1 Thessalonians - Commentaries by Andrew Miller

Caught Up Together, Caught Up Together

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“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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.” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

The Lord Jesus arises from His throne, He descends from heaven, He gives the word Himself, the voice of the archangel passes it on, and the trumpet gives a well-known sound.

The imagery is military. As well-trained troops know the orders of their commander by the sound of the trumpet, so will the army of the Lord answer instantly to His call. All the dead in Christ shall rise, and all the living shall be changed; and they shall enter into the cloud, and be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall they ever be with the Lord. This is the first resurrection, the rapture of the saints. Before a seal of judgment is broken, a trumpet is blown, or a vial poured out, the saints are all gone—gone to glory, gone to be with the Lord forever! What a thought! What an event! Not a particle of the redeemed dust of God’s children left in the grave; and not a believer left on the face of the whole earth! All caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and to be conducted by Him to the Father’s house of many mansions.

But who can think, who can speak, of the happy reunions on that morning of cloudless joy? Doubtless the Person of the Lord will fix every eye and ravish every heart; still there will be the distinct recognition of those who, though long parted from us here, have never lost their place in our hearts. And as all will perfectly bear the image of the Lord, we can never lose sight of Him. Though everyone will have his own identity and his own special joy, yet all will be like the Lord, and the joy of each will be the common joy of all. But chiefest of all our joys that morning, and from which all other joy shall flow, will be to see His face, and behold His glory; or, as John says, and sums up all blessedness in two expressions: “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

(Selected from the writings of Andrew Miller)

Meditations on the Christian Hope Standing State, Vocation, Welfare an, Christian's Hope, The

1 Thessalonians 4

Thou hast done well, my soul, in meditating on the Christian's standing, state, vocation, and warfare; these are subjects of the deepest personal interest, and subjects with which every Christian ought to be well acquainted according to the revelation of God. But there is yet another theme, equally personal and important, on which thou mayest profitably muse for a little; I mean the Christian's hope-the hope of thy Lord's return. Here, then, let thy thoughts, and not thy thoughts only, but thy affections, be centered. The blessed Lord, the Son of the living God, coming from heaven for thee, is the true and proper object of thy hope-thy expectation. It is a question of affection-a family scene.

The Father's house, into which He will introduce thee, is not the place of governmental glory, but of the manifestation of His grace and love. Thou wilt be in the same house with the Son-this is thy hope. O wondrous, blessed, glorious hope! What grace! What love divine! We may know something of God's love to sinners, but what can we know of the Father's love to the children-of the Bridegroom's love for His bride? The former is compassion, but the latter complacency.

FAITH AND HOPE.

Hast thou ever thought, my soul, on that strange anomaly so common amongst Christians that though Christ is the one object of their faith, He is not the one object of their hope. Many think that the coming of the Lord means nothing more than that He comes for us when we die; and that at the last there will be one general resurrection and one general judgment. It would be difficult to say what is the proper hope of such, for all is indefinite, indeed, we may say, confusion. Even as to the proper object of faith, and its blessed results, all is dark and cloudy.

Nothing, surely, can be more natural, in a Christian sense, than that He who is the object of our faith should also be the object of our hope. But simple as this is, it is all important. Thou wilt do well to trace this twofold path a little.

When we know Christ as the one who loves us, and died for us, we have no difficulty in trusting Him: we believe in Him-we have faith in Him. The knowledge of His love creates the most unquestioning confidence; the testimony of the word to the power of His blood meets all our anxieties. We are happy-perfectly happy in Him. His love answers to every desire of the heart, and His sacrifice to every need of the conscience. With every wish met, and every desire satisfied, we must be happy, and can only love and praise the Lord. But why is He not equally the one proper object of hope? Why is He not the daily expectation as well as the daily rest of the soul? Most sure and certain we are, that when a Christian dies, his soul is immediately with the Lord in paradise; and a blessed precious truth it is; but it is never spoken of in scripture as the hope of the Christian: rather that we shall not die, but be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. There is no reason or necessity why a Christian should die; Christ has died for him. But if he should die, death to him is called a " falling asleep in Jesus" -a being put to sleep by Jesus. How sweet, how blessed the thought, O my soul! This is the way a believer dies; the poor body is laid to sleep, and the soul ascends on angels' wings to be with Christ, till the morning of the first resurrection.

But what saith the scripture? faith can only rest on the word of God. Many speak of these things as the " peculiar views " of a particular class of Christians; but the one question is, Has God spoken plainly on the subject? On nothing more so; the difficulty is in the selection; but a passage from Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians may be the most convenient to refer to now. There we have a special revelation from the Lord, for the express purpose of giving further truth in detail as to the coming glory of the Lord Jesus. Carefully read 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

The Thessalonians, evidently, had been converted by means of a gospel that embraced the truth usually called " The Lord's second coming in glory." This is apparent from Acts 17, where we find their enemies giving a political turn to their accusations, by saying, " These all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." No doubt the apostle preached the truth of the Lord's coming to reign in glory. Hence it was, that from the time of their conversion, they were looking day by day for His return. But in the mean time some of their brethren died. This troubled them greatly. Their sorrow was excessive. Not that they had any fear about the salvation of their friends, but because they would not be present to welcome the Lord, and to be received by Him. When the apostle heard of their troubles, he wrote to them at once. They where comparatively uninstructed, and also greatly persecuted both by the Jews and heathen. Their opportunities of learning had been very few. The apostle was not allowed to remain long with them after their conversion, because of the persecution; and the books of the New Testament were not then written. But their ignorance and distress only gave the fitting opportunity for the Lord to reveal His mind more fully on this blessed subject.

In the new revelation which the apostle received, the order of events is given. This is important; though no doubt given in the first instance to meet the sorrowing hearts of the Thessalonians, it is also intended for the instruction of the saints of God in all ages: but the best way will be to go over the verses as they stand; and, first, we would notice,

THE SORROW OF THE THESSALONIANS.

Ver. 13. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." These warm, earnest-hearted, but young Christians had not been instructed as to how the dead saints could be with the Lord when He comes, and share His glory. They were so full of the expectation of the Savior's return, that they had never thought of any of them dying before He came; so that they were in great trouble when some of their brethren fell asleep. But now, observe, my soul, and give good heed to what the apostle says to them. Does he find fault with them for their too ardent hopes of the return of Jesus? Did he say they were too much occupied with it? or that they were excited and lacked sobriety? Familiar to thy mind are such sayings from many of thy fellow Christians; but no such word drops from the pen 'of the apostle. Their waiting for the Lord is mentioned in each chapter of both epistles, and most surely to their praise. Neither does he seek to comfort the bereaved-as is commonly done-by reminding them that they would soon follow-that they would soon rejoin their dear departed in heaven. No, indeed; true as that might be, he does not refer to it as a ground of comfort. The Thessalonians are maintained in the thought that they were still to look for the Lord during their life-time, and a fresh revelation is given to assure them, that all who have fallen asleep in Jesus will have equally their part in the glory with those who are alive at His coming.

Ver. 14. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The first thing that the apostle does is to fix the eye of the sorrowing ones on Jesus-on Him who died and rose again. True comfort is only to be found in looking to thee, O most blessed Lord, and divine strength to glorify thee in our deepest afflictions. There we see victory over death and the grave-there we see the one who died, was buried, rose again, and is now in glory. He is the believer's life. We triumph in like manner-" Even so." Our life is connected with Him who thus died and rose again, and belongs to the glory. All who have fallen asleep in Jesus will be raised, and leave the earth precisely as He did. " There is this difference," says one: " He went up in His own full right; He ascended. As to us, His voice calls the dead, and they come forth from the grave, and the living, being changed, all are caught up together. It is a solemn act of God's power, which seals the Christian's life and the work of God, and brings the former into the glory of Christ as His heavenly companion. Glorious privilege! Precious grace! To lose sight of it destroys the proper character of our joy and our hope."

THE ORDER OF EVENTS.

Ver. 15-18. " For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The apostle always wrote, we must remember, under the direct guidance and full sanction of the Spirit of God; but here there is something special-something that was required for the instruction and consolation of the sorrowing Thessalonians, therefore lie introduces the new revelation with a, " This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." We have a similar instance in 1 Cor. 11, when the apostle says, " For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you." That was given to correct an abuse as to the observance of the Lord's supper; this, to correct a mistake as to the Lord's coming.

But mark the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to His young disciples; He assures their hearts, that in the order of events connected with His coming, the first that takes place is the resurrection of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, and that, in place of losing anything by having departed, they will be the first that are ready to go up and meet the Lord. " The dead in Christ shall rise first." So far from those who have fallen asleep in Jesus missing the joyful hour of His coming, they will be raised before the living are changed. This is grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus; at the same time we know that every event connected with His coming shall be accomplished in 4 moment, in the twinkling of an eye, so that the interval cannot be estimated.

But now, my soul, observe in silent wonder the shining forth of this twofold glory of the Lord Jesus: He rises from His throne, He descends from heaven, He gives the word Himself, the voice of the archangel passes it on, and the trumpet gives a well known sound. The imagery is military. As well trained troops know the orders of their commander by the sound of the trumpet, so will the army of the Lord answer instantly to His call. All the dead in Christ shall rise, and all the living shall be changed; and they shall all enter into the the cloud, and be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall they ever be with the Lord. No separation then: therefore the apostle adds, " Comfort one another with these words."

Thus the apostle explains to the Thessalonians how God will bring with Jesus all who sleep in Him. From verse 15 to 18 is a parenthesis, which accounts for what is said in the 14th: " Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." When the Lord returns in glory, all the saints will be with Him; but, previously, He has awakened the sleepers, changed the living, and translated both to heaven.

This is the first resurrection-the resurrection of the righteous from among the dead at the commencement of the millennium. The wicked dead are not raised till after the millennium, till the day of judgment. 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 20:5, 11-15.

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS.

And now, the saints are gone-all gone-gone to glory-gone to be with the Lord forever! What a thought-what an event, O my soul! Not a particle of the redeemed dust of God's children left in the grave; and not a believer left on the face of the whole earth! all caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. But who can think-who can speak of the happy reunions on that morning of cloudless joy? Doubtless the person of the Lord will fix every eye and ravish every heart: still, there will be the distinct recognition of those, who, though long parted from us here, have never lost their place in our hearts. And as all will perfectly bear the image of the Lord, we can never lose sight of Him. Though every one will have his own identity, and his own special joy, yet all will be like the Lord, and the joy of each will be the common joy of all. " O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together," will be a note of praise often sung, as we meet to part no more forever.

Yes, my soul, heaven is a home, a social place; and surely the blessed Lord who has prepared that home of love will ever have the first thought, the first place; yet He Himself will connect the brightest scenes in glory with the darkest clays of the wilderness. This is evident from what the apostle says in the second chapter. At the very moment when he was hindered by Satan from visiting his beloved Thessalonians, who were sorely persecuted, he looked beyond those troublous times and saw his children in the faith around him in the glory. " For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." But there are many other scenes of earth that will have a bright reflection in the glory. Many cross my mind, some I well remember; but I forbear, their record is on high.

" Hark to the trump! behold, it breaksThe sleep of ages now:And lo! the light of glory shinesOn many an aching brow.Changed in a moment-raised to life,The quick, the dead arise,Responsive to th' archangel's voice,That calls us to the skies.Undazzled by the glorious lightOf that beloved brow,We see, without a single cloud,We see the Savior now!O Lord, the bright and blessed hopeThat cheered us through the past,Of full eternal rest in thee,Is all fulfilled at last."

Here pause a little, O my soul; meditate on this wondrous scene. Who will meet thee there? Who will greet thee with a joyous welcome in that happy land? Who will clasp thy hand, to be sundered no more forever? But oh! how completely all are changed, and yet how perfectly all are identically the same. One cannot be mistaken for another; and not one can be unknown. But chiefest of all thy joys that morning, and from which all thy other joys shall flow, will be to see His face, hear His voice, and behold His glory; or, as St. John says, and sums up all blessedness in two expressions; " We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Surely God Himself could not have done a better thing for us than to make us like Christ; and a richer blessing He could not have bestowed than to give us to see him as He is -that means, we shall see Him and know Him in all the realities of His love, and in all the greatness of His many glories. This will be the fullness of our joy, the everlasting spring of our never-ending delight.

THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE APPEARING.

But to where, may I ask, does the Lord conduct His saints after He meets them in the air? To heaven, surely; to the house of many mansions which He has prepared for them, according to His own promise in John 14 " In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Nothing can possibly be plainer or simpler than these words. Their first meeting in the air may be foreshadowed by Isaac meeting Rebekah in the wilderness. We see in her beautiful behavior the most reverent love; and we see in his love and kindness the fulfillment of the promises and testimonies of Eliezer: " And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel; and she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done." This may be like the Holy Spirit delivering up His sacred charge to the Son of the Father though He will dwell in the Church forever. " And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife: and he loved her." Gen. 24

Having passed into heaven, the saints will then be manifested in the light; as the apostle says, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. 14:10, 12.) But this does not mean, observe, that the saints, as to their persons, shall stand in judgment. Christ has been judged for them, and they, as He says Himself; shall never come into judgment. But it does mean that all their works and ways will be seen in the light of His presence, and that we shall then know His estimate of all that we have done for Him. Being in our bodies of glory, we shall be incapable of experiencing anything like fear or unhappiness; but when manifested in the light we shall have a perfect knowledge, according to the mind of Christ, of every moment of our past history, the value which He sets upon it, and the praise which He gives. (1 Cor. 4:4, 5.) All that was of self or of Christ in our motives, objects, and service, will then be seen-all that we failed to understand in time will be perfectly known then, at least as regards our connection with Christ His Church and service. But, surely, everything as to ourselves will be lost sight of when seen side by side with His patient grace; and we shall pass from His tribunal in admiring wonder and praise at the patience which bore with our ways in the wilderness, and brought us safe to glory. " For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13:12.

All things being now ready, the marriage of the Lamb takes place, according to the vision of St. John. (Rev. 19) " The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife bath made herself ready." He presents her to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5) What a day that will be! What a day even for heaven, so long accustomed to glory! What a mustering of its myriad hosts to do Him honor! But this will be a new glory-the bridal glory of the Lamb! O wondrous thought, transcendent glory! The bride ranks with her Bridegroom, the wife ranks with her husband! As He is, so she is-where He is, there she is-what He has, that she has. And all forever and ever. But tell me, O tell me this, my soul, will thine eyes behold that glory? -will thy heart taste these joys?-will thy feet stand in that holy place?—will these nuptial glories be thine? What sayest thou?-answer me. At perfect rest my heart is, faith replies: as Isaac confirmed all that had been testified of him to Rebekah, so shall the true Isaac confirm all that has been spoken of Him to His Church/ which is His body, and His bride.

The marriage scene, and the marriage supper of the Lamb, are little more than announced; they are not described. But the book of the Revelation is not the place to speak of the Father's house, and the intimacies of love; but rather of the righteous ways of God, and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. Nevertheless, we are permitted to see the bride, the guests, the preparations, and to hear of the blessedness of all present. " Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And immense weight is to be attached to the concluding sentence of this brief account of the nuptial scene: " And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." What grace is

thine, O most gracious God our Father, to give such double assurance of that blessed future to thy weak and often doubting ones May we be faithful to our Well-beloved; to whom we are now affianced, and only think of and prepare for that coming day, which will be the summing up of all blessedness and the consummation of all christian hope.

THE APPEARING IN GLORY.

The marriage supper being over, and all things ready, the blessed Lord, as the last Adam, with His heavenly Eve, the glorified saints and the angelic hosts, prepare for the appearing in glory, and for taking possession of the earth. But before accompanying them thither, it may be well to notice

what has taken place there since the rapture of the saints, and what things in general have come to.

When the true Church shall have left the scene, the merely nominal part, left behind, shall be at once and forever rejected by Christ. (Rev. 3:16.) Then the Spirit of God began to work in the Jewish remnant, and they, as the missionaries of the new testimony, preached " the everlasting gospel to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." The judgment of the living nations in Matt. 25 discriminates as to the results of this testimony; and Rev. 7 shows us the saved multitudes of both Jews and Gentiles by means of "the everlasting gospel." But while the love of God was thus active, and the power of the Spirit thus manifested, Satan was exerting all his power and bringing up all his forces to corrupt the whole earth, and dispute its possession with the Lord's Anointed.

Mere professors, " because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved," shall be given up to strong delusion, that they might believe a lie-awful doom-they are now at the mercy of Satan. Antichrist and the false prophet -the one the head of the civil power, and the other of the ecclesiastical-fill the whole scene of the Roman earth with their blasphemies. Outside, the nations are angry and mustering their hosts for battle. The dragon and his angels are overthrown by Michael and his angels, and their place is found no more in heaven, or in heavenly places. Satan and his angels being cast down to the earth, and knowing their time is short, concentrate all their evil there. (Rev. 12:7-13.) And such will be his power, that when God ceases to hinder his working-as He will do for a time-men will fall down and worship the beast, and the dragon that gave him his power. Human sin, in the person of Antichrist, who is also filled with Satan, rises to its greatest height, and all is ripe for judgment. But let us now return to our heavenly company.

The Lord is coming: He is on His way. Look up, my soul, what seest thou? Heaven is open; " and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." But mark, He does not come alone; the armies of heaven follow Him. " And, the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine line, white and clean." This, we must remember, is a vision which the prophet saw, and not a question of real horses. It is the symbol of the Lord appearing in power and great glory. He comes to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to put down all the wickedness of man and of Satan on the earth. " He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The Antichrist, the kings of the earth, and all associated with them, shall be utterly overthrown. Isa. 11 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 19

THE THRONE OF GLORY.

Having executed what we may call His warrior judgment, He takes His seat as " Son of man, on the throne of his glory," which we may call His sessional judgment. It is not taking vengeance on the masses by an act of His power, as when He is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, but calmly discriminating between the righteous and the wicked. He separates them the one from the other. This is the judgment of " the quick." The judgment of " the dead " does not take place till after the millennium; but no separating of the one from the other will take place there. All who stand before the great white throne are judged according to the value of their own works; and, consequently, are condemned and cast into the lake of fire. Only those who are judged according to the value of Christ's work can be saved. But, When, some may ask, will the judgment of "the quick" take place? Before the millennium commences, according to Matt. 25 Immediately after the Church is caught up, the Lord sends forth messengers to preach the gospel of the kingdom everywhere, and to proclaim the near approach of the king in power and glory. (Rev. 14:6, 7.) Those who believe the message and treat the messengers with kindness, are owned as " sheep," but those who despise them perish as " goats." There is no opening of books here as before the great white throne; all turns on the way the message was received. To honor the king's messengers was the proof of faith; to reject them, of unbelief. The Lord remembers this, and counts what was done to His " brethren" as done to Himself. The " sheep " and the " goats," are the godly and the ungodly of the living nations; the Lord's " brethren " are godly Jews, whom He sent out to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

When the scene is thoroughly cleared of the enemies of the king, as it was at the beginning of Solomon's reign, the millennium in all its glories will' be introduced.

THE MILLENNIUM.

It may be well to pause here for a moment before speaking of the millennium, and meditate on this solemn scene. Hast thou given it much thought, my soul? In a moment, suddenly, when the world is intoxicated with pleasure, and saying " Peace and safety," the heavens open. The once rejected Jesus of Nazareth comes forth: He is clothed in light and majesty; His breastplate is righteousness; His sword is girded on His thigh: His eyes are as a flame of fire; and on His head are many crowns. Saints and angels follow in His train, and celebrate His praise. But what of the godless world below? " Every eye shall see him;" and every heart shall be struck with astonishment; the instruments of daily occupation shall drop from every hand, and all the world, with eyes uplifted, shall stand still. But there is no hope for the rejecters of Jesus now. Their death-knell is rung; the Lord's hand has laid hold on judgment; " He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Amongst the many lessons which thou mayest learn from these approaching judgments, there is one especially I pray thee to remember: Let the solemn realities of thy Lord's coming and kingdom be so mirrored on thy soul as to move thee to increased earnestness, yea, to burning zeal, in preaching the gospel, and in all thy work with precious souls. True, thou wilt be with the Lord thyself, but forget not those who are in danger of being left behind through the deceitfulness of sin. But to return.

We have seen the heavenlies cleared of Satan and his angels; the earth cleared of its wicked kings; the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire; and now we have the binding of Satan. (Rev. 20) Victory is complete! the hidden source of all the evil is bound in the abyss for

a thousand years. The blessed Lord takes the kingdom. " The, kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." (Rev. 11:15.) This is the millennium-Christ openly, manifestly governing) and Satan bound. These are the two grand features of that blessed period, and by which it is distinguished from all former dispensations.

What a mighty change 1 what an immense relief to this groaning earth! Satan and his evil angels banished from the abodes of men: Christ reigning, and His risen saints associated with Him on the throne of His heavenly and earthly glory. Then shall come creation's day of boundless blessedness so constantly spoken of in the Old Testament. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey. The wild beasts of the field shall become gentle and harmless as the lamb, and warfare and strife shall cease from amongst the children of men. Thus will God reverse the history of man; He will heal his sorrow, relieve his misery; crown him with health, peace, and plenty, and spread joy throughout the restored creation, according to His estimate of the cross of His beloved Son. In that day it will be seen and acknowledged that the cross of the Lord Jesus is

the foundation of the wide spread scene of millennial glory and blessing. Col. 1:20.

There are three ways in which Christ will fully reveal and glorify God-grace, government, and glory. The first He did in His humiliation; the second He will do in the millennium; and the third throughout eternity. Thus the millennium will be the revelation of God in government for a thousand years. All language fails to speak of what its blessedness must be. Satan no longer free to tempt men, and the goodness of God displayed in blessing men; the heavens above, Israel and the Gentiles below, the earth, the sea, the lower creation-all brought under the government of Christ—all embraced in His wide dominions; and all to the glory and praise of God by Him.

Kings shall fall down before Him,And gold and incense bring;All nations shall adore Him,His praise all people sing.Outstretched His wide dominion,O'er river, sea, and shore;Far as the eagle's pinion,Or dove's light wing can soar.

But nothing can be more humiliating to man than what we find at the end of the millennium. God will then show that a thousand years of glory will not convert the human soul without His saving grace. The moment Satan is again free,

and exercises his power, the unconverted portion of the Gentile nations are deceived by him. He gathers them together in rebellion; but fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them utterly.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

We have now come to the last and closing scene in the history of man-the day of judgment. All is solemn-most solemn-eternally solemn for all who stand before that throne. " And I saw," says John, " a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." There need be no difficulty on the reader's part in distinguishing this last sessional judgment from the Lord's coming, the first resurrection, and the judgment of the living nations. (Matt. 25) When the Lord comes, He comes from heaven to earth; and the earth, as we have seen, is universally blessed under Him. But that is not the case here. There is no earth to come to: both heaven and earth are fled away, and there is no place found for them. It is the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead at the close of the millennium. All are judged according to their works: the book of life is searched in vain for a single name that stands before the great white throne; all are condemned, and cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

But before parting, and parting forever, with so many of thy poor fellow creatures, be exhorted, O my soul, to pause, to reflect, to weigh up in faith's balances, the last sight of those countenances of agony, and the final sentence of the Judge. Remember, thou shalt see those faces no more forever.

At the commencement of the millennium the saints are seen sitting upon thrones in association with Christ. " They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. 20:4.) This was their time of public reward for service done to Christ during His absence. " The time is come," says the seer, " that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great." (Rev. 11:18.) But on the great white throne Christ is seen alone. While it was a question of governing the millennial earth, the saints governed with Him; but now it is a question of eternal judgment, and in this He acts alone. Nevertheless, they will be with Him, according to that all-precious word, " Forever with the Lord."

And thus shall it be: the lost and the saved shall then stand face to face-the righteous with the Lord, the wicked standing before Him. What a sight! what a moment! What a difference now between the two companies! the one in bodies of glory shining in the image of Christ; the other in the naked realities of their sad condition. Stripped of every false covering, each one must see his sins in the light of divine holiness and righteousness. All must be there. " And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." The depths, the unseen world, are forced to deliver up their miserable prisoners, that they may hear from the lips of the once-rejected Jesus their final sentence. The heavens and the earth are fled away, and nothing is to be seen but the great white throne of dazzling brightness, and the glorious majesty of Him who sits upon it. But all are now gathered, and time is no longer. The guilt and anguish of the heart are seen in all faces; and the awful sentence, uttered amidst the dreadful silence of that solemn scene, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, will send back the wicked into the depths of woe, woe unutterable. " And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." But the glory and beauty of the Savior, Jesus, whom they despised in time, and the myriads of happy saints who surround Him and who shall be forever with Him, can never, never be forgotten.

Thus closes the history of man, and the events of time. Eternity begins. The wicked lost, the righteous saved; and all the ways of God for over vindicated. His love creates new heavens and earth as the future dwelling place of His children; and God comes down to dwell among them. " Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. 21:1-7.

THE BLESSED HOME.

There is a blessed home, beyond these azure skies,Where saints with Christ in glory live, in life that never dies.There is a blessed home, beyond earth's toil and din,Where we in white shall walk with Christ, beyond the reach of sin.There is a blessed home, where prayer is turn'd to praise;When in the light of Jesus' love we'll rest for endless days.There is a blessed home, where God our Father dwells;And every child who

enters there, the note of glory swells.Within that blessed home, around our Father's board,The endless feast will then be spread of hidden manna stored.Within that blessed home His " new name " we shall bear,Inscribed upon the fair " white stone," His special love to share.Within that blessed home, within our Father's rest,Within the everlasting arms, forever loved and blest!O Father, Christ, and home! to be forever thereIs joy unspoken, love untold, and bliss beyond compare!

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