Chapter 1

“I Will Come Again”

A party of men stood gazing into the sky. Overhead, the Syrian sun blazed in a vault of blue. In the distance a patch of cloud drifted lazily away. That solitary group on the eastern slopes of Olivet stood looking still, faces radiant with sudden understanding. Their Master and daily companion had just ascended into heaven before their very eyes, and still in their ears echoed the words spoken by strange visitors only a few minutes before, “This same Jesus … shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

No longer was there any room for doubt and perplexity. He had left this world; they had seen him go; and one day he would return to establish that kingdom on earth which they in their ignorance had imagined so close at hand. In the meantime there was a commission to execute; the building of a spiritual kingdom of God, of which they were to be his witnesses, not only in Jerusalem and in all Judea, but to the uttermost parts of the earth. That was the vista which opened before their mental vision as they climbed over the brow of the hill and found themselves back in the world of men.

From earliest times men and nations have dreamed of and looked for the “Coming One.” Nearly every race under heaven has amongst its most cherished traditions the story of one who came from above to do good, and departed with a promise that upon his return the utmost desire of every man would be fulfilled and the woes of humanity be no more. Behind such traditions there is a common origin, the story of how to man, fallen from perfection, a willful violator of Divine Law, and consequently condemned to reap the penalty of that violation—death—came a ray of hope in the promise of God that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). God is one day to undo the effects of that evil which man has brought upon himself, and as men multiplied and spread abroad over the face of the earth, that promise was carried with them and evolved into a thousand fantastic mythologies all having the same basis of fact. One day “He that shall come” shall descend from the heavens to the salvation of man.

Small wonder then that it is recorded of the day of Jesus Christ’s first advent that “[a]ll people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not” (Luke 3:15). Little cause for surprise that they asked him “Art thou that prophet?” (John 1:21; Deuteronomy 18:13,15,18, 19; Acts 3:22). Greater cause for wonder perhaps, that being thus in expectation, they failed to realize in the person of Jesus Christ the deliverer for whom they looked. Blinded by an incorrect conception of the manner, as well as the object of his appearing, they knew not the time of their visitation (Luke 19:44) and lost an opportunity which can never be regained.

Now in our own day history is repeated. For nearly two thousand years disciples of Christ have followed in the footsteps of those first eleven men, looking for and expecting the Lord from heaven. The general enlightenment of these past
centuries has produced a marked advance in the understanding of this age-old hope which enables disciples of the present day to view in clearer perspective the teaching of Christ and the apostles regarding his promised return. The materialism of orthodox theology through the centuries had reflected itself in current expectation regarding the second advent, and not until the Bible began to be widely studied and discussed two hundred years ago did the doctrine of his coming begin to take great strides forward out of the gross literalism with which its ablest exponents had invested it.

Now we live in a time when the literal fires of hell, the golden floors and pearly gates of heaven, the falling mountains and the strident trumpets of the Day of Judgment, are all recognized to be material symbols of spiritual truths. In many quarters among Christian people the call of the Church and God’s provision for the world which is outside the Church are beginning to be seen as two phases of a beneficent plan intended to bring “whosoever will” into full harmony with righteousness. Election and Free Grace are no longer considered irreconcilable doctrines involving the spilling of much theological ink. Death, the logical and inevitable wages of sin, rather than a method of revenge adopted by an offended deity, is seen to be the law of God’s creation; and everlasting life, on spiritual or human plane of being, to be the glorious prospect held out to those who willingly align themselves with the principles of righteousness.

Therefore it should be considered a reasonable proposition that, recognizing this marked advance in the spiritual perception of Scriptural teaching, the sublime theme upon which preachers and students alike have dwelt for centuries should share in such progressive development. The material trappings surrounding every man’s conception of that day when the “Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout” can be expected to wax old and vanish away when progress in Christian thought renders it possible for a clearer and more lucid vision to be received and understood by the “Watchers.”

It is, then, with a sober recognition of the value of past expositions and an intelligent expectation of progressive revelation in the understanding of this theme that the subject is approached. To reject the present plane of belief and go back to the ideas held centuries ago is out of the question. To imagine that there is nothing further to be known regarding the subject is nonsense. Increasing knowledge of the physical universe and a deeper understanding of the nature of that spiritual world which is beyond the reach of human sense will prepare the mind for a more definite revelation than has ever been possible before. In this day of trouble and perplexity it is possible to attain to a clearer knowledge of the transcendent truth implied by Jesus in that most startling of all his statements,

“If I go away
I WILL COME AGAIN.”

Chapter 2
“The Glory of the Celestial”

“There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another” (1 Corinthians 15:40).

An outstanding achievement of Christian thought during the last few hundred years is a deeper understanding of the spiritual world and the difference between human and spirit nature. In past ages, when men were groping their way to an
understanding of the higher things of life, it was to be expected that even the
deepest of thinkers could only visualize that spiritual world as a replica, although
a less tangible replica, of this material one; its inhabitants as glorified human
beings with more or less substantial bodies. Even today the same view is held by
many. Since Scriptural teaching concerning the second advent is so closely knit
with a true appreciation of the nature of that spiritual realm which has as its
centre the throne of God himself, it becomes necessary to have a clear
understanding of the distinction between human and spiritual beings.

In the text quoted above, and throughout a large part of the fifteenth chapter of
first Corinthians, Paul draws a clear distinction between the natural and the
spiritual (using the term “natural” in its primary sense of material, tangible to
the five senses) and makes it plain that the spiritual nature is of a different order
not discernible by those five senses. Although a real and continuing state of
existence, its inhabitants acknowledging their Creator and fulfilling their
ordained place in creation, it is a world not perceived or visualized by the senses
of men. The analogies of human experience are inadequate to describe the nature
or the glory of that order which is so far above the human. Hence Paul, who was
“conveyed away to the third heaven,” and heard “indescribable things … which
it is not possible for a man to relate” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Emphatic Diaglott)
gaining just one glimpse of the glories of that world, found human words and
earthly analogies insufficient to convey to other men the impression produced
upon his own mind and memory. Likewise, upon the occasion when Christ
appeared to him on the road to Damascus (1 Corinthians 15:8), he received an
impression of the resurrected Christ which could not be detected by the natural
eyesight, and under any other circumstances could not have been appreciated by
Paul until he in his turn had been born into the spiritual world, in the First
Resurrection (Revelation 20:6). Hence his exclamation “He was seen of me also,
AS OF ONE BORN OUT OF DUE TIME.”

Now it is “this same Jesus,” the resurrected Lord, in all the glory and with all the
attributes of his spiritual nature, who returns to this earth at the time appointed.
If the “Watchers” are not to be taken unawares at the time of his coming—and
the Scriptures assure us of this—it is essential that there be a clear appreciation
of the principles which will govern the manner of his return. The example of two
thousand years ago, when he came to his own, and his own received him not,
because they KNEW NOT the time of their visitation, stands ever before us—a
warning.

That our Lord Jesus Christ, before the days of his flesh, was the most honored
member of the spiritual world—the Logos, or right hand of the Father himself—
is clearly understood. That he laid aside the glory which he had with the Father
before this material order of things existed (John 17:5) and became MAN, “for
the suffering of death” (Hebrews 2:9) is an integral feature of the Christian faith.
That upon the third day in that tomb in Joseph of Arimathea’s garden, he rose
again “[in] the power of an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16) to the full glory of
spiritual being (Ephesians 1:20) having no part nor lot further in the flesh which
he had given for the life of the world (John 6:51) is the basis upon which the
doctrine of the “Ransom for All” (1 Timothy 2:5,6) is built. It is clear, therefore,
that our Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth, not as a man as in the “days of his
flesh” but as a spiritual being. The question is then immediately suggested “What
is a spirit?”

Paul’s hypothetical disputant comes to mind at once. “How are the dead raised
up? and with what body do they come?” (1 Corinthians 15:35). A glance back
along the centuries will suffice to show how inextricably mixed are man’s ideas
concerning bodies of flesh and spiritual bodies. It is only to be expected that in the early days of mankind when the worship of “gods many and lords many,” of sticks and stones and idols of gold and silver was the accepted thing, man’s conception of a spiritual being was almost completely anthropomorphic (pictured in the form of human beings and material things). The dead were buried with food and drink and implements beside them, for their use in the other world. The Sumerians in the days of Abraham sent numbers of slaves to their doom upon the death of the reigning monarch to serve him in the after life. The Egyptians embalmed their dead so that the body was available for use again on the day of resurrection. Even Moses, conversing with God upon the mount, pleaded that he might for one moment gaze upon the face of the Almighty.

This primitive inability to visualize the world of the spirit without such material appendages finds its counterpart today in the belief that the “rapture of the saints” will comprise a glorifying of the human body with the eternal retention of what is in all its essentials, the present physical frame. Similarly the returning Lord is looked for in purely material guise, the body laid in the tomb outside Jerusalem enduring to all eternity as the “Lord from heaven,” who is now and for all time the head over all things both in heaven and on earth.

Our Lord’s own words to Nicodemus convey a depth of meaning to the observant which, rightly received, banish forever all such crudities of thought: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Those who are accounted worthy to attain “that world, and that resurrection from the dead” are like the wind, which is invisible, powerful, but comprehended by the effects of its presence; and this understanding receives startling confirmation when the lesson of our Lord’s conversations with his disciples after his resurrection is considered.

His recorded “appearances” number about eleven, but in only one instance, that of the manifestation to Thomas, did he appear in his pre-Crucifixion likeness. Mary, at the tomb, saw a gardener. The disciples, on the way to Emmaus, saw a stranger. On the shore of the sea of Galilee they failed to recognize the unknown friend until the miraculous draught of fishes was taken.

This one who appeared and disappeared at will, assumed various forms and features, found locked and bolted doors no hindrance to his passing, was very evidently not the “MAN Christ Jesus” they had known.

What then is more reasonable to expect than that he who, in the days of his flesh and by Divine power, manipulated the constituents of matter to produce wine where formerly there had been water, or so controlled the forces of nature that the storm on the lake ceased at his word, should not, after being “clothed upon” with his spiritual body, call on the same power to create upon each occasion a form of human lineaments which could be the medium of his communication with those whose senses were only receptive to material things. The one satisfactory explanation, not only of Christ’s appearances after his resurrection, but of all the recorded appearances of celestial visitants throughout Old Testament history, is that the gap between spiritual communication and human reception was bridged by this quasi-material expedient; a necessity because it is not possible for spiritual beings to be perceived or comprehended by human senses.

After Pentecost there came a change. No longer do messengers from above appear to men in human garb as the three men sought Abraham. The coming of
that holy spirit which at Pentecost introduced a new influence bearing the Divine Revelation to men upon earth rendered the older methods of communication unnecessary and superfluous.

To those who have come “into Christ” by complete self-surrender and consecration to him, the power of the holy Spirit conveys an understanding of spiritual truth and, through that, an appreciation of the spiritual world which can be given in no other way. No longer can such “appearances” convey real assurance in a day when modern science and magic is well able to reproduce similar phenomena. The deeper knowledge that comes from constant spiritual communion with God by prayer and Divine guidance overshadows by far those material aids to faith which were given to the disciples in the time of their need. The physical appearing of Christ as a human being—as even the noblest and most imposing of human beings—would surely constitute a very poor anti-climax to the stirring events which in all the world around us have been heralds of his coming.

Logically, then, the whole conception of Christ’s second advent is changed. The sign of his presence is no longer a visible appearance in the skies with attendant angels and the sound of trumpets. The watchfulness inculcated upon those disciples who would be witnesses of his return is not a physical watchfulness which keeps the eye upon the clouds and the ear strained to catch the voice heard from heaven. The whole technique of “watching” is revolutionized. The Christian will realize the fact of His presence by a spiritual insight and understanding of the Scriptural evidences relating to the time and circumstances of his coming. He will “see” him through the obvious fulfillment of the Scriptures in relation to contemporary events and the motion of forces which result in the destruction of this present order of things and the establishment of God’s kingdom in its place.

This realization will imply a diligent study of Bible prophecy in the light of current events. It implies a clear understanding of the purpose as well as the nature of his coming before any attempt to recognize the time can be made. It implies a deep spiritual watchfulness if the full meaning of our Master’s own words “Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour” is to be appreciated. But once there is a firm grasp of this essential truth that Christ at his second advent must of necessity be invisible and uncomprehended by mortal eyes, the way is paved for full acceptance of the New Testament teaching that Christ’s Advent is to cover that whole period of time which in the Divine Plan has been set apart for the recovery of mankind from sin and death. He comes, not to pass sentence upon a multitude of trembling sinners and carry a few elect ones away to heavenly glory, but to wind up the very unsatisfactory state of affairs now existing in what Paul calls “this present evil world”; to establish upon its ruins a new and better order of things “wherein dwelleth righteousness” and to so deal with all mankind, the risen dead as well as the contemporary living, by wise and merciful administration, that all men may come to know God as they have never known him before.

It is to this unostentatious aspect of Christ’s return that the angels made reference when they said: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Away from the haunts of men, invisible to the busy life of the city, upon the eastern slopes of Bethany, the Son of Man took his leave of earth. None perceived his going, save the faithful few who watched. Similarly none perceive his return save the few Christian disciples whose spiritual senses are continually exercised.
to discern the evidence of his presence. He went away a glorious spiritual being, for his humanity had been given at Calvary for the life of the world. The physical form which the disciples’ eyes followed until a cloud received it out of their sight was but a materialized body which manifested “the Lord—that Spirit” to men whose natural eyes were unable to perceive the presence of a heavenly being. When he “appeared in the presence of God for us” his manhood was left behind for ever and he was in very truth glorified with the Father with that glory which he had with him before the world was (John 17:5). Likewise he who returns is the Lord from heaven, a spiritual being, a man no longer.

It was afterwards that the masses knew of his resurrection and ascension, proclaimed in the streets and squares of the city by men upon whom rested the power of the holy spirit. So will it be again. It is after the first consciousness of his Second presence has dawned upon those who are watching, that the realization of this stupendous event and all that it implies will come to mankind at large.

That material form ascended before the disciples’ eyes visibly for a few hundred feet at most, and it was when it disappeared into the cloud and the disciples could see no more, that Jesus Christ, who for thirty-three years had dwelt among men in the flesh, partaking in every respect of the nature of the material world, passed out of this realm of time and space into that eternity which knows not either, “from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”

Chapter 3
“Dawn”

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:27).

Few texts have been more discussed than this when the second advent is being considered, and there are few which are more generally misunderstood. A brilliant comparison drawn by our Lord has been in large measure miscomprehended by reason of an all too common failing, that of taking an isolated text of Scripture and endeavoring to interpret it without any reference to its immediate context. As soon as the connection of these words with those uttered by Jesus in the same breath is appreciated, the force and meaning of this passage becomes luminous.

This twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is historic. It records the detailed reply given by Jesus to his disciples in response to their earnest question as to when the kingdom should come and by what sign they would discern the fact of his return to earth and the imminent end of the age. To explain such all-important matters, closely interwoven as they were with a spiritual world of which those disciples knew nothing, was no easy task, and it became necessary for our Lord to select carefully chosen analogies to make his meaning plain.

Passing over the long catalogue of intervening events, “wars and rumors of wars,” “the abomination of desolation,” “this gospel, preached for a witness” and so on, the twenty-sixth verse arrests the inquirer with a rather abrupt transition of thought: “Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. FOR AS the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; SO shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Two possible manifestations of his coming are rejected. The true manner of that
event is pictured in the form of a vivid metaphor. The symbol of the desert is a false one. The symbol of the secret chambers is also false. That of the lightning is a true illustration; here is the sign for which the disciples asked.

A careful examination of this passage, then, should reveal the foundation upon which every Christian’s expectation should be based. What spiritual truth lies behind the symbols of the desert, the secret chamber, and the lightning?

“Behold, he is in the desert.” Those words must have fallen with a familial ring upon the disciples’ ears. Not so many years previously some of them had themselves been followers of John the Baptist, a prophet preaching in the desert; of whom it was said “Then went out to him [in the wilderness] Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan” (Matthew 3:3-5). Jesus himself referred to John in asking his listeners, “What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? … A prophet? Yea … and much more than a prophet” (Luke 7:24-26). John was truly a prophet of the desert. Not for him the busy life of the city, where his lone figure might easily be lost in the heedless crowds. Not for him a ministry in some quiet village, where a few immediate neighbors alone would listen to his impassioned words. John spent his life in a desert place and yet amidst a blaze of publicity enhanced all the more by the fact that men streamed from all quarters to hear and see this singular and never-to-be-forgotten figure.

So was it with the seers of Israel. Elijah, who gripped the nation’s imagination when he destroyed the priests of Baal; Moses, than whom there arose not a greater in Israel (Deuteronomy 34:10); others who, rising early and calling betimes, voices crying in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3) becoming influential figures in the national life, were prophets of the desert—known of all men, seen of all men, their very presence so obvious a fact that whether the people would hear or whether they would forbear, they could never blind themselves to the truth that a prophet stood before them.

“Behold, he is in the secret chambers.” A weak translation is responsible for hiding, at first, the allusion made here. The Greek word ταμιεῖον rendered “secret chambers” describes an inner room or storehouse which in every Eastern dwelling held the family treasures, stores and provisions. It became therefore a synonym for a private place, the place exclusive and secret to the family of the house, into which strangers could not intrude. The same word is used for “storehouse” and “closet” in the following Scriptures:

“When thou prayest, enter into thy CLOSET” (Matthew 6:6).

“That which ye have spoken … in CLOSETS shall be proclaimed upon the house tops” (Luke 12:3).

“Consider the ravens … which neither have STOREHOUSE nor barn” (Luke 12:24).

Upon comparing this statement with the preceding one, our Lord’s meaning is clear. In the understanding that his coming was not to be a publicly advertised and appreciated spectacle (“in the desert”) the disciples were not to react to the opposite extreme and look for nothing more than a private revelation to a favored few in the secrecy of the family circle. For many centuries had Israel held to their claim of being the one nation selected and set apart for God’s blessings, and not even the Samaritans were admitted into the fellowship of the chosen people. (John 4:9). They claimed Messiah was for the Jew, and the Jew alone, and all without were treated as outsiders. The tremendous struggle which took place in the minds of apostles as well as other believers before they could accept the transcendent truth that “God is no respecter of persons: but in every
nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34,35) is well known to all readers of the New Testament.

Many Christians have progressed very little along this line. Even today there lingers in many quarters the idea that Jesus will appear for his own, but for nobody else. The conception of his coming, not only to take his Church to himself, but also—in due time after that great event—to reveal himself to all the world for their blessing and salvation, has not taken hold of many minds. The narrow-minded bigotry which has so well expressed itself in the old doggerel

“God bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
Us four and no more”

lingers still and blinds the minds of some to a full conception of the immortal truth that is enshrined in the succeeding verse.

His coming is not in the open place of public view and universal knowledge, neither is it in the inner sanctuary of a chosen family where no one outside will ever know anything about it. It is to be discerned in a manner which combines the “coming as a thief” to his own with the fashion in which “every eye shall see him” when the time of his full manifestation shall have come; for “As the lightning [Greek: astrape] emerges from the east, and shines to the west; so will be the presence of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:27, Emphatic Diaglott).

The most soul-stirring conception of his second advent which Christ could possibly have given his disciples is that which is pictured in this metaphor of the radiance of dawn emerging from the east and flooding the world with light. Dawn in Israel is not the same thing as dawn in European countries, and of course our Lord’s allusion was based upon the reality with which his disciples were familiar. The ability to visualize an Eastern dawn is necessary if the full force of these words is to be appreciated.

The sun comes up suddenly, and a few minutes suffices to transform the velvety blackness of tropical night into the full brilliance of a Syrian day. It is for this reason that very few inhabitants of the land actually witness the sun’s rising, for their sleep is broken only by its dazzling beams as they encircle the earth. There is no long and gradual dawn as in more temperate countries. The first sign of approaching day is a grayness in the eastern sky, a grayness for which, in Jerusalem at least, both city watchmen and the priests in the temple were duly waiting and watching—the watchmen, because it indicated the end of their period of service; and the priests, because as soon as light had flooded the land it was their duty to offer the morning sacrifice. Hence the constant Scriptural association of the coming of day with the “watchers,” and the meaning of that cryptic message, “Watchman, what of the night … The morning cometh, BUT IT IS YET DARK” (Isaiah 21:11,12, French version). Within a few minutes the grayness is streaked with shafts of pink, and then, so rapidly as to almost bewilder the unaccustomed observer, a glorious effulgence of golden light spreads fan-wise from the cast and moves visibly across the sky, turning the clouds in its path to pink and white and bathing the entire land in a wonderful rosy glow. It was at this time that the watching priest, stationed in a pinnacle in the temple, cried out in a loud voice that the light was come and had overspread the land, and his companions below immediately commenced the time-honored ritual of the morning sacrifice. Within a few minutes the full blaze of day is pouring down upon a people quickly arising from sleep and betaking themselves to their accustomed tasks.

It is this emergence of light from the east, followed quickly by the sun itself, to
which reference is made in Malachi 4:2 where the promise is that the “Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings”—the great fan of glory spreading over the sky as the sun rises being not inaptnly likened to the pinions of some great celestial creature. Our Lord’s own allusion to the astrape emerging from the east and sweeping the sky to the west is undoubtedly a reference to that same phenomenon which his disciples, early risers as they must always have been and accustomed to remaining awake all night, were thoroughly accustomed to witness.

In this connection it needs to be realized that the Greek astrape, rendered “lightning” in this verse, and its derivatives, refer to any form of brilliant light or radiance. Thus we have:

“Two men stood by them in shining garments” (Luke 24:4).

“As when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light” (Luke 11:36).

“His raiment was white and glistening” (Luke 9:29).

“His countenance was like lightning” (Matthew 28:3).


“There shined round about him a light from heaven” (Acts 9:3).

“There shone from heaven a great light round about me” (Acts 22:6).

Other occurrences in which the word is associated with thunder and can properly be applied to the vivid glare of lightning are found in Revelation 4:5; 8:5; 11:19 and 16:18.

It is from the parallel account in Luke’s gospel that the full implication of this as a time when the fact of Christ’s presence is to dawn upon the minds of men is found: “For AS the lightning [astrape], that lighteneth [illuminates] out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; SO shall also the Son of man be IN HIS DAY” (Luke 17:24).

Here then is a plain intimation that this metaphor predicates a period of time—the day of the Son of Man—likened to a natural day, insofar as the analogy of dawn, meridian, and sunset are concerned. It becomes easy to appreciate why the translators of the Revised Version, as well as such students as Robert Young, Joseph Bryant Rotherham, Dr. Wilson in the Emphatic Diaglott, and more recently the translators of the Concordant Version, all concur in rendering the Greek word parousia, which is translated “coming” in the Authorized Version, by the English word “presence.” It is the use of the word “coming” which has beclouded thought on the subject. While men held the conception of a catastrophic arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ, the signal for a twenty-four hour day of judgment and the dissolution of all things terrestrial, there could be no other meaning than the traditional one applied to the word parousia. When the real object of our Lord’s return is seen, and the necessity for a comparatively lengthy period of time for the accomplishment of the things associated with his return appreciated, the true meaning can be applied to the word with a full understanding of its significance. {FOOTNOTE: For the convenience of the student, a list of every verse in the New Testament where parousia appears is given here, and in nearly every case it will be observed instantly that “presence” is the obvious implication: Matthew 24:3,27,37,39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 16:17; 2 Corinthians 7:6,7; 10:10; Philippians 1:26; 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1,8,9; James 5:7,8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4,12; 1 John 2:28.} In this connection the following abbreviated extract from the appendix to J. B. Rotherham’s translation of the New Testament will be read with interest:
“In this edition the word *parousia* is uniformly rendered ‘presence.’ … The difficulty expressed in the notes to the second edition of this N.T. in the way of so yielding to this weight of evidence as to render *parousia* always by ‘presence,’ lay in the seeming incongruity of regarding ‘presence’ as an event which would happen at a particular time and which would fall into rank as one of a series of events. … The translator still feels the force of this objection, but is withdrawn from taking his stand upon it any longer by the reflection that, after all, the difficulty may be imaginary. The *parousia* … may, in fine, be both a PERIOD, more or less extended, during which certain things shall happen,—and an EVENT, coming on and passing away as one of a series of divine interpositions. Christ is raised as a firstfruit—that is one event; He returns and vouchsafes his ‘presence,’ during which he raises his own—that is another event, however large and prolonged; and finally comes another cluster of events constituting ‘the end.’ Hence, after all, ‘presence’ may be the most widely and permanently satisfying translation of the looked-for *parousia* of the Son of Man.”

The commencement of his presence, then, the earliest time at which it can be said that the long-promised second advent has become an accomplished fact, is to be discerned by the dawning of a spiritual illumination in the minds of the “Watchers”—the early risers—an appreciation, not only of the object and manner of the second advent, but also of the outward signs, in the affairs both of the Church and the world, which betoken that the “DAY of the Son of Man” has actually begun.

As if to stress this truth, Jesus ended this remarkable statement with a fourth metaphor, equally arresting in its strangeness: “For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together” (Matthew 24:28).

Travelers in Israel have often remarked on the keenness of sight which characterizes the several species of eagle and vulture which formerly abounded, and are still to be found in the country. Vivid descriptions have been written of occasions when a beast of burden has fallen by the wayside, and although a second previously the sky has been clear in every direction, the animal has hardly become still when far in the heavens appears a black speck—then another, and another—birds of prey traveling with incredible speed to the victim their marvelous power of vision has revealed to them. Thus in drawing attention to that predominant characteristic of the eagle which stamped it out above all other denizens of the air, our Lord inculcated a lesson which must be indelibly impressed upon the mind if Christ’s presence in its early stages is to be discerned.

“WATCH therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matthew 24:42).

As the eagles can see, as it were by supernatural sight, their prey afar off and come, first in ones and twos, and then in greater numbers to the center of attraction, so must the disciples of Christ, watching for his coming, expect to see the evidences with a sight which is superior to the natural, and come quickly in concert with others who also have seen. Hence the constant exhortation to watchfulness—not a continual gazing into the physical heavens and an anxious scanning of every cloud that drifts across the sky, lest it be the one which shall cleave asunder to reveal the returning Lord with his attendant angels. Nothing so material as that. The call is to spiritual watchfulness, that a clear understanding of the manner of Christ’s manifestation may pave the way to a full and complete acceptance of the reality of his presence when that fact is revealed.

That many are to be oblivious to his presence is clearly indicated in the likening
of the day of the Son of Man to the day of Noah and the day of Lot. In each case the similarity lay in the ignorance of mankind at large to the fact that there stood one among them whom they knew not.

“For, just as the days of Noah, SO will be the presence of the Son of Man; for as they were in those days that were before the flood, feeding and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the ark; and they observed not, until the flood came and took away all together, SO will be the presence of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:37-39, Rotherham).

With each of these comparisons there is repeated the exhortation to watch. The allusion is taken from the function of watchmen upon the city walls, alert to report every new and unusual occurrence before the city dwellers could possibly have become aware of such. The watchmen first saw the dawn, they hailed the approach of deliverers when the city was besieged, they became in every respect the symbol of the nation’s watching and waiting on the things of God and communion with heaven. Hence we have in the glowing words of Isaiah:

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night” (Isaiah 62:6).

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him [the watchman] that … sayeth unto Zion, Thy God reigneth” (Isaiah 52:7).

“Thy watchmen … shall see, eye to eye, the L ORD returning to Zion” (Isaiah 52:8, Margolis).

The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested, then, as the dawn; a gradual realization of the fact of his presence discerned at first only by those who are able to appreciate fully the outward evidences which witness to this truth. That appreciation grows stronger until a time comes when, as in a moment, the realization of his presence penetrates to a sleeping world and awakens all men to “look upon [him] whom they have pierced,” and to “mourn for him” (Zechariah 12:10) as the sunlight of his presence floods the world. But that belongs to the time of meridian day, and not to early dawn.

As the light sweeps over the world and men realize and accept the fact that a new power has taken control of earth’s affairs, the “Sun of righteousness” will bring life and healing to the nations. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet,” “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26). It is then that Christ the king presents the restored and perfected human race, in possession of a reconstructed and beautified earth, to the Eternal Father, that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

The Messianic reign runs its allotted course and comes to its close like the sun which, setting in a blaze of glory over the Western sea, is so startlingly reminiscent of those prophetic words of old: “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). The key to this whole sublime picture lies in the word “presence.” The coming of the Lord, no longer a momentary nor even a twenty-four hour event, but a period during which all the varied phases of his second advent find their place and reach their consummation, will conclude with a very real fulfillment of the words spoken to Zechariah: “At evening time it shall be light” (Zechariah 14:7).

The metaphor is a true one. The radiance which emerges from the east is to shine even unto the west before it has fitly completed its picture of the day of Christ, and in that glorious sunset of the end of Christ’s parousia restored humanity will enter upon an eternity of “ages of glory” spent in exploring to the farthest limit.
Chapter 4  
“The Voice of the Archangel”

“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” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

In symbolic language the writers of the New Testament speak of three distinct aspects of the Second Coming. These aspects each view a different phase of the work which our Lord is to accomplish at his Advent, and each employs a different set of symbols to describe the characteristics of that work. Each of these phases is worked out upon this earth as the stage, not necessarily simultaneously, but together constituting the characteristic events of the day of his presence.

A brief survey of the position will show that Christ returns, first, to reveal himself to his own; to resurrect the “dead in Christ” who have slept in death until this time and to “change” the living ones from earthly to heavenly conditions. With this must be associated those Scriptural references to a “harvest” of the age in which the “children of the kingdom” are gathered into the garner (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:52; Matthew 13:37-43).

The second aspect is that which pictures Christ as coming in judgment to wind up the affairs of this age and establish his own kingdom upon the ruins of Gentile dominion. To this must be joined the vivid story of the fall of great Babylon, the call to God’s people to “come out of her” and the reaping of the vine of the earth and treading of the winepress (Revelation 14:18-20; 18:1-5; Joel 3:9-17).

The third is of brighter hue and speaks of Christ’s manifestation to all mankind for blessing—a time when there is to be universal mourning for past blindness, but a wholesale repentance and turning to the Savior of mankind. This can have its fulfillment only at a time when the light of Christ’s presence has begun to reach all men and every eye is turned toward him.

The first subject to examine, therefore, is obviously that which most closely concerns the Church of Christ. In harmony with this the apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonian Christians on this subject, left on record for all time a vivid description of the manner in which the Lord at his return would be manifested to “them that look for him” (Hebrews 9:28).

That the passage in Thessalonians is a metaphor admits of no doubt. To expect our glorious Lord to announce his arrival by a literal shout as he cleaves the atmosphere in his descent borders upon absurdity. It remains, therefore, to probe Paul’s words and understand the meaning of the allusions he makes.

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” This clearly speaks of the actual point of time at which our Lord’s presence becomes an accomplished fact. It is to be signaled by a “shout.” The Greek word is an unusual one, keleusma, used nowhere else in the New Testament and evidently deliberately selected by Paul to convey a meaning which could not be conveyed in any other way. In New Testament days sea going vessels (galleys) were propelled by rowers, sometimes as many as three or four hundred men being thus employed in a single ship; and to ensure that these men pulled in unison, an overseer known as the “Keleustes” stood in a commanding position on the ship and gave at regular intervals, in unison with the rowing, a cry which was called
the “keleusma.” This call urged the men to sustained effort, directed their work, and so became a shout of combined authority, direction and encouragement.

This is in the mind of Paul. He describes the descent of Christ to direct and supervise a work, to take authority over that work, and to encourage to great effort. To use a more modern illustration, He takes up his position as the captain on the bridge, and proceeds to direct the first great work of his presence.

What that work involves may be discerned from an examination of related Scripture. Revelation 14:14-16 speaks of one like unto the Son of Man coming to earth upon a white cloud, crowned with a golden crown and wielding a sharp sickle. A cry is made that the harvest of the earth is ripe and ready to be reaped. Scriptural analogy points to the parable of the wheat field in Matthew 13:24-30. The explanation of that parable given by Jesus in verses 37-43 of the same chapter states that the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom, and the tares are the children of the Evil One. Both are to grow together until the harvest. When the harvest is come, the Chief Reaper will say to his servants “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” There is to be no attempt at separation until the Lord of the harvest is present, with his sickle, and gives the word. The harvest is definitely stated in the same parable to be the “end of the age”—the same period for which the disciples in Matthew chapter twenty-four desired to know the signs.

The harvest, then, takes its place as one of the events comprising the end of the age, and requiring a definite span of time for its accomplishment. It is clear also that the harvest commences with the presence of the Chief Reaper, He, as it were, leading by cutting the first ripe wheat. Much in this reminds one of the solitary phrase in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “And the dead in Christ shall rise first.” The in-gathering of the children of the kingdom pictured by ripened wheat will commence with those who have already “rested from their labors.”

This keleusma will obviously not be a literal shout heard by the literal ears. It is spiritually discerned, and its evidence will be the recognition of a work proceeding in the Christian world which corresponds to the parable of the harvest of wheat and tares, supported by such evidence of the declining power of the “kingdoms of this world” as to justify the assumption that the end of the age is at hand. It will be of such a nature as to afford great encouragement to the “Watchers” and an incentive to great activity on behalf of the “gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 24:14). It must definitely imply direction and oversight of a work in Christendom which has not been done previously, and it must be closely associated with all that the Scriptures reveal concerning the condition of the Church of Christ upon earth—to whom alone the “shout” can be audible—in the closing years of their experience.

The “shout,” therefore, should be understood as indicating that the time of our Lord’s return is marked by a recognition that the harvest of the age is commencing and that the time of separation between wheat and tares is at hand. As a positive “sign” to the Watchers who are living during that period this “shout” is one of conviction as well as encouragement, and constitutes one very definite outward evidence of the parousia.

Because the detailed interpretation of this harvest period involves a consideration of present-day events, the implications arising from the foregoing can be more properly presented in Chapter 8, where evidence is adduced to show that the keleusma has already been heard and acted upon by many disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.
The second allusion describing this eventful time is Paul’s reference to “the voice of the archangel.”

Judaistic tradition knew seven “archangels”: Oriel, Raphael, Raquel, Michael, Saraqael, Gabriel, and Remiel. They were believed to be the special commissioners of God to watch over his creation and each was allotted a specific duty. The archangel to whom was entrusted the protection and defense of the people of Israel was Michael, and here the Scripture becomes luminous when the various references to Michael, the only archangel mentioned in the Bible as such, are remembered. In the book of Daniel, Michael is the spiritual prince of Israel. Jude (v. 9) mentions an occasion upon which he contended with the devil over the body of Moses. To Paul’s readers, then, the expression in Thessalonians could bear one meaning only—the voice of the archangel indicated that the prince of Israel, the protector of God’s people, the One who should “stand up” at the Time of the End (Daniel 12:1) was in the act of arriving. The traditional conception of Michael the archangel, prince of Israel, finds its reality in Christ, the great protector who comes to save his own.

Since the voice of the archangel cannot be a literal voice sounding upon the air and perceived by the natural ears, it follows that, like the “shout,” the discernment of this voice is a spiritual matter. Those who by an understanding of the “signs of the times” perceive that the call has gone forth to “come out of her, my people” (Revelation 18:2,4) and to engage in the work of this Gospel age harvest, are the ones who have heard the voice of the archangel.

To this time must belong the primary fulfillment of Revelation 18:1. A mighty angel comes down from heaven and the earth is lightened with his glory. The message goes forth “Babylon is fallen” and although the examination of this passage must be left to a succeeding chapter it can be noted in passing that God’s people—the true church of Christ—are bidden to separate themselves from Babylon before the full force of Divine retribution comes upon the ill-fated city. It is not difficult to see in this a parallel to the separation of wheat and tares in the parable, and to discern, therefore, that the call to “come out of her” is still another feature of the commencement of Christ’s presence. A consideration of supreme importance is that the call does not imply so much a physical separation from earthly institutions as a separation from that spirit and practice of Antichrist, which has revealed itself in every man-made system throughout the age—a gathering together in “spirit and in truth” of those who are sincere disciples of Christ.

The voice of the archangel, then, is the summons to become separate from every phase of those systems which the returning Lord is about to destroy; to realize that the “standing up of Michael” involves judgment and destruction upon all that is in opposition to the incoming kingdom; and to grasp the transcendent truth that a deliverance mightier by far than anything which the world has ever before known is about to come, first to the Church, those who “look for him,” and then to the world, to all men in every place who, now sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death (Psalm 107:10) are to have a great light shine upon them.

The third signal given by Paul in his metaphor is the “trump of God.” This idea of a mighty trumpet heralding the wonderful events which close this age and usher in the future day of blessing is very prominent in the New Testament. To a people such as the Jews, familiarized in their ancient history with the use of the trumpet to announce a going-forth to war, and to herald the feast days, and the year of Jubilee when the land had rest and all men were restored to their inheritance, this must have been a very apt symbol. The last trumpet, the one
which announces and declares Christ the coming king, which informs all men of the greater Jubilee, “Times of Restitution … spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21), and sounds a signal for the Battle of the great day of God Almighty (Revelation 16:14) is indeed a momentous one. Like the other symbols, it is not a literal trumpet blast such as Israel heard at Sinai (Hebrews 12:19) but its spiritual counterpart; a clear and definite proclamation making known throughout the world that the Time of the End has come, that the Lord is descending from heaven to set up his kingdom, and that the good tidings for all people are about to be declared in power. The fulfillment of this symbol must certainly be looked for in such a world-wide proclamation, commencing with the realization and declaration that the harvest of the age has commenced and continuing with increasing enlightenment and diligence in testifying to the kingdom on the part of those who have themselves heard this trumpet. The revelation of Truth concerning Christ’s mission and the Divine Plan, once commenced in this fashion, will continue and extend until in the full glory of the Millennial kingdom it shall become true that “all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Jeremiah 31:34). Hence the trump of God commences to sound at the time of the Lord’s descent from heaven, and continues so to sound until all men have heard its message. During the whole period of the parousia its notes will penetrate to the minds of men with “good tidings of good” (Isaiah 52:7,8).

Now it should be noted that with the sounding of this trumpet certain events are associated. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:52 declares that: “The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” And again in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven 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.”

Taken together, these Scriptures indicate that while the “last trump” is sounding, there will be a resurrection of the dead in Christ and a change from earthly to spiritual conditions for those who, being Christ’s, are still “alive and remain” at the time of his presence.

The close association of these words with the act of descending from heaven justifies the general view that the dead in Christ, or, as they are sometimes termed, the “sleeping saints,” are resurrected, as the first work carried out by our returned Lord. This resurrection is not to human form and environment, but to spiritual nature and into the spiritual world; a clothing upon with “our house which is from heaven” (2 Corinthians 5:2). That those thus raised are brought into personal association with the Lord Christ is evident; it is thus that Paul’s own wish “for the returning, and being with Christ” (Philippians 1:23, Emphatic Diaglott) becomes a reality. There is no assumption that those thus raised commence their reign with Christ until Christ himself has established his kingdom and begun to reign; it being already admitted that Christ returns to earth for the purpose of “taking his great power” (Revelation 11:17) that he may “in due time” commence his reign. The beginning of the presence is definitely a period during which earth’s previous rulers are being removed from their positions and the announcement of the new kingdom promulgated. It is sufficient, therefore, at the moment to appreciate that the “risen saints” will from the time of their resurrection “be with Christ.”

Were the second advent but the work of a moment, this primary raising of the sleeping ones would involve an immediate and simultaneous “change” of all the remaining members of Christ’s church on earth, and the instant cessation of his
work among the saints of this age. This is the belief held by many Christians, especially by those accepting the twenty-four-hour catastrophic view of the ending of this world, and within these limits is perfectly logical. It fails, however, to take into proper account the three-fold character of the second advent previously referred to. Once it is appreciated that the “presence” occupies a certain period of time during which various events occur relative to the winding up of earth’s affairs and the introduction of the new kingdom, it is easier to understand that a possibility exists for some of the “saints” to continue living during this period of time while the events of the presence of Christ are proceeding. This gives a wider and a more significant meaning to Paul’s words: “We which are alive and remain.” The dead in Christ are to rise first. Then we which are alive and remain are to be changed. There is no necessity for that change to be simultaneous—provided that all who become Christ’s do in fact experience their change before the day comes when, resplendent in heavenly glory, “the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43).

The position of those who, being Christ’s are still living during the early days of his presence, is considered in greater detail in chapter 6. There is sometimes a failure to realize that the resurrection of the Church and that of the world stand related to each other, and that light can be shed upon this much-discussed matter by considering the whole position regarding the resurrection of the dead.

These statements in Thessalonians, then, should be interpreted as symbols expressive of that spiritual discernment upon the part of Christ’s disciples which enables them at the time of his Advent to realize the fact. He comes to encourage, to direct his work, to proclaim his coming kingdom, and to gather into their spiritual home all who have become members of his Body—the “Bride of Christ.” By the close of this “harvest” period the “General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23) will have become a reality, and with the casting out of those Gentile powers which oppose the new kingdom, the stage will be set for that stupendous scene when “All the tribes of the earth [shall] mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).

---

Chapter 5

“In Flaming Fire”

“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

It is very clear that one of the objects for which our Lord returns to earth is the destroying of the “kingdoms of this world” together with every system and institution of man which stands in the way of the coming kingdom. In this light should be understood the many passages which speak of Christ as coming in judgment and retribution, and which picture him as a destroyer rather than a preserver.

There are certain differences in the symbolic statements regarding his coming for his church and his coming for the destruction of earth’s systems. To the Church he comes as a Reaper, gathering to himself all who are found ready for him, and the signs of that coming are such as would appeal only to the watchful and the spiritually minded. This second aspect is of different stamp. The whole setting of the “catastrophic” Scriptures implies an outwardly spectacular work; an evident epoch of destruction in the world of men and plain to all even although the
power behind this destruction is not clearly discerned; and a final leveling of all
the powers and kingdoms of the earth preparatory to the setting up of that which
is to be the “desire of all nations”—the earthly kingdom of God.

The second epistle to the Thessalonians affords the key. To those who were
expecting the second coming to take place in their own lifetime, Paul writes with
instruction of the highest importance. That day shall not come, he says, until
certain events have transpired, culminating in the development of a “Man of Sin”
which, after the removal of the “hindered one” and coming to the full climax of
its power, is to be “consumed with the spirit of his mouth and destroyed with the
bright shining of his presence.” Leaving aside for the moment any question as to
whether this event is past or future, let it be especially observed that it is the
manifestation of the Lord’s presence that completes the work of destroying this
“Man of Sin”: moreover, that this is to be an indication to the “Watchers” that
this presence is an accomplished fact. It would have been easy for Paul to correct
the Thessalonian Christians’ error by reminding them that the evidence of the
day of the Lord would be manifest in their beholding him in visible form
descending from the skies, were that the true manner of the second advent. The
fact that Paul did not resort to that argument is a reasonably sure proof that no
such manifestation attends the Lord’s coming for his saints. Instead, they—and
we through them—were bidden to watch for the destruction of the “Man of Sin”
as a sign which would indicate his presence at the end of the age.

Now the eighteenth chapter of Revelation speaks in deeply metaphorical
language of just such an event as Paul describes in the second chapter of second
Thessalonians. A mighty angel descends from heaven and the earth is lightened
with his glory. He makes an announcement “Babylon is fallen” and cries an
invitation “Come out of her, my people.” And while this cry that Babylon is
fallen is apparently uttered before the event becomes an accomplished fact, the
chapter goes on to describe the fulfillment of the dread sentence, the distress of
kings and great ones, and finally the dramatic act of a millstone cast into the sea.
“Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise.”

The picture is taken from the writings of Jeremiah and the vivid experiences of
Israel in the days of Cyrus. Babylon, the oppressing city, had fallen before the
onslaught of a mighty deliverer, and with every epitaph of opprobrium the great
city was consigned to destruction while Israel was to go free and be restored to
their own land. Here in the reality the mighty angel descends, lightening the
earth with his glory, and proceeds to carry out the work of destroying what even
men in their more lucid moments have called “Great Babylon.”

There are many Scriptures which speak prophetically of this same time when the
greed and selfishness and sin of mankind has brought the world into its
Armageddon, a time of trouble from which there can be no escape except by the
coming of Messiah’s kingdom. Not all of these Scriptures definitely identify this
time as being contemporary with the day of Christ’s presence, and yet the few
which do so identify these days are sufficiently detailed to show clearly that the
early period of his presence, beside being devoted to gathering his saints, is also
devoted to this work of destruction. The fact that this time of trouble is the
natural result of man’s own course and conduct since his creation does not make
any difference to the truth that a mightier hand than that of man is overruling
these events for ultimate good.

It should be clear then that the Michael of Daniel 12, who stands up and gives the
signal for a great time of trouble; the Son of Man of Daniel 7, who receives a
kingdom at the passing away of all earthly kingdoms; the mighty angel of
Revelation 18; and the rider on the white horse of Revelation 19, are all different symbolic representations of the same events described in Thessalonians as the revealing of the Lord Jesus from heaven in flaming fire, “taking vengeance on them that know not God.” To these passages must be added the one in 2 Thessalonians 2, and from all these statements a comprehensive picture can be drawn. That picture will be something like this.

The arrival of the Lord himself from heaven is co-incident with a time of judgment in which things not approved by God are to perish in a flaming fire of destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The consuming of the “Man of Sin,” by the spirit of the Lord’s mouth, will be already in progress, and the period immediately following his arrival will witness its destruction and complete passing away by the manifestation of his presence (2 Thessalonians 2:8). There will already have been a widespread proclamation and understanding of the “truth now due” on those features of the Divine Plan which had been previously hidden by Dark Age theology and this understanding will have helped to the consuming of Antichrist (the spirit of his mouth) and anticipate the expression in Revelation 18:1, “The earth was lightened with his glory” as well as meet the requirements of those passages which demand an awakening of the Watchers, a trimming of lamps, and a going forth to meet the Bridegroom, before he has come (Matthew 25:1-13).

Next in order, at the arrival of the Lord from heaven, comes the proclamation “Babylon is fallen. Come out of her, my people.” This “coming out” is preparatory to the separation of wheat and tares in the parable and thus indicating that the call comes at the same time as the commencement of the harvest. From the seventh chapter of Daniel it is discerned that the Son of Man is brought near before the Ancient of Days at a time when the judgment is set and the books are opened, and as a result the earthly powers represented by four great beasts are forcibly taken and given to the burning flame, and the time comes for the saints to possess the kingdom. This forcible dispossession must obviously be a question of time and so for some, the period of his presence will witness the steady breaking down and destruction of these systems. This is pictured vividly in Joel 3:1-17; Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 46:1-11; etc.

The completion of the work of destruction is pictured in Revelation 19 where a new feature is introduced. The rider upon the white horse comes forth from heaven and in the ensuing conflict those who have gathered for the final stand are utterly overthrown and consigned to the lake of fire.

Every opponent is now vanquished. The kings of the earth, mighty ones and chief captains, the beast-like powers which in this “present evil world” oppress and enslave humanity, and also the Antichrist or “Man of Sin” who “as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God,” all are gone, and the ground is cleared for the third and most spectacular of the aspects of Christ’s presence.

Be it noted that in all these passages, fire is the symbol used to denote the utter destruction to which all these opponents of the Messianic kingdom are devoted. There is no suggestion anywhere that human beings are thus destroyed—the reference is consistently to the powers, the institutions, the systems of government which stand in the way of the “Rule of righteousness.” All must go, before that “judgment in righteousness” (Acts 17:31) which God has ordained, can begin.

Simultaneously with the harvest, then, this work of retribution proceeds. It has its commencement at the same time, the moment of our Lord’s arrival, although the harvest will be ended and the saints gathered to their Lord before the final...
scenes of this Day of Trouble have been enacted. From the time that the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to the time that the rider on the white horse casts the bodies of the beast and the false prophet into the burning lake, is a period during which all the forces which have been at work for centuries leading up to this climax of the age shall converge and meet in a fury of strife and destruction justifying to the full those solemn words which fell two thousand years ago on the ear of the beloved disciple on Patmos: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16).

Chapter 6
“Resurrection”

“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” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The dead in Christ are raised first. This is an undisputed fact of Scriptural revelation. The plain statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 leaves no room for doubt that the first work of our returned Lord is to raise to spiritual life those faithful ones who have, for few or many centuries, slept in death. Here is the beginning of resurrection work, aptly styled in Revelation 20:5, “the first resurrection.” But what of the living ones, who, to use Paul’s words, “remain unto the presence of the Lord”? The fact that this period between his coming for his saints and his revelation with his saints is reserved for the work of casting down kingdoms, destroying great Babylon, and preparing the world for the glory of his kingdom implies the possibility of other saints who have not yet passed into death and yet must be “caught up” before the next phase of the Divine Plan can go into effect. Whether there is such a company who are living and being “changed” during the time of his presence, or whether 1 Thessalonians 4:17 must be taken as implying that all the living ones are instantaneously translated at the moment of his arrival, is the purpose of this chapter to discuss.

If the Scriptures do indicate that there are risen saints in the spiritual realm while at the same time there are others still upon earth, a further question arises: What are the risen ones doing while this “tarrying time” continues?

In considering these questions it should be agreed that the resurrection of the Church cannot be considered apart from that of the world. Both works stand related in time and in their connection with the outworking of God’s plan. Resurrection, a marvelous demonstration of Divine power, commences with the arrival of our Lord at his second advent and continues throughout the whole period of his presence until, at the end of the Messianic reign, the words of the parable are spoken to a restored and perfect race: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34; cf. Revelation 22:17). Medieval theology limited resurrection to the work of a moment. One long trumpet-blast, and the graves would open, the tombstones reel, and

“Louder still, and still more dread
Sound the shrill note that wakes the dead.”

while the souls of men, re-clothed in their material bodies, assemble before the throne for judgment. The days of that conception are past for many Christians, but all too often there is a tendency to advance very little farther from that
position and to regard the resurrection as taking place at two points of time only; first, at the moment of Christ's arrival when the living as well as the sleeping saints will be instantaneously translated, and then, after a lapse of years, another moment when humanity will arise from the grave to re-creation of human identity. When the significance of Paul’s words “Every man in his own order” (1 Corinthians 15:23) is appreciated, and the fact that resurrection (anastasis, re-standing, a standing again) implies not only a re-vivifying or calling back to life for the individual, but also a progressive development bringing that individual to a state of full perfection and harmony with God, it is seen that the entire Millennial age is given over to the resurrection of mankind. The Scriptures abound with references to that day when men will hear the voice of the Son of God calling them from their graves—from the sleep of death (John 5:28,29). The men of Nineveh, of Sodom and of Gomorrah; the children for whom Rachel wept in Ramah (Luke 11:32; Ezekiel 16:55; Jeremiah 31:15,16), all the ransomed of the LORD, shall return amidst general rejoicing (Isaiah 35:10). There is no doubt that this wonderful event will occur upon the establishment of the kingdom in power, after the Lord has come with his saints, and Scriptural evidence need not be advanced at this moment to ensure general assent to that truth. But before this desirable condition of things can come to pass and this “general resurrection” commence, a previous event must have taken place.

That event is the raising to life and the establishing as “princes in all the earth” of the “Ancient Worthies” (Hebrews 11:38).

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews records the names and actions of a number of men and women famous in biblical history for their devotion to God and their sterling faith. One and all they are described as individuals who have entered into a walk with God which justifies their being termed “heroes of faith.” While other men looked and strove for the plaudits and the encomiums of this world, they “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). “For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country” (Hebrews 11:14). In long ago times these gave evidence of that same devotion to the principles of righteousness which in after days has characterized the disciples of Christ, and it is not surprising therefore to find that in the Plan of God they have a definite place. The first clue to the nature of that place was given by Jesus himself when he said to the Pharisees (Luke 13:28), “Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out.”

The Pharisees would not be debarred from a share in the opportunities and blessings of the Messianic kingdom, for that would be to make the word of God of none effect when it declares that Jesus died for all and all are to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). The inference is clearly that the Pharisees would be “thrust out” from any position of authority in that kingdom, and that the patriarchs would take their places as “princes [who] shall rule in judgment,” in that day (Isaiah 32:1).

This teaching of a ruling authority upon earth, administering the laws of the kingdom and acting as the earthly representatives of earth’s spiritual king, is supported by a number of Scriptural allusions. Thus we have Jeremiah 23:4, speaking of Israel’s regathering, “I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them.” And Psalm 45:16 referring in symbolic imagery to the union of Christ and the Church, and voicing the declaration, “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.”

There is also a striking passage in Hebrews 12:22-24 so pregnant with meaning
to every earnest observer of the signs of the times as to deserve reproducing in full:

“You have approached to Zion, a Mountain and City of the living God—the heavenly Jerusalem; and to Myriads of Angels—a full Assembly; and to a Congregation of First-borns, having been enrolled in the Heavens; and to a Judge who is God of all; and to Spirits of the Righteous made perfect; and to a Mediator of a new Covenant—Jesus; and to a Blood of Sprinkling speaking something Better than Abel.”—Emphatic Diaglott translation.

In sublime language the writer to the Hebrews here pictures the position to which Christian believers have attained. Whereas Sinai of old, with its thunders and lightnings and fearful sounds from heaven heralded the inauguration of a covenant and a new order of things for all Israel on a purely material level, the disciple of Christ is brought in vision to a spiritual Zion, which, with the symbolic thunders and lightnings of Armageddon, is to herald a new order of things for the betterment of all mankind. The symbols used can be readily recognized as having their reality in the scenes which attend the close of this age, and since the picture includes the “general assembly and Church of the Firstborn” in evident reference to the church of Christ, the further reference to “spirits of the righteous made perfect” can only refer to those same faithful ones of Old Testament days who are to become the “princes in all the earth” of the Messianic kingdom. They must be brought forth from the tomb and prepared for their destined place before the work of the Millennial age can commence.

Prior to the general restoration of mankind, then, the Ancient Worthies must themselves have been restored from the grave.

That this event occurs before the close of Armageddon is evident from Zechariah 12:6 where the governors of Judah are depicted as taking some prominent part in the final phase of the Time of Trouble which, centering around Jerusalem, demonstrates that wholehearted repentance on the part of regathered Israel which is to herald the establishment of God’s kingdom in power.

Although the Ancient Worthies’ resurrection thus precedes the general resurrection of all men, it should be clear that this event cannot take place until the last member of the Church has “passed beyond the vail.” The fact that it is the entire church which shares in the “First Resurrection” implies that every member of the “people for God’s name” (Acts 15:14) for the selection of which this age has been set aside, must have finished their earthly course before the work of “giving life” can commence. Hence the conclusion to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, in which, after recounting the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies, the writer closes by saying, “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for US, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39,40).

There is therefore that period of time between the resurrection of the “sleeping saints” and that of the Ancient Worthies, and the question as to whether those living during the time of the Lord’s early presence are “changed” one by one during that period or are changed instantaneously at the moment of his arrival. There are substantial grounds for logical thought on this subject and no reason why a satisfactory understanding of the matter should not be attained.

The general view expressed by those who look for a sudden and spectacular appearance of Christ at the moment of his second advent is that the dead in Christ are raised and the living ones “changed” simultaneously and that they are all united with Christ in one moment of time. The principal foundation for this
belief is the literal interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, and an assumption that our Lord’s simile likening his day to that of Noah and Lot lay in the suddenness of the catastrophe. Further thought will generally be sufficient to show that the force of the simile lies in the ignorance of the people in those days to the significance of what was transpiring around them, and their persistence in the ordinary avocations of life, notwithstanding the preaching of one who stood amongst them to warn them of the coming change of dispensation.

Certain groups of Christians dwell with great elaboration on the confusion into which the world will be precipitated when this event takes place. Pen pictures are drawn depicting Christian engine-drivers taken in a moment from the controls of express trains, Christian captains from the bridges of ocean liners, and so on, with consequent destruction and death to hundreds. Such a conception of God’s methods does no honor to him and betokens considerable darkness of mind as to his true character, even although it is a perfectly logical corollary to the belief thus expressed. The God of the Bible is one whose works are carried out in order and with dignity, and to insist on the wholesale destruction of inoffensive people as a means of marking the final gathering of “his saints” is unthinkable to those who have come to realize the inherent benevolence of the divine character.

Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:52 indicate that the “change” is the work of a moment; “in the twinkling of an eye.” This can mean nothing else than that the moment of death is also the moment of resurrection to the higher, spiritual life, and that this, while not the experience of those who “sleep” during the long centuries of the Gospel age, is nevertheless the portion of those who are still living at the time of the Lord’s coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 practically repeats the same teaching but adds the qualification “then.” “The dead in Christ shall rise first: THEN we which are alive and remain [unto the parousia of the Lord] shall be caught up together with them … to meet the Lord in the air.” The word “together” here has often been quoted to prove the simultaneous “rapture” of the living with the dead saints, but this is by no means justified. The word certainly implies association; we shall be “caught up” as well as they; we, with them, shall be caught up, but not necessarily at the same moment of time. The same word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:9,10 “…our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.” None will claim that our resurrection to life “living together with him” commenced at the same time as his own resurrection to life, two thousand years ago. So also in Romans 3:12, the Gentile and the Jew had “together become unprofitable” but the Gentile became unprofitable long before the Jew in point of time. From these examples it will be seen that the word does not always demand an instantaneous action, and that when 1 Thessalonians 4:17 declares we shall be caught up together with them, it is really saying that although the raising of the dead in Christ comes first, we, the living, are not going to be forgotten. Then, next in order, afterwards, we too shall be caught up as well, that we, with them, may be forever with the Lord.

To determine the duration of that “catching up” and its relation to the time of the raising of the dead in Christ, it is necessary to consider the fifteenth verse. “We which are alive and remain unto the [presence] of the Lord” says Paul. That word “unto” is of intense significance in this study. It is the Greek word eis and has the meaning of “unto” when used in relation to an object or point of time (such as “come unto me” or “unto the time appointed”) but means “into” when referring to a place or a period of time, such as “into the field” or “into the next age.” When men believed the second advent to be the work of a moment, a point of time, it was proper enough to render the verse “unto the coming of the Lord.”
Now that we know it to be a period of a thousand years or more it is right to read “we which are alive and remain into the parousia of the Lord.” When it is once established that this “presence” is a period of time—no matter how short or how long—it is easy to accept the testimony of this Scripture that some will remain into this period, and it then becomes a reasonable conclusion that the “catching up” is progressing during so long a part of that period as there are any left to be “caught up.”

It has already been shown that the first work of the Lord at his arrival is the raising of the “dead in Christ.” It has also been demonstrated that the raising of the Ancient Worthies will indicate that the Church is at last complete—beyond the vail. The reasonable conclusion, therefore, is that during that portion of the “presence” which lies between these two events “we which are alive and remain” are being changed, one by one, at the moment of death, in a manner which conveys nothing unnatural to the human observer, but for the one thus changed means an instantaneous reunion with those who have gone before; “caught up TOGETHER.”

This final gathering and glorification of the Church will be completed with that deliberation and dignity which has characterized all God’s work with the “people for his name.” Silently, unnoticed by men, each faithful footstep follower will be called aside while the world continues in its heedless way, ignorant of the tremendous significance of this period of time intervening between the arrival of the Lord to gather his Church and that later day when he is revealed to all men for their salvation.

The statement sometimes made that the reign of Christ commences with the moment of his arrival and that his kingdom is even now set up is true only in an accommodated sense. In one sense Christ’s kingdom was set up at Pentecost when his followers first preached the new message. In another sense it is said to have been set up when his second advent became an accomplished fact and the forces were set in motion which will eventually pave the way to his assumption of royal jurisdiction. But in matters such as this it is necessary to deal with the plain meaning of terms, and since in all the Scriptures the “kingdom” and the “reign” refers to that time when Christ not only has the RIGHT to rule but also is actually administering his kingdom; and since when that time arrives his Church is to be with him (Matthew 25:31; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3), it is an evident fact that the reign of Christ has not commenced. The impression sometimes met with, that the time of Christ’s arrival and the glorification of his Church must coincide with the commencement of his reign over the nations, is an assumption which does not find any support in Scripture. Until the righteous “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43) and are thus established upon the “twelve thrones” of the regeneration (Matthew 19:28), the Millennial work proper does not begin. The Scripture evidences already presented indicate quite clearly that before this great event can come there must elapse a period during which Christ is present superintending the downfall of the kingdoms of this world, the fall of great Babylon, and the harvest of the age. Hence it follows that the moment of his arrival, so far from coinciding with the time when the saints “shine forth” in the glory of the kingdom, must be earlier.

It is therefore reasonable to ask; “What are the risen saints doing in the meantime?” The suggestion that in some manner they are taking part in a spiritual warfare aimed at disintegrating the powers of “this present evil world” should be rejected. The Battle of the Great Day is, in the providence of God, a natural result of human selfishness and impotence converging at last into the cataclysm known as Armageddon. The risen saints have no part nor lot in the
warrings and strife of mortal man—their work lies in the future, beyond Armageddon, and it is for that work they must wait.

Here, perhaps, is the answer. The risen saints are to wait; for the completion of their number; for the “marriage of the Lamb”; and for their manifestation in glory to all men “in that day.” It is a well-accepted fact that God “rested” when man was created, preparatory to his greater work in sending and raising from the dead his own son (Ephesians 1:19,20). Jesus also, after the work of his first advent was completed, rested, “from henceforth expecting (waiting) till his enemies be made his footstool” (Hebrews 10:13). In the same way do the Scriptures indicate that after the trial and endurance of earthly life, those raised preparatory to entering the service of the kingdom shall wait, as it were observers of world events, until all is ready for the final act in the drama of God’s Plan.

Two Scriptures afford guidance in this connection. Paul, writing a word of encouragement to the Thessalonian Christians, has this to say: “If indeed it is just with God to repay affliction to those who afflict you, so also to you the afflicted, a rest together with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:6,7, *Emphatic Diaglott*).

If this revelation from heaven has its commencement at the time of the Lord’s arrival to preside over the destruction of world power, as described in chapter 5, it follows of necessity that the “resting together” of the Thessalonians with Paul is to be something different from that “rest” in the grave which they admittedly experience through the centuries between their own day and the second advent. Since their resurrection cannot be to the work and service of the kingdom, that kingdom not being set up in power for some time after the raising of the “dead in Christ,” Paul’s description of a “rest” is singularly appropriate. Like the angels who are spectators in the theater of 1 Corinthians 4:9 ("We are made a theater unto the world, and to angels") the risen saints can be pictured as rejoicing in fellowship together while they watch the final stages of the drama being now played out to its ending on this earth.

The well-known passage in Revelation 14:13 becomes luminous when viewed in this light: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

The time is that of the Lord’s early presence; the close association of these words with the harvest picture in the following verses would indicate that, and the happy condition thus referred to is the portion of those who pass beyond the vail during the harvest period. They are to rest from their labors. The trials of earthly life are ended; the service of the kingdom has not yet begun. Like those who, being “asleep” at the time of the Lord’s coming, were “raised first,” these are “changed” to full perfection of spiritual life to rest and to wait for their fellows.

From these considerations, therefore, it is suggested that resurrection power, once commenced at the raising first of the “dead in Christ” continues without ceasing until “whosoever will” at the end of the Millennial age attains complete *anastasis*—a standing again—in the glory of the earthly kingdom. The dead in Christ rise first—that is the work of an instant, accomplished immediately upon the Lord’s return. Thereafter, while the world rushes on into Armageddon, the “living ones” are changed, their body of humiliation being cast away in immediate exchange for that “house which is from heaven” (2 Corinthians 5:2). The “assembly” beyond the vail rests and waits for its last member, and
then comes the time described in Scripture as the “marriage of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7). This climax will apparently be reached while as yet the world is still in its morass of trouble and strife, but with the change of the last member of Christ’s Church the Ancient Worthies will come forth to be followed finally by the proclamation of a new order of things and the opening of the graves and return to earth of all men.

Thus seen, the resurrection, like the parousia or presence of Christ, will commence in an invisible and unostentatious manner and progress steadily to that glorious fulfillment depicted by the prophet Isaiah when in an ecstasy of prophetic fervor he declared, “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10).

Chapter 7

“Every Eye Shall See Him”

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).

Of the seventeen major passages describing the second advent there are only three which picture it definitely as an event which is universally seen and realized. To the Watchers, his own disciples, the fact of his early presence is manifest before any others are awake to it. To those who must learn by the stern logic of political and social events, his presence to wind up earthly affairs and establish his kingdom begins to become evident even while, as in the days of Noah, the masses of mankind continue in their customary way, heedless and ignorant of the great change about to be inaugurated. Yet these three Scriptures stand out as beacon lights illuminating a much less clear, because much later, aspect of Christ’s presence. The time when he comes to be universally accepted with every sign of repentance and contrition is very evidently not yet; and cannot be while the reign of sin and death endures.

Nevertheless this last aspect of Christ’s Second Coming can be truthfully described as a universally perceived one—a complete fulfillment of those symbolic Scriptures which picture him coming in the clouds of heaven, visible in the skies before the gaze of assembled multitudes on earth and receiving the submission as well as the repentance of those who, at that time, will participate in a “great mourning” (Zechariah 12:11).

Our Lord’s words to Caiaphas admit of no compromise: “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man … coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). The expression is repeated in that passage where Christ describes the signs of his coming, and which is quoted at the head of this chapter. Again to the Revelator does the same word come: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and, every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (Revelation 1:7). The surprising unanimity of these statements justifies the application of them to some single stupendous event in that series of happenings which constitutes the end of this age; and this conviction is heightened when one word from the Old Testament is attached to these words; for by Zechariah (12:10) comes the prediction, “They shall look upon [him] whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.”

What is the spectacular event which it is the common lot of all men to witness in
a fashion which can be truthfully described as seeing with the eyes, and which is attended by universal mourning?

Certainly not the coming of Christ for his Church, for their portion is one of joy and not of mourning when the consummation of their hopes is reached at length, and that coming [presence] is in any case unperceived by the majority of mankind. Neither can it be his coming in judgment and retribution upon the evil systems of this world, for although that is admittedly a time of mourning yet it is not a time when “every eye shall see him.” It is, on the contrary, a time when “they knew not, until …” (Matthew 24:39). Beside which, his coming at this time of universal realization and general repentance is to be after God turns upon Israel the spirit of grace and of supplications (Zechariah 12:9,10), which gives us good cause for identifying this aspect of his coming with the symbolic prophecy speaking of God’s descent upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4) and the divine intervention which brings to an abrupt end the power of man and establishes the mountain of the Lord’s house in the tops of the mountains (Micah 4:1-5).

The conclusion to be drawn from these various considerations, then, is that a time will come when the following conditions will be fulfilled:

First, Israel will be in a repentant and purified condition, a people gathered together for God’s purpose on earth and ready to undertake their long-promised mission of sending forth the law from Zion.

Second, the event must include a time when Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim of his day will have been restored to human life from the death state to witness the fulfillment of those solemn words which they declared to be blasphemy, and which became the pretext for the condemnation of Jesus Christ to death.

Third, Mankind in general will be in an attitude of watchfulness and expectancy, ready to “see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10) and in that heart condition of repentance and submission to God which alone can justify the description of universal mourning which these verses so consistently portray.

Fourth, The time of this revelation is after the great tribulation which our Lord not only declared to be the greatest and the last of all times of trouble, but which also is in itself an evidence of the earlier phases of his presence (Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24).

From these considerations the setting of this scene is very evident. It comes after the Church has been glorified and the “Marriage of the Lamb” has taken place; after the nations have suffered their final downfall and disintegration in Armageddon; after the children of Israel, under the leadership of their “princes in all the earth” (Psalm 45:16) have begun to look again to God; and even after the general calling out from the graves (John 5:28,29) has at least commenced (Matthew 26:64).

In short, this aspect of Christ’s coming has its fulfillment in the early days of his kingdom established in power. It is a vivid picture of the revelation that will come to all men as by a lightning flash when the law of the LORD goes forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4). It is the time when Isaiah’s words come true: “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” (Isaiah 25:9).

From that time and forward, the second presence of Christ will be no longer a matter of doubt and dispute. All will know that he is present and that the Times of Restitution, so long foretold by all God’s holy prophets (Acts 3:19-21), have
commenced. The outward evidences will leave no further room for question, and the prompt application of the laws of the new kingdom; the rapidly spreading realization that Satan and the forces of evil have been bound “for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:2) will leave the fact no longer open to uncertainty.

This is the time when the Church of Christ, already gathered to him and joined with him, shall also “shine forth” in association with him. Matthew 13:43, speaking of that time, declares: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” The earnest expectation of the creation, says Paul, waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God (Romans 8:19). A wealth of Scriptures indicates that at that time when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

How will Christ and his Church appear to the risen millions of mankind in that day? There are many who contend that a physical appearance to the natural sight is intended by these Scriptures, and that the glorified “Bride of Christ” will thus hold literal converse with those who come to them. A literal enthronement of Jesus Christ in some great palace at Jerusalem is expected by some. On the other hand, the fact that the “Ancient Worthies” are certainly to be the intermediaries between mankind on the one hand and Christ the king upon the other may well demonstrate the greater dignity of a kingdom in which Christ and the Church, glorified beings on the spiritual plane, are shrouded from mortal sight.

Should this spiritual company at any time become visible to mankind, they must of necessity “materialize” as did the angels before the flood and as did those celestial messengers who appeared to Manoah, to Daniel, and others. The necessity for such “materialization” may be hard to discern when a dignified and effective medium for the work of the Church with mankind is at hand in the persons of the Ancient Worthies.

Mankind will, at any rate, “see” these things with mental sight. And how effective! Job, in the course of a long life, beheld much of the ways of God in nature and in men—but it was not until he had experienced for himself the wondrous workings of that God that he was able to say, in words eloquent in their brevity: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee” (Job 42:5).

It was said of Moses in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews (vs. 27) that “he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” That apprehension of the power of God which comes by means of mental perception is far deeper and more lasting than any great spectacle which can only impress the natural sight. Let it be remembered that in this day when every scientific marvel speedily becomes commonplace, there would be no real impression made on the minds of men at the sight of a literal apparition in the heavens. The momentary wonder over, men would speedily return to their various affairs and forget all about it. The time when “every eye shall see him” is a time when men will perceive by mental vision the reality of that which in time past, if they heard or knew anything about it at all, was dismissed as a visionary dream unworthy of credence or serious consideration.

The book of Isaiah concludes with a striking statement which illustrates this matter well. Speaking of the days when the work of the kingdom has brought forth its intended fruitage in the reconciliation, of “whosoever will” to God the Father of all, the prophet declares: “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all
None would assert that a literal preservation of the bodies of the incorrigible to form a public spectacle to all eternity is here indicated. The passage is readily seen to refer to that constant remembrance of the dire results of sin and death which will always remain with mankind as a lesson well learned and an experience which will never need to be repeated. Men will appreciate the desirability of righteousness, and the past days of sin and unrighteousness will rightly become an “abhorring to all flesh.”

In like manner will they “look upon him whom they have pierced” not with the physical sight but with a mental vision which reveals to them as never before the glorious reality of that long-looked-for new order of things which is to be in deed and in truth

“The desire of all nations.”

Chapter 8
“When Shall These Things Be”

“Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing, for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:8).

When our Lord told his disciples that “of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36; cf. Mark 13:32), he placed on record a great fact: the Creator’s impassive silence as to the times and seasons of his unfolding purpose. It has ever been that a detailed understanding of the Divine Plan relating to any particular period has been made known to the “Watchers” of that time, but those same Watchers have been able to discern only a shadowy and fragmentary vision of the things which were yet to be. The truth of God has unfolded itself before men’s mental vision only as the time for its fulfillment has come and when some have profited sufficiently by the lessons of past history to be ready to receive it. Hence it is that expressions such as “truth now due,” “meat in due season for the household of faith,” have come to bear a distinct and very specialized meaning. The light of past ages as well as of the present, converging upon those features of the Divine Plan which are now about to be fulfilled, or indeed are actually in process of fulfillment, has the effect of illuminating “things new and old” with a deeper and more accurate understanding than ever before. A familiar hymn illustrates this principle so undeniably in active operation:

“More glorious still, as centuries roll
Shall Truth’s fair banner be unfurled
Until at length, from pole to pole
Its radiance shall o’er flow the world.”

It is in recognition of this fact of the ability to understand God’s plan as it becomes due of fulfillment that the prophet cries, “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

God makes no serious move in the succession of events which mark the dispensations; brings no sweeping change in the affairs of men; or permits no catastrophic end to an epoch without revealing his intentions to those who are his devoted ministers. It was so with Noah and the cataclysmic finish to the antediluvian world. It was so with Moses when God called Israel out of Egypt. The predictions of Isaiah and Jeremiah and their terrible fulfillment on the
nation to which they were uttered are no less striking than the knowledge of many men in the days of the first advent that the coming of Messiah was imminent (Luke 3:15). Now we in our turn are watchers on the walls of Zion, we perceive with clarity of vision the coming collapse of “this present evil world” and the early establishment of a world “wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). It should be a reasonable expectation that, no less than in the past, those whose hearts are tuned to the forces of spiritual things will distinctly perceive the times and seasons which affect their own lives so closely.

It should be expected, therefore, that as the various phases of the second advent begin to run their course there will be earnest disciples of Christ who are made aware of the fact. Although in the early stages of that advent there is little that would carry conviction to the mind of a natural man or even to the average professing Christian, there is sufficient evidence to impress the spiritual consciousness of many consecrated children of God that the days of the Son of Man have commenced. That evidence must obviously be based upon Scriptural prophecy and the predictions of Christ himself, co-related to the history of the world and particularly to contemporary events, if it is to be of any value. It must afford, not only a satisfactory presentation of the meaning of past events in history, not only a reasonable exposition of the position in which Christian disciples find themselves today, but also an outline of the manner in which the immediate future will see further progress in the work of setting up the kingdom. It should be possible for us, as devout followers of the Master, to locate our approximate position on the stream of time in respect to this wonderful succession of events which constitutes the “presence of the Son of Man.”

This chapter draws attention to certain lines of Scriptural teaching which suggest that we who live in this century have already entered upon these days. The Lord from heaven has come for his Church and is at this very time in process of taking them, one by one, to the glory of spiritual being. He has already commenced to be revealed in judgment upon the evil systems and institutions of this world. The third phase of his appearing, his manifestation to all men, is imminent, “even at the doors.”

The first indication which can possibly justify Christians of this day in arriving at such startling conclusions is afforded by the trenchant words of Paul given to the Thessalonian Church about A.D. 53 as a guide for Christians for all time. That little company of believers had imbibed the hope of Christ’s imminent return, in a more or less visible and spectacular manner, with such faith and enthusiasm that the passing of the years and the death of some of their number brought questions and doubts as to the position of those who died before the expected event took place. It was in answer to that state of query among them that Paul wrote this second epistle to that Church, and in the second chapter of the epistle he states plainly and definitely that the second advent could not take place until certain events first transpired, and that the culmination of those events would constitute the sign for which they looked.

Here then is time prophecy of the utmost importance. If we, from our vantage point, can correctly identify Paul’s inspired allusions, a strong link in the chain of evidence pointing to the time of the second advent is ready to our hand. Paul’s words are these: “That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who ... as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God ... And he that now hindereth will hinder, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the bright shining of his presence.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8).
The salient features in this chain of events are three in number. There is to be a falling away, obviously from the true faith of Jesus, and the rising of an anti-Christian system designated by Paul the “Body (or Man) of sin,” or “Son of perdition,” arrogating to itself the prerogatives of God. An already existing power is to hinder the full development, or “revealing” of this system, but eventually that “hindering one” is to be removed and then the “Man of Sin” will reach the full zenith of its development.

Then comes destruction. The system will be consumed by the spirit of the Lord’s mouth and destroyed by the radiance (epiphania) of his parousia or presence. The consuming and destruction of the system, once identified, is therefore an indication of the time of that “presence” which is effecting the destructive work.

In the past, Christian students looked for a superman in power and in wickedness to arise at the last day to fulfill this prediction in his own person. The enlargement of understanding which is now the possession of many indicates much more clearly that the spirit of Antichrist which existed in Paul’s own lifetime was to be crystallized after his death into a great and all-powerful ecclesiastical system which would exert all its power to crush and destroy independent thought and worship in the Church. The hindering one was Imperial Pagan Rome, and when that power gave way to the rule of organized “Nominal” Christianity; the “Wicked One” was fully revealed.

It is a matter of recent history to recall that the greatest oppressor of the saints ever known, the Church-State system ruling from Rome and deriving its support and power from the claims of the Papacy, received a mortal wound at the hands of Napoleon in A.D. 1799; that the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 dealt it another blow, and that the annexation of the Papal States by King Victor Immanuel of Italy in 1870 and the Pope’s retirement to become the “Prisoner of the Vatican” finally destroyed the persecuting power of the “Man of Sin.” As a church system, it continues and takes its place in the affairs of this world—but as a ruling power making and unmaking kings, including and excluding men from the consolations and practice of religion, and in general controlling the outward circumstances of “Christendom,” its power has gone. The rapid rise of Bible Societies and other instruments contributory to the growth of Bible knowledge from 1804 onwards, as well as that deeper understanding of the Divine Plan which came later in the century, all constitute the “spirit of the Lord’s mouth” which during this early period of the parousia is effecting the total destruction of the “Man of Sin” and all that is like it in principle. The fact that as a system it still has possessions and influence, and shows no immediate signs of complete destruction, makes no difference to the fact that it is today the merest shadow of its former powerful self. The “consuming” is still proceeding and the “destroying,” in common with every other man-made institution, not far off. The conclusion is that this process of degeneration and imminent destruction is a clear fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8 and hence forms one evidence too clear to ignore that the “presence” of Christ is already an accomplished fact.

*    *    *

For a line of evidence in a different sphere it is necessary to turn back to the Old Testament. Concluding his apocalyptic foreview of world history in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel, the revealing angel having arrived at what is evidently the last great period of mortal strife between men, declares (chapter 12, verses 1-4): “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people … And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting [Hebrew: ollah, enduring] life,
and some to shame and everlasting contempt ... And they that turn many to righteousness [shall be] as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words ... even to the time of the end [the appointed time, when] many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall he increased."

The striking correspondence of these words to the events of today has impressed itself upon many Christian thinkers of quite divergent theologies and schools of thought. The predicted running to and fro and increase of knowledge has been the characteristic feature of the past two centuries, and the process is even now by no means ended or even retarded. The marvelous achievements of transport, communication, and air travel are only about a century old. Popular education has made great strides. When it is realized that these wonders were declared to Daniel as coinciding with a time of trouble upon nations such as was never before known, and which is identified by Jesus himself as marking the end of the age and the time for the establishment of the kingdom, it is impossible not to see in the Michael who stands up for the deliverance of his people a reference to the direct connection of Christ with these events. The knowledge and enlightenment of this time, particularly in those directions which reveal to mankind its own potentialities and possibilities, is a manifestation of the radiance of Christ’s presence, a veritable foretaste of the coming kingdom. The trouble and distress upon all nations which is so equally a marked characteristic of the same period is no less the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on the forces inimical to righteousness. The entire picture thus presented to the student’s view confirms the conclusion heretofore enunciated, that the latter years of the nineteenth century saw the commencement of the second presence of Christ in the realm of mankind.

*    *    *

The attention of Bible students for several centuries has been focused upon that mysterious commission given to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, as recorded in the book of Daniel. The time was that of the overthrow of Zedekiah, the last king of Israel, and the end of the independence of that nation which sprang into being when Moses brought the Law down from the Mount. From that day to this, a period of over twenty-five hundred years, the people of Israel have been subject to the Gentiles—to Babylonian, to Persian, to Greek, to Roman, and finally to the present-day powers of Europe. That period which the New Testament calls the “Times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) has been one long-drawn agony to a nation which once proudly bore the title of “a peculiar treasure ... an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5,6). The striking fulfillment of Daniel’s predictions in the experiences of that people even up to the present day cannot fail to impress the student, and when to this is added the confirmatory evidence of Jesus and of the seers of Scripture it becomes evident that the promised period of Gentile domination between the overthrow of Israel as a nation and the establishment of that kingdom which is to witness Israel’s restoration is a very real thing.

Now the book of Daniel presents this period of time as one in which successive world empires would wield sovereignty over the land and the people of Israel until the appointed time for the setting up of God’s kingdom should have come. For century after century the nations of men upon earth would have full liberty to govern according to their own desires and standards and without let or hindrance from God. The inspired word makes it abundantly clear that the ultimate result of the liberty thus accorded would be the complete breakdown of all human forms of government and an adequate demonstration of man’s inability to govern and direct the affairs of this world, while yet he remains
unreconciled to God.

In symbolic language the seventh chapter of Daniel describes this catastrophic end to the “Times of the Gentiles” by picturing the various earthly powers as ravenous beasts gathered before the Lord of all the earth for judgment and destruction. “One like unto the Son of Man”—familiar expression for the personality of Christ—is pictured as taking his stand before the “Ancient of Days” preparatory to assuming control of earth’s affairs for the ultimate blessing and benefit of all. The work of destruction is pictured in vivid terms—a fiery stream consuming all the institutions of evil and leaving the Son of Man and his followers, “the people of the saints of the Most High,” in full possession of the sovereignty of men. Their kingdom, it is said, is an everlasting kingdom which shall never pass away nor be destroyed (Daniel 7:14-27; cf. Daniel 2:44).

This time of declining Gentile power must also coincide with the restoration of Israel as a nation (Luke 21:24). That people returned to their own land, then converted at last by the experiences through which they have passed, will be active agents in spreading abroad the gospel of Christ which is to be the standard of the kingdom (Isaiah chapters 60 to 62). The time when “every eye shall see him” has already been shown to coincide with this, and it follows therefore that the days of Christ’s early presence for the gathering of his saints and the destruction of the world’s institutions are coincident with the period spoken of in Daniel, chapter 7, as that during which the power of the Gentile nations decline to their ending.

Now it is a well-known fact that some observers of world affairs predict the imminent collapse of civilization. The fact that man’s development in scientific knowledge has advanced at a greater rate than his ability or even desire to use that development for beneficial ends only has become a menace to the very existence of the human race. An early return to world barbarism is prophesied by some. In almost every quarter can be seen the fulfillment of Christ’s words, “Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity … Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking [to] those things which are coming upon the earth” (Luke 21:25,26). The terrible efficiency of modern means of destruction makes the virtual extinction of the race no longer a fantastic conception. In short, reluctant as men may be to admit the fact, this world, by its own standards and as a logical consequence of the course it has followed, has about reached the end. Except God reaches down from heaven to save, there is no salvation.

These then are the nations in their death agonies, the world in pain and waiting for the birth of a new order. All this is in itself a confirmatory evidence that the King of Kings is present, preparing the way for the establishment of his kingdom, and nearly ready for the time when, speaking peace to the nations, his kingdom will extend from “sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Psalm 72:8).

*    *    *

One of the most definite parables uttered by our Lord, and one pregnant with meaning, was that of the wheat and tares. It is one of the few parables in which Jesus first relates the story and then gives a full explanation of its meaning (Matthew 13:24-43). The striking correspondence between this passage and the vision of John in Revelation 14:14-16 where he sees one like unto the Son of Man, coming upon a white cloud and in kingly majesty to reap the harvest of the earth, leads some students to accept the two pictures as relating to one and the same thing, the return of Christ to reap the harvest of the age.

Since this is a harvest of the age, it follows that the reaping must be a gathering
of that which was sown and has been developing throughout the long centuries. While it is true that all down through the age there have been those of the “wheat” characteristics as well as those of the “tare” characteristics, it is plain that the New Testament teaching regarding this wonderful time in which we live, and which is declared to be the harvest, cannot be interpreted as the mere gathering of a few saintly individuals out of “tare” systems into another earthly organization. This is confirmed by the fact, demonstrated by history, that there has never been an earthly organization, no matter how noble and lofty its original ideals, which has succeeded in keeping free from the “tare” element. Who among us today would be so bold as to say that there is such an organization now in existence? The whole of our experience points to the contrary.

It is misleading to conclude that the wheat and tares refer merely to principles of truth and error which have been broadcast during the age and have each borne their appropriate fruitage, because our Lord himself declares that the good seed are the children of the kingdom and the tares are the children of the Evil One. This leads us to consider a development and a growth which can be identified with individuals and yet occupy all the age in order to run its course and arrive at maturity. The fact that an enemy is permitted to sow tares precludes its application to the Millennial age, for in that day nothing will be permitted to hurt nor destroy (Isaiah 11:9; 65:25), and the Lord’s words fit admirably to the work of this Gospel age in which we find ourselves.

To be in harmony with the parable, then, it would seem that the children of the kingdom and those of the Evil One are to grow together until the harvest, more or less indistinguishable one from the other, and that this process of united growth or development would culminate in a time when, in a collective sense, the “tare” element in the Christian world would be separated from the “wheat” element preparatory to the destruction of the one and the glorification of the other.

It is necessary, therefore, to look for a time in which the “tare” element—Christians in name only—is found to become separate from those who are sincere in faith and walking still in the advancing light, being in truth “servants that wait for their Lord” (Luke 12:36). When this separation can be observed taking place, and it becomes obvious that the cleavage is definite and final, then the “watchers” can have confidence that the harvest is come, and that the succeeding events—the burning of “tares” and gathering of the “wheat” into the barn—will not be much longer delayed.

From apostolic days these two seeds have been sown, and in consequence these two classes have always existed side-by-side, and intermingled with one another, in the Church of Christ upon earth. As Christian thought and understanding developed, and new truths were revealed, century after century, so did the spirit of Antichrist develop also. At no time could men point to an earthly Church consisting entirely of “wheat,” and in point of fact the ability of men to discriminate between wheat and tares was largely nonexistent, even as in real life in the East the tares resemble wheat and cannot be distinguished from it until the harvest.

But a time came when conditions changed. With the glowing enlightenment of the nineteenth century men began to look upon the truths of religion with clearer eyes. They saw a world torn with the antagonistic theologies of many sects, but holy men from all those sects came to the study of the Scriptures in a new frame of mind. The rise of Bible Societies, of Sunday Schools, of facilities for reading
and hearing expositions of the Word of Truth increased a thousand fold. Great men whose names are household words to this day expounded the first glimmerings of a light which in later years shone much more clearly upon the “Household of Faith.” After more than a thousand years of oppression and persecution the word of God became studied and discussed as never before.

Concurrently with this the vague, shadowy ideas men had formerly held concerning the end of this world and the coming of a better one began to take more definite shape. The study of time prophecies and chronology, which characterized so many Christian movements of the nineteenth century, was but the first crude endeavor to explore what the Scriptures have to say concerning the heavenly Father’s immediate plans. Later on the signs of the times began to show more definitely that events were moving toward the climax of the age. The first half of the nineteenth century was a time of rapidly developing Truth, and it was in this period more than ever before that men began to get clear ideas on the main teachings of Scripture with regard to the Divine Plan. In the second half of that century a conviction grew that the kingdom was imminent. A few there were who perceived with that deeper understanding of the distinction between human and spiritual natures, which then came to light, that Jesus would not return as a man, visibly, but as “the Lord that Spirit,” invisible to human eyes. They understood in a new light the Scriptural teaching that he returns for his own at a time when the world in general are quite unconscious of the fact.

At the same time that the “Watchers” were thus assimilating the “cream” of Christian thought and understanding then available, the writings of Darwin, and the conclusions of scientific research, came with a shattering impact against the structures of Christendom. The Origin of Species, published in 1859, provoked a theological storm the echoes of which have nearly died away, but which at the time was a first-class issue. The old theology had no answer to make. Christendom was so committed to its doctrinal errors, the absurdity of which—such as the literal fires of hell—were becoming apparent to every reasonable man, that in large measure the case went by default. Belief in the integrity of the Bible began to vanish. Those who attended Church and professed Christianity for other than sincere reasons began to find it unnecessary to keep up the appearance of religion. Church-going was no longer a necessity to being “respectable.” People who served Christ because of fear as to the consequences in a future life if they failed to do so, lost their fears with their beliefs. In short, the “professors” of Christianity have been steadily falling away from any form of association with religion, and stand revealed in their true colors as “tares.”

On the other hand, this same enlightenment concerning the errors of the Dark Ages and the clearer understanding of Divine Truth which marked that century also produced a people who more than ever before justified the name of “Watchers.” Not only devoted to the ethical principles of Christ’s teaching, which is an essential for all believers in Christ, these went further, and by dint of deeper study and whole-hearted consecration were able to perceive, much more definitely than the majority of those still supporting the denominations, the manner in which God’s plan is working out. The clearest vision of “things to come” has proceeded not from theological colleges and cathedral pulpits, but from men of lesser fame and often without degree or denominational ordination.

Here is the fulfillment of the parable. The “tares” are being gathered out from among the “wheat.” Their “tare” characteristics will be burned, destroyed, in the troublous period which is to close the age, when the “wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid” (Isaiah 29:14). The work of reaping and gathering the wheat proceeds, an evident picture
of the gathering of the “people for [God’s] name” (Acts 15:14) into the heavenly condition where they are to be used in the outworking of his designs “for the life of the world.”

The Gospel age, then, produces two classes of people. When the age comes to the full, there is a separation, first the tares being rooted out, and then the wheat gathered. The field was “ready for harvest” by the middle of the nineteenth century and the two great influences—increase of light on the Word of God, “truth now due,” and increase of scientific knowledge—are the influences which are separating these two classes.

In our own day, we see what are evidently the closing features of this work. The separation is all but concluded. The fiery experiences which shall consume the “tare” class are close at hand. The symbols of Revelation 14:14-16 have been fulfilled; the One seated upon the white cloud has thrust in his sickle to reap, and the earth has been reaped. The gathering of the wheat into the barn has been likewise progressing and will progress until it can be truly said that “His wife hath made herself ready” and the marriage of the Lamb shall have come (Revelation 19:7). That event still lies in the future, but must surely come as a triumphant climax to this wonderful work. This testimony regarding the harvest of the age finds abundant fulfillment in the events of the recent past and constitutes one more line of reasoning pointing to the conclusion that the period of Christ’s presence has already commenced.

* * *

It is of interest to note that in Revelation 16:15 a unique parenthesis occurs which may not be without meaning. Bible students are accustomed to regard the events of the sixth vial of wrath (Revelation 16:12-14) as depicting the preliminary events leading up to the Time of the End and the seventh vial (Revelation 16:17) with its dark foreboding, “He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon,” as describing the final conflict in which the kingdoms of this world pass away. Now inserted between these two descriptions there is one brief word: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

If that verse was set in that position by divine intention, it must at the very least constitute a strong hint that the proclamation and the fact of his presence as a thief at a time when the necessity for continued watchfulness is imperative, was between the sixth and seventh vials. Such a casual reference cannot by any means be described as an “evidence”—nevertheless it must be accorded some respect as an indication to be considered and regarded. And if it tells anything at all regarding the time of his coming, its testimony is in accord with the evidences which have just been presented.

* * *

Can there be any reasonable doubt, in the face of these considerations, that the second presence of Christ has already commenced; that he has already raised the sleeping saints to be with himself; already commenced the “change” of the living ones as they come to the end of earthly life; already set in motion the forces which are rapidly consummating the inevitable destruction of this “present evil world”? And if the Scriptural evidences, taken in conjunction with the signs of the times manifested in world events, are thus positive, what is the reasonable conclusion as to the immediate future?

Surely that the third phase of his coming—the revelation with his Church to all men—is an imminent event. That upon the ruins of this doomed social order
there will rise the edifice of God’s kingdom upon earth, a day of light and
gladness in which the ransomed multitudes of all humanity will leave behind the
miseries and injustice of the present, and receive with open hands and open
minds the blessings and laws of a kingdom of righteousness, peace, security,
health, everlasting life. Every aspiration and desire of normal human beings will
be gratified, men and women living in perfect harmony and brotherhood with
their fellows, and all with one accord molding their lives in complete assent to the
wise provisions of that universal code which is at once the Law of Nature and the
Law of God.

“And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall
there be any more pain: FOR THE FORMER THINGS [HAVE] PASSED
AWAY” (Revelation 21:4).

What wonder then that the aged disciple John, sole survivor of those who,
seventy years previously, had seen their Lord ascend from Olivet, should lift up
dim eyes to heaven and give voice to that heartfelt prayer, vibrant with the
certainty of ultimate fulfillment which stands for all time as a signature to the
written revelation of God in the Bible,

“EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS.”

Written by Albert O. Hudson (1899-2000) and originally published in 1939
by Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL,
England.

Reprinted by permission

To print this booklet just click "Print" on your browser's menu.