all the world, to try them who dwell on the earth. This, therefore, is more general; it is not the great tribulation of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Matthew, which is exclusively Jewish. Here we have the church. But what is said of this time of temptation as regards the church who await Christ? They shall be kept out of it. That is, the passages which speak of the tribulation which none is like (and from which alone we know there is one) declare unanimously it is for the Jews and not for the church. The passage which, addressed to the church, refers to an hour of temptation, declares in a precious promise that, having kept the word of Christ's patience, she shall be kept out of that hour.

If I turn to Rev. 12, which in effect, speaks of the "three years and a half trial, I am told the conflict of the heavenly saints is over before it begins. The woe is for others (that is, for Jews). Christ was not born of the church; nor is it the church who has to say, "To us a Son is born." The positive witness is as clear as clear can be. The statement, that there is a tribulation, declares the Jews will be in it, the church kept out of it. But there is a passage obscure to most (Rev. 7). It is one of the signs of error and the enemy's work, that he takes an obscure passage to trouble the minds of saints and unsettle them by this means in great and plain truths. The passage may be employed so, and hence I notice it also.

That it is not the church which is spoken of here is clear from the promise to Philadelphia. All confirms this. It is a different class from the elders, who represent the heavenly kings and priests to God. One of the elders explains who they are. I would remark that the expression (ver. 15) “dwell among” them, is a wholly false translation. It is “shall tabernacle (or, dwell) over” them. The word is used for “dwelling with,” with other prepositions as *ἐν, μετα, ἐν μέσῳ*, but not with *ἐπὶ*, whereas this is the preposition used for overshadowing, as in Num. 9:18, 22, with the word *σκιάζω*, it is true; but *σκηνώω* is not so used in the LXX (unless once in some MSS, where it has nothing to do with this). There can hardly be a doubt of the allusion, I think, to the cloud which was a shelter over Israel.

Hence the only conferred blessing spoken of as the result is this protection, nourishment, refreshment, and the cessation of sorrow. They come in after the sealing of the elect of the twelve tribes of Israel, as a distinct class from all before a new and distinct class from the elders; one of whom has to give an account of who they are as such. Hence their position is as different as possible from those in chapter 5:10. They are talked about, and it is explained who they are; but, save as to owning their own salvation through God and the Lamb, they are silent. They are sheltered, refreshed, fed, blessed, but take no part with others; indeed, the elders do not praise here. They have the privilege of serving God continually in His temple;⁶ but they are no part of the scene above, who celebrate and unfold the acts of God: on the contrary, as we have seen,

6 Remark, that in the heavenly Jerusalem there is no temple; so that the service here spoken of does not apply to that blessed place.

those who are, are presented as a separate class, capable of explaining the enigma of this additional class of persons who are found standing before the throne and before the Lamb. There is no praising for others, no intercessional language. One has only to compare the passage above cited to see the difference—to see they are another class. To use this passage, certainly obscure in its application (in which those who have been in the great tribulation are definitely distinguished from the heavenly company of crowned and enthroned elders, their whole position being different), to destroy the force of one expressly declaring that those who have kept the word of Christ's patience will be kept out of that "hour of temptation," is certainly the opposite of a sound interpretation of scripture.

In result, what is the evidence of scripture, on this point? There are six passages which speak of tribulation, and by which we know there will be tribulation. Four are clear and positive in applying it to the Jews; one declares that the faithful church saints will be kept out of it; and the last, speaking of Gentiles, distinguishes them, in the most marked way, from those who represent the church, and saints in heaven, the crowned and enthroned elders. Thus direct scripture is as clear as clear can be. We have seen that, indirectly Rev. 2 confirms this view. What remains? General principles. Hence the attempt to bring the church into the tribulation;⁷ and this is the secret of the whole matter—the confounding the church of God with the

7 One tract I have seen goes so far (showing the utter destruction of all spiritual discernment, which is the result of these views) that it speaks of the loss to the church in not going through this tribulation (thus confounding suffering for Christ with the terrible chastening of God for sin and unbelief—the temptation which the disciples were taught to pray to be kept from.

Jews and with the world, their hopes, and the trials that come upon them.

(Concluded)

J. N. D.

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