

# The Second Coming Of Christ, A Look At The Any-Moment Theory<sup>1</sup>

By James Slater

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## Introduction

THE Lord Jesus, on the completion of His earthly work and ministry, led His followers out as far as to Bethany Luke 24:50. There, as He lifted up His hands in blessing, He was carried up into heaven.

The same writer taking up the theme in Acts 1, tells that as they stood beholding, there appeared two men in white apparel. We quote the words of these heavenly messengers. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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."

Here is presented to us the glorious truth that He who came as the lowly Babe of Bethlehem, is coming a second time, in power and glory. This truth is set before us as an incentive to holiness, Titus 2:13, and as the consummation of our salvation. "the redemption of the body". Romans 8.23.

This should be the glorious hope of every believer, and while we would wish this to be so, we do know that there are many, and diverse views and interpretations of the Holy Scriptures given in relation to this event.

The following notes are humbly presented, after a long and careful study of the subject as revealed in the word of God, and preeminently as an endeavour to expose the error of the widely taught theory that the Lord may return at 'any moment'. The writer formerly believed and accepted this teaching, so tenaciously held by brethren with whom he has been associated for many years, and here his changed views are given in the hope that some exercise and interest may be caused in the heart of some fellow Christian.

The chief exponent of this teaching of an 'any moment' return of Christ was John Nelson Darby, who in the middle of the 19th century was a prime mover in what is known in Christendom as the 'Brethren Movement'. It was mainly as a result of his influence that this doctrine was accepted by all branches of Christian companies gathering under the title 'Brethren'; so much so that it is one of the main tenets of assembly teaching. Many, however, associated with the companies, who on searching the Scriptures have found the 'any moment' theory to be wrong, now believe that the second coming of Christ still awaits prophecies to be yet fulfilled and that it will be one event, including all believers; and not occurring in 'two stages' as J. N. Darby, and those of like mind have taught.

The result of the writer's studies can be briefly given as follows: the second coming of Christ will be one event, not in two stages, and all believers will be included in the 'Rapture' at the first resurrection, this taking place at the end of the Great Tribulation. Every blood-bought saint, from Adam to the last redeemed from that Great Tribulation, will share in the triumph of our Lord Jesus at this time, the words of the patriarch Job, as given in chapter 19:25, prove that believers from Old Testament times will receive glorified bodies on that day of victory.

All teaching should be tested in the light of Holy Scripture, and we trust that the reader will make full use of the references given, and like the Bereans of old, "search the Scriptures to see if these things be so."

The following pages are not presented to promote controversy, nor to prove that anyone is wrong, but to

show in some small measure, what we believe to be the truth concerning the second coming of our Lord.

The inclusive pronoun 'we' used throughout these meditations, embraces all whose views coincide with those of the writer, and do not necessarily refer to any particular company or assembly.

## **Chapter One - Watching And Waiting**

THE first question that would arise in our study is this: at what point in time after His ascension could the Lord Jesus have returned? Is there any Scriptural evidence to show that He would return at 'any moment' after He ascended to heaven? We think not.

From the ministry of our Lord we find that He taught His disciples that certain events must take place, and a divine program carried out by them before He would come back again to earth.

"Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," Luke 24:49. No specific time was given for the waiting; we now know it was ten days.

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:19-20.

Such a commission must of necessity require many years.

"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

We who live in the present day have seen this prophecy of the Lord Jesus well-nigh reach its complete fulfillment; we have witnessed too the Wycliffe Bible Translators in their gallant, and ambitious task of giving every tribe and people the Holy Scriptures in their own language, with their labour almost completed. Thus we rest assured that the coming of the Lord is not now far off.

The apostle Peter knew that this event, the Second Advent, would not occur in his lifetime. We quote his own words, "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me." 2 Peter 1:14. This is in reference to the word of the Lord Jesus in John, chapter 21, that Peter would die a violent death as an old man. That took place over thirty years later.

We note in reading Acts, chapter 20, that the apostle Paul did not expect an 'any moment' return of the Lord Jesus. This is shewn in verse 29, "For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." We believe that the departing here referred to is his passing away in death. Whether it does mean this, or his taking leave of the elders of Ephesus at that time, the fact remains that the apostle gave prophetic assurance that there would be an assembly at Ephesus for a long time.

It is a common assertion that the apostle Paul did expect the Rapture during his lifetime; this is stated because he includes himself among the company who are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord, 1

Thessalonians 4:17. The inclusive pronoun is here used, "we which are alive and remain."

On turning to 2 Corinthians 4:14, we find the same apostle counting himself among the dead in Christ. "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you." It is clear that the apostle Paul associates himself in general terms with all believers in both of the foregoing quotations.

In Luke 21:28, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "and when ye see these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Before He spoke these words the Lord Jesus had given an outline of events that would precede His return. Thus He taught that there would be visible signs giving indication of His second coming. This again is clearly stated by the apostle Paul as the correct attitude of 'watching and waiting' for this great event: . . ."we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" Titus 2:12,13.

We may be reminded by some that the signs apply to the coming of the Son of Man to the Jews, and are not for the church. This very common practice of selecting some portions of the gospels as Jewish, and others for the church, is remarkable in its inconsistency: strange indeed it is that the prophecy given to the disciples in Luke 21, (on Tuesday afternoon) is said to be Jewish, while the institution of the remembrance given, in the upper room, to the same men in Luke 22, (on Thursday evening) is for the church; it does not make sense.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:4, reference is made to the day of the Lord. There we are reminded that we are children of light, and should not be caught unawares by the coming of that day. We would wish the reader to observe that this word is given to Gentile believers, and not directly to Jews. The godless world may, and no doubt will be, taken unawares by the coming of the Lord; but no believer with an open Bible, and an open mind, should be so overtaken.

Watching and waiting is the attitude enjoined upon the believer in relation to the coming of the Lord; the Holy Scriptures abound with prophecy yet to be fulfilled, and also in the process of being revealed, that must take place before the return of our Lord.

It is a blessed occupation for the believer to watch the unfolding of events, that point to His soon return; and to wait with patience for the appointed day.

## **Chapter Two - The Signs Appearing Now**

THE Lord Jesus, speaking to His disciples in the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24, used the figure of the fig tree. "Now learn the parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh," verse 32.

It is generally recognized by students of prophecy that Israel, in its chequered history, is the subject of this parable.

We who are privileged to live in this era of grace, can see this parable unfolding now. Israel has once again,

after centuries of dispersion, taken her place among the nations. True, it is but a small beginning, and very far short of what the boundaries of that nation will be, but nevertheless the signs are appearing.

The times of the Gentiles, Luke 21:24, are fast drawing to a close, and we can look up, as instructed of our Lord Jesus, and see things come to pass which show us that "our redemption draweth nigh."

Pretribulationists teach that no prophecy stands yet to be fulfilled ere the Lord may come 'to the air', and so they persistently close their eyes 'to things that have come to pass'; the sure Word of prophecy being fulfilled at this present time.

Much that yet awaits fulfillment centers on the appearing of a superman, the Antichrist. Present events show that the coming of this wicked one will not be long delayed. Is not the stage being set even now for the appearance of this dictator? Among the many activities foretold of him one in particular comes before us now. "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save that he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name," Revelation 13:16-17. We think of the closed shop policy of trade unionism, of amalgamations, associations, and confederacies, all curtailing, and in many instances denying the freedom of the individual. That this is entering into every sphere of life cannot be denied.

In the international field men are faced with problems that defy solution, and these men are now in a position to welcome any political genius that would solve these difficulties. When this superman does appear he will be hailed by the majority, and will receive an exultant welcome. Their cry will be, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war against him?" Revelation, 13:4.

According to Daniel 9:27, this Man of Sin will make a covenant with Israel; a contract due to last seven years. When this has run for three and a half years he will break the covenant, and then will follow the time of bitter persecution, known as the Great Tribulation.

This completely upsets the 'any-moment' theory, because the Antichrist could not make a covenant with Israel while it was dispersed among the nations. Only when they gathered as a nation under a leader, or governing body could such a covenant be made. They have been scattered abroad for centuries, but the standard was raised in Palestine on May 1948, and so Israel is once again recognized as a nation.

Present day events tend to show that the coming of this wicked one will not be long delayed, and his appearing is an event that immediately precedes the coming of the Lord, 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

### **Chapter Three - The Gospel**

THERE is only one gospel unfolded in Holy Writ. Among the many erroneous statements and inferences, which the supporters of the any-moment theory make, one of the most outstanding is that the gospel of the grace of God differs from the gospel of the kingdom. The difficulty which they have to overcome is that while they teach that the day of grace will end at the Rapture, there is a vast multitude of redeemed seen coming out of the Great Tribulation, Revelation 7:14. In their efforts to meet this they point out that the gospel of the kingdom, which they teach as Jewish, will be preached by a remnant of Jews during the

tribulation, resulting in the salvation of the company just mentioned.

Pretribulationists can usually give some Scripture reference to support what they teach, and believe, but although the present writer has on many occasions questioned them on this preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by Jews in the tribulation, he has never met one who could give one Scripture text to substantiate the view. In his widely accepted Dispensational Charts, the writer, Clarence Larkin, presents this teaching there without Scripture reference which proves he could find none.

We would turn to the word of God and accept what is there taught concerning this glorious gospel.

The Lord Jesus, in Matthew 24:14, said to His disciples; "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." This was the gospel which the Lord Jesus preached, and through which Nicodemus received the teaching of the new birth, John 3.

If the gospel of the kingdom is Jewish, it would be wholly inconsistent to preach it world-wide among the Gentile nations. We have abundant evidence in the Acts of the Apostles that the disciples preached the gospel of the kingdom well beyond the bounds of Israel.

When we turn to Acts, chapter 8, we find Philip the evangelist earnestly telling forth the gospel. In verse 5, he went to Samaria and preached Christ unto them; in verse 12 he preached the kingdom of God, and in verse 35 to the Ethiopian eunuch he preached Jesus. Would any be so foolish as to suggest that his gospel differed on either of these occasions? The foregoing only serves to show the variety and scope of the one glorious gospel.

We would pursue this further, and in Acts 20 consider the preaching of the apostle Paul. In his address to the elders of the church at Ephesus he recalls how he had preached the grace of God, verse 24, and in the next verse he tells of his preaching among them (Gentiles), of the kingdom of God.

In the closing verses of the Acts of the Apostles we have what is probably the last view, on earth, of the beloved apostle. He was in bondage in Rome, but he was still permitted to preach, and we find of the Jews that came to visit him the majority rejected the gospel. We quote the last two verses: "And Paul dwelt in his own house, and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

The gospel which the apostle Paul preached included the good news of saving grace, and of the kingdom of God. Did he preach two gospels? We find his own answer in Galatians 1, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," verse 8.

In Galatians 3:8 we read, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.'"

Here in the Old Testament is the source of a stream that has expanded into the flow of a mighty river; the

gospel with a twofold purpose and theme. These are the divine rule of heaven on earth through faith, as seen in Matthew 13, revealed in this present day, and the literal ultimate personal reign on earth, on the throne of His father David, Luke 1:32, for a thousand years.

God made a covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17, that in him all nations would be blessed. The Children of Israel are his seed according to the flesh, and the church the seed through faith. The former are to inherit an earthly kingdom, the latter is a spiritual kingdom. All is included in one glorious gospel: the "grace of God hath appeared to all men, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all nations."

#### **Chapter Four: The Day Of Our Lord**

THE present period is man's day. Throughout the centuries he has been tested under various conditions, and has proved himself a failure in every sphere. The coming day of the Lord is God's day, and it is then that the triumphs of the Lord Jesus will be fully displayed. In the word of God this day is mentioned in differing aspects; it is the day of the Lord, Zechariah 14:1; the day of Christ, Philippians 1:10; and the day of God, 2 Peter 3:12.

There are a number of like references, but we believe those quoted, and others, all speak of what we commonly term the day of the Lord.

Pretribulationists teach that the days quoted above are all different occasions, and so many dear saints are ever more confused. In general this theory teaches that the day of Christ is the coming for the church, while the day of the Lord is His appearing as Son of Man, which they say are separate events, before and after the tribulation. This is definitely not the teaching of Scripture. According to Zechariah 14:1, the day of the Lord is ushered in when the Lord Jesus comes again; the time when He takes full control. This day is not a period of twenty-four hours, but will last at least a thousand years. This is confirmed in 2 Peter 3:10, where we read, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

We know that this will not take place until after the Millennium, and the verse just quoted states it will occur in the day of the Lord. It is remarkable that while pretribulationists teach that the day of the Lord is Jewish, the only two occasions where the apostle Paul uses the phrase is in writing to Gentiles: 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:2, R. V. In the closing verses of 1 Thessalonians 4, he tells them of that glorious event the rapture, when all believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and the conjunction 'But' with which chapter 5 opens shows he is continuing the same theme to the same company.

Why should the apostle consider it necessary to write to these believers as in 1 Thessalonians 5:4, of the possibility of their being taken unawares by the day of the Lord if they were to be caught up into heaven some years before it comes?

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the day of the Lord is associated with a 'falling away', and with the revelation of the Antichrist. That portion of Holy Writ reveals to us that there will be a falling away previous to the day of the Lord. This is referred to in the Revised Version, and in other translations, as the 'falling away' (the

apostasy).

There has been departure from God, both personally and collectively, on very many occasions throughout the centuries, but this apostasy will evidently be a period of unrivalled unfaithfulness and error on the part of professing believers. Unsaved men and women cannot fall away from God as they are already, by nature, 'afar off from Him', by rejecting His offer of reconciliation.

So it is most interesting, and instructive, that the day of the Lord is linked in the opening words of 1 Thessalonians 5 with the Rapture; while in 2 Thessalonians 2, it is associated with the coming of the Antichrist, and these are two events which pretribulationists state are separated by about seven years.

We believe that the falling away is the state of the church in the latter days as is revealed of the church at Laodicea, Revelation 3:14.

The day of the Lord commences with the Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, and includes reward, 2 Timothy 4:8, and 1 Corinthians 3:13: with judgement, in Zechariah 14:2, and blessing as in Zechariah 14:9 including too, as we have already shown, the reign of the Lord Jesus for a thousand years on earth.

### **Chapter Five: The Mystery**

"BEHOLD I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," 1 Corinthians 15:51.

A mystery in the Holy Scriptures is invariably something kept secret or hidden, until the appropriate time for it being revealed.

Many diverse views are given concerning the mystery mentioned in the above text. Most pretribulationists teach that this is the coming of the Lord Jesus to the air, and state very definitely that this was only revealed to the apostle Paul.

This interpretation will not stand even the simplest test of Holy Writ, because the Lord Jesus gave a number of clear promises relative to His second coming.

In the foregoing verse of 1 Corinthians which we have quoted, the mystery that was exclusively made known to that apostle was not that Christ was coming to the air in any secret return, but that at His coming living saints would be changed; and this was not revealed to any other of the apostles.

Another theory widely taught is that the 'church' was a mystery that was only made known to Paul. This is based on a careless reading of the opening verses of Ephesians 3; but the careful student will see that verse 5 includes others of the apostles and prophets in this revelation. This mystery was not that the 'church' was to be formed, but that Jew and Gentile were to be brought together into that one body.

The apostle Peter was the one most prominently used of God in laying the foundation of the assembly on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14.

Thus we have the 'church' founded, and functioning for the glory of God, while Saul of Tarsus was as yet unsaved. They were soon to hear him breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples, Acts 9:1.

So then the 'apostles' doctrine of Acts 2:42, did not include any of the teaching of the apostle Paul, and this alone would prove that the mystery of the 'church' was not exclusively revealed to him.

While we do state that this mystery was not made known only to Paul, we do say that what was revealed to him, regarding this, or any other truth, was a direct revelation to himself from heaven, and he was not dependent for what he was divinely taught on any other of the apostles, Galatians 1:2.

On several occasions in his writings he says: "I received of the Lord," and we truly have reason to be grateful for assembly truth and teaching found in his writings.

### **Chapter Six: The Tribulation Saints**

AT a recent conference a speaker in the course of his address made this statement: "Not one saint will go through the tribulation." This was immediately received with a nod of assent, and a murmur of approval from many in the audience.

Now this assertion may satisfy the wishful thinking of many earnest and godly men, but it certainly is not the teaching of the Scripture.

When we turn to Revelation 7:13, we find a question asked by one of the elders: "What are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" The next verse gives the answer; "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

In Revelation 20, reference is made to a company of saints who suffer during that time of trial. "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," verse 4.

These believers will be raised in the first resurrection, and will reign with the Lord Jesus in His earthly kingdom, verse 5.

As we turn again to Revelation 7, we read in verses 9-10: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.'" The description here given marks this company as a Gentile throng, and two things are said of them which affects the study before us now. They came out of the Great Tribulation; and they are redeemed by blood. In the purpose of God, and in His prophetic plan there are two distinct peoples; these are Israel and the church, and this great multitude must belong to either of these two companies; the word of God gives no alternative. We have observed it is a Gentile throng so we conclude they are associated with the church.

The careful student will note that the Word does not say they were saved during tribulation: it does say they came through it. We have no doubt that many of this company are saved during that period, but we are convinced that this multitude are the saints of the latter days of the church age.

Many will be martyred at that time, as we may see from Revelation 20, and they will be included in the first resurrection, verse 4.

If the Rapture takes place before the tribulation then this great company, who have part in the first resurrection, will not be in this great event. A question arises here: "When will these saints receive their glorified bodies?"

In their efforts to prove that the church will escape the Great Tribulation some make an erroneous inference in their interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 1:10. There the exhortation is given to these Christians; "To wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from wrath to come."

It is widely taught that the 'wrath to come', referred to here, is the Great Tribulation, and not future punishment as in John 3:36. On the testimony of reliable authority we learn that the word 'wrath' in both the passages mentioned is the same Greek word. Could we be permitted to say of the words of John to the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:7, that he was warning them to flee from the Great Tribulation? The word construction is the same in Matthew 3:7 as it is in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, and we consider this interpretation wholly preposterous and unscriptural.

## **Chapter Seven - Matthew 24**

MATTHEW chapter 24 is one of the most important portions of the Word of God in relation to prophecy, and much controversy has been entered into as to its true interpretation; both orally and on the printed page.

Pretribulationists teach that this chapter is Jewish; and the teaching is that the Lord Jesus will come at a second stage of His coming as Son of Man to Israel at the close of the Great Tribulation.

We would observe that the prophecies which the Lord Jesus gave on this occasion were spoken to His disciples, verse 3. It has been said that He spoke to them then as the representatives of the nation: if this be so it may be noted that He, two days later, in the upper room, taught those same disciples as He instituted the remembrance, a 'church' ordinance. Did they so quickly change their representative character?

Two questions were asked by the disciples in the opening verses of Matthew 24: "Tell us when shall these things be?" (the destruction of the Temple); "and what shall be the sign of Thy coming?" (the Second Advent). The first of these questions refers to the razing of the Temple in A.D.70, while the second question has reference to an event yet future, the coming of the Lord. The failure of teachers and students to distinguish between these two questions has been the cause of much error and confusion.

The Lord Jesus continuing His discourse in verse 37 said, "But as the days of Noah were, so also shall the

coming of the Son of Man be." In verse 40 we read, "Then shall two be in the field; one shall be taken and the other left."

That the Scriptures just quoted have direct reference to the Rapture cannot be gainsaid; but since pretribulationists will not accept this they are presented with a difficulty of interpretation.

In order to overcome this they state that the one who is taken is taken away in judgement, and the other left for blessing.

Two simple questions need to be answered if this be the true interpretation: how will the one who is taken be removed, and to where will that person be taken?

An unbiased student will find that the true translation of the words of the original text is that the one who is taken is received for blessing, while the one who is left is forsaken. Both the Newberry Bible and the Companion Bible agree with this interpretation.

The Lord Jesus said, "as the days of Noah were; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." What happened in Noah's day? Undoubtedly Noah was taken from the earth, in blessing, because he found grace in the eye of God, while those who were left on earth perished in judgement.

In the parallel passage in Luke 17:26, He uses the figure of the days of Lot to illustrate His teaching. He says, "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot," verse 28, and in verses 35-36 He tells of one being taken and the other left.

Lot was taken from Sodom to be blessed before divine judgement fell on the place, and those who were left perished there.

To those who teach that Matthew 24 is Jewish, and that it refers to a second stage of the coming of the Lord, and His advent as Son of Man to Israel, it must be embarrassing to find in verse 37, the mention of the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man.

### **Chapter Eight - Romans 8:23**

WHEN the first man, Adam, through sin lost the dominion over creation that was given him by the Creator God, the curse was put upon that creation because of his disobedience. Thus there followed all that is the blight of what was then a fair and peaceful scene: death and decay, thorns and thistles, and "nature red in tooth and claw."

Romans 8:23, points us forward to a time when this order will be reversed, and the groaning creation will be released from its bondage.

That joyous release will take place when the last Adam takes control: a glorious day foretold by Zechariah the prophet in chapter 14:4, "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east..."

The point of interest in Romans 8 is the fact that creation's blessing is linked there with the "redemption of the body", that occasion, when "we shall all be changed"; the Rapture.

The teaching of pretribulationism is that the 'redemption of the body', and the release of creation from its bondage, are two separate events. This is in direct conflict with the indisputable word of Romans 8, verses 19-23, which plainly show that the Rapture of the believer coincides with the day of creation's blessing.

He must truly be said to be 'willingly ignorant' who would not fail to see and recognize, that this portion of Holy Writ before us now proves beyond all doubt, that the second coming of the Lord Jesus is one event.

There is no doubt too that the patriarch Job was in the good of this glorious prospect when he uttered those well-known words, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:"...Job, 19:25-26.

### **Chapter Nine - 2 Thessalonians 2:7**

THE majority of pretribulationists believe, and teach, that the above passage shows that the Holy Spirit will be taken from the earth with the church, in a pretribulation rapture.

Mr. W. E. Vine, himself a staunch pretribulationist, in his *Expositionary Dictionary of New Testament Words*, says that there is no word in the original of this text to suggest that anything is removed.

It is also worthy of note that in the Newberry Bible the word taken is in italics, and we believe this is because this eminent scholar could find nothing in the original to justify the use of the word.

The present writer has studied the interpretation of the verse by reliable and unbiased men, and holds the view that the restraining power referred to there as "he who now letteth", is not the Holy Spirit, but the present system of organized government, and in the present state of world unrest it is not difficult for us to realize how this can, and no doubt soon will be set aside, to be replaced by the rule of the Antichrist; "when he, (the antichrist) shall arise out of the midst", (Gk. text). This is the true reading of the word 'taken out of the way', and the student with an open mind will find the advantage of the original here.

If the Holy Spirit is to be removed from the earth in a pretribulation rapture then those who believe in this teaching would need to explain how the preaching of the gospel (during tribulation days), will achieve such wonderful results seen in the saved multitude of Revelation 7, without the power of the Holy Spirit, when we today with His power in our midst are grieved at the lack of interest in divine things, and are disappointed in the results of our gospel efforts.

Many have the mistaken idea that Holy Spirit came to earth for the first time at Pentecost, Acts 2, when He came to form the nucleus of the assembly, and that He will leave the world again when that work is completed at the end of the rapture.\

True it is that He came here then to be an indwelling force as never before according to the word of the Lord

Jesus in John 14.

There are very many instances in Scripture that tell of the activity of the Holy Spirit on earth since first He moved on the face of the waters, Genesis, 1.

When we turn to Exodus 35:30, we find the Spirit guiding and fitting men for the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Again we note that godly men were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the Holy Scriptures, "holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Peter 1:21.

When we turn to Acts chapter 2, we have the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord Jesus as given in John 14, that the Comforter would come to them, and here we have stated the duration of His stay on earth: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

The saints of this, and any future age, can draw comfort from these words, and know that the Holy Spirit is always with them.

Pretribulationists who tell us so feelingly that our God would not allow His church to go through the Great Tribulation, do not seem in the least concerned that if their teaching is correct, the multitude of saints that are seen coming out of that fearful time of trial, Revelation 7, will have to bear their testing, and affliction, without the help and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

### **Chapter Ten - Revelation 3:10**

WHEN supporters of the 'any moment' theory are endeavoring to substantiate their teaching they invariably turn to Revelation 3:10.

Here we have a promise given to the church at Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." There is no doubt but that the hour of temptation just quoted is the Great Tribulation and so this is taken as definite proof that the 'church' will not pass through this time of trial.

When this is examined in the light of the context, as all Scripture should be so studied, it presents an entirely different viewpoint.

These letters to the seven churches may be seen in at least three aspects.

They were divine messages to literal company of that period, touching much of their shortcomings and failure.

What is described in the various letters can represent conditions that have existed in assemblies throughout the centuries, from Pentecost, until this present day, and any of the conditions could have coexisted at any time in the past, and in Christendom today.

Then there is the historic-prophetic view, when the changes which have taken place down through history can be traced, in the letters. For the sake of any who may not be familiar with this teaching a brief summary may be given.

The letter to Ephesus, Revelation 2:1, presents the church in its pristine glory, "in its first love." This is the period of Acts 2, immediately following the day of Pentecost.

What was written to Smyrna reveals the trials that were soon to follow, when "a great persecution arose against the church," Acts 8:1.

Pergamos covers the era when the church gained popularity at the conversion of Constantine, a Roman Emperor, A.D. 272-337, it was through this that the church became linked to the state.

So can be discerned the roots of Papacy, in the message to Thyatira. Sardis unfolds the period of the Reformation in which Martin Luther was a prominent figure.

The historic period which is covered in the letter to Philadelphia shows the time when a recovery of truth was made, when in the early nineteenth century, the truth of Scriptural assembly gathering was in great measure recovered.

Now it was to the church whose message covers that period of church history that the promise of Revelation 3:10, was given, and truly we have seen that this promise has been fulfilled.

Laodicea suggests the final hour of church history, in declension and departure, and it is very evident that we have reached that stage now.

This will reach its peak and full development in the 'falling away' (the apostasy), of 2 Thessalonians 2:3, and Scripture makes it abundantly clear that these conditions will precede the coming of the Lord, when the Man of Sin will be destroyed at the end of the Great Tribulation.

## **Chapter Eleven - With His Saints**

THOSE who seek to divide the second advent of our Lord into two stages teach that He will come in the first stage for His saints, and in a second stage with them. In support of this it is often stated that He must first come for them, before He can come with them. Sound logic this may appear to be but it is not Scriptural teaching.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:13 we read, "To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

If this verse is a reference to a second stage of the advent is it not inconsistent to exhort believers to live in view of it if they are to be taken to heaven in a previous stage, some time before.

The saints whom the Lord will bring with Him when He comes again, are those who are with Him now in glory. He does not require to come for them before this.

We turn to 1 Thessalonians 4, and seek an interpretation of what the apostle says in reference to this. We read in verse 14, "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The reference here is to them "which sleep in Jesus." The believer who has fallen asleep does not cease to exist, but where? Certainly not in the grave. Scripture teaches that they are now in the enjoyment of the eternal life given them when they believed.

The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 1:23, that believers who die "are with Christ which is far better," and in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that those who are "Absent from the body are present with the Lord."

Thus we have the clear statement of Holy Writ that those who 'sleep in Jesus', are now with the Lord. What will happen to them when the Lord comes? Will he leave them behind in heaven? The answer is "they that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him", the soul to be reunited to a glorified body. He is coming with those who are in glory with Him now, and for them who will be "those that are alive and remain"; one glorious event, to be completed, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.

## **Chapter Twelve - The First Resurrection**

THAT there will yet be two resurrections of the dead is the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. The first is referred to in 1 Corinthians 15, and in 1 Thessalonians 4; and this will include all believers of every age, and Old and New Testament days; 'the dead in Christ'.

The second will take place at the end of the thousand years reign (the Millennium) of the Lord Jesus: then 'the rest of the dead', i.e., those who will not have part in the first resurrection will be raised, Revelation, 20:5.

Only twice in the Word of God is the resurrection of believers actually described as the first resurrection: Revelation, 20:5-6, and here it is placed immediately after the Great Tribulation. The 'any moment' teaching puts this resurrection before the Tribulation, and so the plain statement of Holy Writ is set aside.

In their endeavour to explain this, pretribulationists say that the first resurrection takes place at different times, and occurs in parts, the first being the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the last part being the raising of the martyrs of the tribulation. One very common assertion, which the present writer has himself heard from public platform, is that the statement of Revelation chapter 20, verse 5, could read, "this completes the first resurrection".

In 1 Corinthians 15, we read of the Lord Jesus being the 'first-fruits' of resurrection; and He is this because He is the only one to rise from the dead who presently "lives in the power of an endless life". There were others raised from the dead before Him, and there are three in the Gospels, but all went into death at a later day.

A resurrection of saints is brought before us in Matthew 27:52, "And the graves were opened; and many

bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared to many." It is vain for us to conjecture where these saints eventually went, or what happened to them, as Scripture reveals no more than has already been quoted. It has been suggested that this event is the fulfillment of the harvest ingathering of Leviticus, 23, when the first sheaf was brought in before the Lord. With this we are inclined to agree, but it must be observed that these rose from the dead after His resurrection, and He was the 'first-fruits'. Matthew 27:53.

Those who accept the teaching that the first resurrection is in parts must have difficulty avoiding partial rapture. The Scriptures are very clear that "we shall all be changed": every blood-bought saint is to have a body of glory, and that Old Testament worthy, Job, was well aware of that, Job 19:25-27. This change will take place according to 1 Corinthians 15, "at the last trump"; and as stated in 1 Thessalonians 4, when we "are caught up to meet the Lord in the air".

If the teaching of pretribulationism is right then those who are raised at other parts of the resurrection than those just mentioned, will not be included in the Rapture. The question that must then be answered is "when will these saints receive a body of glory?"

We prefer to accept the very plain statement of Holy Writ; "this is the first resurrection..." Revelation 20:5, taking place at the end of the Great Tribulation, and including all believers, one complete and glorious event.

### **Chapter Thirteen: The Temple**

MUCH of the history of the children of Israel centers round the temple. Every faithful Jew had his heart set on this place; the place where God had placed His name. The Holy Scriptures contain the record of three successive temples. The first was built by Solomon, and was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; 2 Chronicles 36:19.

In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah a second temple was built, this stood for some five hundred years, until it was plundered and desecrated during the Maccabean period. The third was built by Herod, and was being used in the days of the earthly ministry of our Lord. This was destroyed according to His prophecy, Matthew 24:2, in the year A.D.70.

Each of these buildings was erected on Mount Moriah, 2 Chronicles 3:1, the place where Abraham built an altar on which he was prepared to offer his son in sacrifice to God; this fact can be so very instructive to us believers today.

The Moslem Mosque of Omar now dominates that sacred spot, and this I would suggest, stands as a living testimony against the teaching that the Lord Jesus may return at 'any moment'.

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, that in a future day the Antichrist will sit in the temple of God. The verse reads: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God."

The Scriptures teach us that the entire period of the operations of the Antichrist is to be seven years, and in

the midst of that time he will make a covenant with Israel; this will be broken with dire consequences for that people.

Would it be possible to clear that sacred site and build another temple in that time, and in particular under the conditions which we have just envisaged? We think not.

The temple built by Solomon was seven years in building, 1 Kings 6:38, and if we compare Ezra 3:11 with Ezra 6:15, we will find that Zerubbabel was about fifteen years in building the second. The temple which stood in New Testament times was forty-six years in building, John 2:20.

Seeing that so many years were required for the erection of each of these temples, it is evident that even with the most modern of building techniques, a considerable period of time will be necessary for the building of another.

There is no doubt but that a future temple will be erected on the ground where the Mosque of Omar now stands, and we are equally sure that it is in this temple (and not a Gentile building), in which the Antichrist will demand the worship of a deceived world.

The evil work of this 'man of sin' will precede the coming of the Lord Jesus; and 2 Thessalonians 2:8 makes it abundantly clear that he will be destroyed at that time. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

Since the wicked operations of this person will terminate at the coming of the Lord, the temple in which he is to make his vain display must be built before this glorious event.

And so we look to the Middle East and developments there, and listen to the repeated claim of devout Jews to the site where this temple will yet stand.

### **Chapter Fourteen: The Last Trump**

IN 1 Corinthians 15, we have an interesting trilogy: the last Adam, verse 45; the last enemy, verse 26; the last trump, verse 52. This is a chapter of victory, showing the triumph of the Lord Jesus in resurrection, reaching its climax in the latter verses: "Oh death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Those who hold that there is no reference to the Rapture in the Old Testament may note that these words are quoted from Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14.

The last trump is of immediate interest to us meantime, as it is given as the point of time when living believers will be changed and the 'dead in Christ' raised. Those who adhere to the 'any-moment' teaching say that this last trump will sound before the Great Tribulation.

When we turn to Matthew 24:29-31, we read: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Here we have again the plain statement of the

word of God that a trumpet is to be sounded after the Great Tribulation, yet pretribulationists insist that the last trump will sound before that fearful time.

Only one series of trumpets is found in the New Testament and these are outlined in Revelation 8. In Revelation 10:7 we read, "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets..."

We believe that the mystery referred to here is that which was revealed to the Apostle Paul, as shown in Ephesians 3, that the Gentiles would be brought into the same divine blessing as the Jew in this new body, the church. This new order will finish at the sounding of the seventh, and last trump, when the Lord Jesus will return to earth to reign for a thousand years, and we His people with Him.

We would note at least two points in these verses. First, it is the time when the Lord commences to reign, and this we know will be when Antichrist has been destroyed. Second, it is a period of reward for believers, and we know from 1 Corinthians 5 that this time of reward is the judgement seat of Christ, So we have the reigning and the reward both associated with the sounding of the seventh, and last trump.

Many theories are presented by pretribulationists regarding the last trump. Some say it is so-called because it is the last trump that we (believers) will hear. Surely we who are to be so closely linked with events at that time will hear others that may sound, and there can be none after the last. Again, it is said that the last trump is drawn from the imagery of the Roman army; various trumpets being sounded on diverse occasions. There is not a hint of this in 1 Corinthians 15, or elsewhere in the Scriptures: we prefer the express statement of the word of God. It is not necessary to go outside of the sacred page for its interpretation, all its teaching can be linked with a counterpart inside the book, usually giving a further revelation of divine truth.

It has been taught by some that the last trump of 1 Corinthians 15, is the second trumpet of Numbers 10. They are indeed hard-pressed that have to resort to such interpretation. It may be observed that these were sounded by priests, and were associated with worship, or with the warfare and journeyings of the people. The last trump of 1 Corinthians 15 is to be sounded by an angel, as are all the others of Revelation, and not by a priest.

Personally, I consider the two trumpets of Numbers 10 to be lovely types of the Old and New Testaments. Both beaten out of one piece, and given for our instruction in worship, warfare, and our walk as believers, and like the silver trumpets (the metal of redemption) they can be used singly or together, as the need may arise.

It has been said that seeing that the book of Revelation was written some time after Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, how could the apostle know about the seven trumpets of which John wrote?

In answer to that we remember that Paul made it abundantly clear that any revelation given him was not of man, but was "received of the Lord." The revelation given him of the last trump came from the same blessed source.

No matter what explanations or interpretations are given, the very fact that this is stated to be the last trump implies that others are sounded before it.

If these are not the other six of Revelation then we ask, "What are they? And where in Scripture can they be found?"

So too it is reasonable to say that the last trump must be the last, any sounding after it makes the apostle's statement in 1 Corinthians 15 a fallacy.

### **Chapter Fifteen: To 'Meet' The Lord**

ONE of the most delightful, and most commonly used statements in relation to the second advent is that we are to meet the Lord in the air.

Those who believe that the Lord may return 'at any moment', teach that He is coming to the air in the first stage of this advent, when He will come for His saints; to return with them at a later stage to the earth.

The Scriptures do not say that the Lord Jesus will come to the air, what it does say is that we shall 'meet' Him in the air. A brief study of this word 'meet' will prove this point, and the unbiased student will find this profitable. This word occurs four times in the original text of the Word of God; the word is 'APANTESI', and it is found in Matthew 25:1-6, in Acts 28:15, and in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

The word conveys the same idea in all of these passages. In Matthew 25, the virgins went out to 'meet' the bridegroom, and when they met Him they turned from the direction in which they were going when they met, to journey with Him in the way which He was traveling.

The same truth is unfolded in Acts 28, where we read of the apostle Paul as he journeyed towards Rome: verse 14 reads, "and so we went towards Rome."

We read of the meeting in verse 15: "and from thence (Rome), when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appi Forum". The brethren when they heard of the coming of the apostle went out to meet him, to return with him as he continued his journey to Rome.

Would the use of the word in Thessalonians be different from the two occasions just cited? We think not. We quote the passage there: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to 'meet' the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The Lord Jesus is coming back to the same hallowed spot from which He ascended, Zechariah 14:4, "and His feet shall stand on that day upon the Mount of Olives . . .", and on that glorious day the redeemed from every age and clime, will "meet" Him as He descends to earth, and return to earth with Him, accompanied by the

saints who are presently with Him in heaven, a glorious escort, to live and reign with Him for a thousand years.

## **Chapter Sixteen: Coming And Appearing**

THERE are two words commonly used in Scripture in relation to the second coming of our Lord. These are: 'His coming', 1 Thessalonians 4:15, and 'His appearing', Titus 2:13. While the writer recognizes the value of studying these two terms in the original Greek, his present purpose is to view these two words in the ordinary English usage.

The 'any-moment' theory teaches that His coming is for the church, before the Great Tribulation, while His appearing is to Israel and the world at the end of that period. If this be so why are the saints time and again exhorted to look for His appearing, and to live in the expectation of it, if they are already taken from the earth to glory with Him at His coming? Surely there is inconsistency here.

We have the appearing brought before us in 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is, and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure."

What is the purifying hope presented here? Is it not the 'blessed hope' of Titus 2:13, and the hope of a groaning creation as in Romans 8:23? The hope thus set before us is that this body shall be changed, and fashioned like His body of glory, Philippians 3:20. In each of these three references to the hope of the believer, we find that all are associated with the appearing of our Lord Jesus.

The closing verses of Hebrews 9 present three appearings of our Lord Jesus. He appeared to put away sin, verse 26; He appears in the presence of God for us now, verse 24, and He is to appear the second time without sin, unto salvation verse 28. We have put emphasis on the last two words here, 'unto salvation'. They are found together in three other verses in the New Testament: Romans 1:16; Romans 10:10; 1 Peter 1:5. These form an interesting study, and linked together they teach the purpose of our redemption.

If the appearing referred to in Hebrews 9:28 is after the Great Tribulation, and our salvation is completed at the Rapture before this time of trial, then the words there, 'unto salvation' are an unnecessary addition.

Those who teach that the second coming and the appearing are two separate events or stages of the second advent, must find great difficulty in explaining 2 Thessalonians 2:8 where we read: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

So while pretribulationists teach that the revelation of the Antichrist is at the appearing of our blessed Lord, the text just quoted shows this is at the coming.

We conclude that the coming and the appearing are one and the same occasion: He is coming for His saints, 1 Thessalonians 4:15, and will then at that time be manifested with them, 1 John 3:2: one glorious event.

## Chapter Seventeen: The Judgement Seat Of Christ

WE have observed in another paper that there is to be a day of reward for believers. "For we must all appear at the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Corinthians 5:10.

The same writer expounds this truth more fully in 1 Corinthians 3, and there are numerous references throughout the Holy Scripture to this time when our works shall be manifested. Many diverse views are expressed regarding this day, and in particular as to the time when it will take place.

In 2 Corinthians 5:10, the apostle says, "we must all appear," and this all is inclusive of every believer. Pretribulationists teach that this judgement will take place, in heaven, between the "two stages" of the second coming; the period of the Great Tribulation. How can all the blood-bought host of the redeemed appear at the judgement seat if thousands still on earth suffering at the hands of Antichrist while the judgement is taking place?

The clear statement of Luke 14:14, is that the day of reward is at the resurrection of the just; and in Matthew 16:27 we are told that this day of recompense is at the coming of the Son of Man.

If, as pretribulationists teach, the resurrection of the just and the coming of the Son of Man are two separate occasions, how can they reconcile the two verses that have just been quoted?

The Word of God shows very clearly that the day of reward, the judgement seat of Christ, at which all believers will appear, is at the end of the Great Tribulation. This is confirmed in Revelation 11, where we have the reward linked with the sounding of the seventh, and last trumpet. "And the seventh angel sounded. . ." verse 15, then the word continues: "We give Thee thanks O Lord God Almighty and the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, both small and great".

These verses show that the judgement and reward of believers takes place when the Lord Jesus commences to reign upon the earth, and the company which we have just mentioned may be clearly identified as both Old and New Testament saints.

One of the most blatant errors of pretribulationists is found in their interpretation of the latter verses of Matthew 25. In this they state that the salvation of these here referred to depends on their treatment of the Jews, whom, they say are the company the King speaks of as 'my brethren'; so they condone, unwittingly perhaps, salvation by works.

If Matthew 25 is read in the light of the context, as all Scripture should be, we cannot fail to see that verses 31-46 describe the judgement seat of Christ, and it may be noted that the unrighteous of this portion are consigned to everlasting punishment without having to appear at the Great White Throne judgement, a thousand years later.

The careful student will find that in all references to the judgement seat of Christ, it takes place on earth, whereas the Great White Throne is set up in space.

The moment we were 'saved by grace' we were secure for all eternity, and the prospect is ours of being 'with Christ' throughout the endless ages, but our reward for service here is ever associated with our place in His kingdom when He reigns on earth.

## **Chapter Eighteen: The Blessed Hope**

THE second coming of the Lord Jesus is described in Titus 2:13 as 'the blessed hope', R.V. It is there presented as an incentive to godly living, and is there linked with the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ. No stretch of the imagination can interpret this text as teaching two stages of the Second Advent. It is often said that only the expectation of the Lord 'at any moment' can really be a blessed hope. Those who have seen the error of this, and who believe in a post-tribulation rapture, have been accused of robbing the saints of this hope. The first advent of the Lord is described, on several occasions, as the hope of Israel, and yet we know that this was foretold many centuries before the event took place.

Pretribulationists teach that there is no reference to the rapture in the Old Testament, and that any prophecies regarding the second coming are all connected with His appearing (a second stage of this event). We point to the words of 1 Corinthians 15:54, where the Old Testament is quoted with the significant phrase: "Then shall be brought to pass. . .", surely this is a fulfillment of prophecy. In Titus 2:13 the blessed hope and the glorious appearing are linked together as one event. The true light of prophecy, 2 Peter 1:19, shining in the heart of the believer, is indeed a blessed hope in these dark days. As we look around we see the signs and events which ever remind us that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Is the expectation of the return of the Lord at 'any moment' the hope that it is so fondly said to be? We think not. The writer has heard somewhat of the uncertainty and doubt that arises in the heart of earnest believers, as they have pondered what will happen to their children when the Lord comes. Christians who have such a qualm of fear and doubt, such as this cannot honestly be 'looking for that blessed hope'. Some would wish to believe that their children will go with them at the rapture, but we can scarcely conceive our God making distinction between the children of believing and unbelieving parents, under an age of responsibility.

Scripture does not reveal much as to this question, but what we can glean is helpful, we believe that all children who have died, not having reached an age of responsibility, are saved and are of those who are 'Christ's at His coming', 1 Corinthians 15:23. The words of David in 2 Samuel 12:23 would teach us this. Of the child that had died he said, "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

When the Lord Jesus comes, the curse which was pronounced upon creation will be removed, Romans 8:23; and we may learn from Scripture that the very infants will be free from harm. "And the sucking child shall play on the hole of an asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain", Isaiah 11:8-9.

Thus we are assured that the children that will be left after a post-tribulation rapture, will enter into the blessing of the glorious triumph of the Prince of Peace in millennial glory.

The prospect of having to endure the sufferings of the Great Tribulation need not dim the hope of any believer. There are many references in the Word of God to the privilege of being called to suffer for Christ: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad. . ." Matthew 5:11.

"And they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Acts 5:41.

Such suffering makes 'the blessed hope' shine the brighter.

### **Chapter Nineteen: The End Of The Age**

THERE are quite a few occasions where the most commonly used version of the Holy Scriptures, the Authorised Version, fails in presenting an accurate interpretation of the original Greek text.

An outstanding example of this is found in the translation of the Greek, 'Aion', which this version invariably renders as "world".

The correct reading of Hebrews 1:2 should be: "Through faith we understand that the 'ages' were formed by the word of God".

Reference is made to the first advent of the Lord Jesus in Hebrews 9:26, as follows: "...but now once in the end of the ages (plural), hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Thus we see that the various times and periods under which man has been tested since his creation, are referred to as 'ages', while from the first advent of Christ until His second coming, that period is described as the age (singular).

Giving His commission to His disciples in the last verse of the gospel according to Matthew, our Lord says: . . and lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age.

Very many believers erroneously describe these ages as dispensations, but we may note that the word thus translated in Ephesians 3:2 means 'stewardship' and is not a period of time.

When we turn to Matthew 24:3, we find the disciples asking the Lord Jesus a two-fold question: "Tell us when shall these things be?" (the destruction of the Temple), "and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and the consummation of the age?"

In chapter 13 of this same gospel we have this phrase: "the consummation of the age", mentioned three times. In verses 39 and 40, "the harvest is the end of the age", and in verse 49 the same word is used in relation to future judgement.

Where this phrase is used in chapter 13, it is always linked with the coming of the Son of Man, which pretribulationism presents as the second stage of the advent of the Lord in glory, and we have already pointed out that the 'age' is the period of time from the coming of the Christ to Bethlehem, until He comes again in power and glory.

We would remind the reader again that the Lord Jesus stated in Matthew 28:20 that He would be with His disciples, in their proclamation of the gospel, unto the end of the age, the moment of time when they would share in a glorious resurrection and rapture.

There is not a shadow of doubt but that the references of Holy Scripture to the 'end of the age' are to one and the same period of time, and so upset any theory of a two-stage coming of the Lord.

### **Chapter Twenty: Until**

"THE Lord said unto my Lord, 'Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'" This is the opening verse of Psalm 110, and it is more often quoted, or referred to, in the New Testament than any other portion of the Old.

If, as pretribulationists would have us believe, the Antichrist is to commence his evil work after the church has gone, then they would have us accept that the Lord Jesus will leave His present place at the Father's right hand before His enemies are so subdued. Surely this Antichrist must be numbered among those enemies.

We find the words of Peter in Acts 3:30-31, "And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the time of the restitution of all things. . ." The times of the restitution of all things is creation's hope, as found in Romans 8:21-25; and in Zechariah 14:4, when "His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives."

Thus we are taught from both Old and New Testaments, that our Lord will continue in His present place in heaven, until the moment when creation's hope is to be realized, and every enemy will be conquered; "the times of the restitution of all things"

The apostle Paul in writing to the saints at Rome informs them in chapter 11, verse 25, that "blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." The national rejection of their Messiah by Israel reached its climax when they cried, "away with this man, ...we have no king but Caesar." There has, however, always been a faithful remnant even in that nation's darkest days, and so the apostle can truly say that "blindness" there is only in part, and until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. This period of national rejection will end when "they shall look on Him whom they have pierced", Zechariah 12:10, and when they cry in the extremity of their distress, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matthew 23:39.

It is interesting to note that in Luke 21, the "times of the Gentiles" are linked with the coming of the Son of Man, which pretribulationists affirm is the title associated with Israel, and with the "second stage" of the coming of the Lord Jesus.

And so our Lord waits in heaven, our Advocate at the Father's right hand, for the appointed day when His enemies shall be made His footstool and until the time of the restitution of all things, and the fulness of the Gentiles be complete.

We thus conclude that Israel will be brought into its full, and promised blessing, at the end of the Great Tribulation, this will coincide with the 'hope of a groaning creation", and the redemption of the body, when all that the first man lost will be fully and finally restored.

**Then will He appear, the second time (not a second stage), without sin, unto salvation.**

James Slater

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